

ACTIVITY 7.1

WOOP Scenarios and Group Discussion

Concept

Students can be introduced to the idea of self-regulation and reprogramming habits by helping them identify different elements associated with habit formation and habit change. Teachers may want to start by modeling how to identify habits and goals. Then explain the complexity of habits as they involve implicit, subconscious, automatic components as well as explicit, conscious, and deliberate elements. To achieve this, teachers may want to explain what mental contrasting is first by providing definitions and examples (Oettingen & Reininger, 2016). Then present the WOOP strategy and define each of its subcomponents. Allow students to work in groups in order to examine scenarios and learn to identify the various components related to mental contrasting and the WOOP strategy (Oettinger, 2014).

Units it could embed into

Cognition, Stress and Health, Learning

Learning Targets

1. Identify the various components associated with bad habits.
2. Apply evidence-based strategies that can increase the probability of reducing the frequency of bad habits, increase the frequency of desired habits, and promote long-term cognitive, emotional, and behavioral change.

Directions

For this assignment, you will be researching yourself in terms of the following areas:

1. What are some bad habits in your life?
2. How were those bad habits established?
3. What is the impact of bad habits across various areas of your life like your academic performance?
4. How can we learn to reprogram our psychology towards establishing and strengthening new positive habits?

You will share your research and conclusions with the class through class and homework activities.

Materials

- [WOOP video](#)
- [Handout 7.1a: WOOP Elements](#)
- [Handout 7.1b: WOOP Scenarios](#)

Time

40-60 minutes. Some elements can be implemented as homework assignments. These lessons could be extended further to integrate some of the suggested extension activities.

Instructions

- Introduce the above vocabulary and WOOP strategy
- Share the WOOP activity handouts for the scenarios provided and ask students to be as specific as possible. Emphasize behaviors that can be reasonably targeted and changed.

Extension activities

- Conduct a whole-class debriefing that engages students in sharing problems they faced identifying each of the components of the scenario
- Invite students to brainstorm about habits they would like to change in their own lives and write them using the same handout

Alternative uses for the lesson

- This lesson could be integrated into lessons regarding motivation theory. For example, you can have students link the concepts with ideas regarding intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation or to discuss why some behaviors are easier than others to execute.

WOOP Elements

Wish:

What is the habit the person should consider changing?

What will the person continue to do if they change?

What will the person continue to do if they don't change?

Outcome:

What will be the best result from changing the habit permanently?

What will be the outcome if the person doesn't change the habit?

Obstacle:
What is the main obstacle that would prevent the person from achieving their habit change?

Plan:

What is an effective strategy to deal with the main obstacle the person faces? Make a statement connecting the obstacle and the plan using the language of: When... Then...

When _____

Then _____

HANDOUT 7.1B**WOOP Scenarios****Scenario 1 for Group Discussion**

Monica is a 16-year-old girl who struggles maintaining healthy eating habits because she loves snacks and sweets late at night. She likes to relax by snacking and watching TV or snacking while chatting with friends on social media. She eats pretty healthy most of the time, and healthy eating habits are an important goal for her. She is an athlete at her school's track team. She has surprised herself by finishing bags of snacks and candy without realizing it. Monica catches herself compulsively going to the fridge and pantry even when she is full. This seems to happen more when she is bored or stressed. Monica's mom has brought this to her attention and sometimes Monica ends up feeling frustrated and guilty after arguing about this with her mom. Finally, Monica doesn't like to drink water and has become dehydrated at practices and during competitions.

Scenario 2 for Group Discussion

Alberto is a 13-year-old boy who is currently attending online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He loves video games and has gotten into the habit of playing during class. His teachers rarely catch him because he's found strategies to play on his cellphone while appearing to be paying attention, or he turns his camera off when teachers aren't paying attention. He realizes he is not doing well in his math and social studies classes and wishes to improve, but he doesn't seem to be able to stop playing video games during and after class. He has started to become anxious about tests and homework. Alberto is also starting to think he is not very good at math and that he doesn't have the same vocabulary as other students in his class. He does want to do better in school. Finally, he wishes he could see his friends and get to play soccer with them soon.

Scenario 3 for Group Discussion

Tanya is a 15-year-old girl who feels tired all the time. She drinks 3-5 caffeinated drinks per day to get energy. She falls asleep easily during class, when she is doing homework or watching TV. She stays late at night because she has a hard time falling asleep. The caffeine doesn't seem to have much effect during the day, but at night it seems to be the opposite. During the weekdays she sleeps about 4-5 hours. However, on weekends she can sleep over 12 hours each day. She has started to feel depressed because she is falling behind in school, stopped going out for walks with her dog, and doesn't have the motivation to do her chores around the house. All of these issues have made conflict with Tanya's parents happen more and more frequently.