

7. Vision Activity: Mental Contrasting

This is a positive thinking exercise that helps you define your vision. In her book, *Rethinking Positive Thinking* (2014), Gabrielle Oettingen argues that too much positive visualisation can rob a person of their desire to succeed – they get happy enough just dreaming about something and never end up doing it. Any goal you set will usually have obstacles in the way of you achieving them (if they were easy everyone would be able to achieve them!). It's tempting to think that your obstacles will mainly come from outside of you: changing jobs markets, your parents splitting up, friendships ending, etc. These things happen, of course, but most of the obstacles you will face will come from within yourself. The phrase 'self-sabotage' is often used to describe how we end up becoming the obstacle to our own aims because of the ways in which we think or behave. Mental contrasting gets you to think about these obstacles and develop an 'if ... then' plan to help you overcome them. The process also gets you thinking about the feasibility of your goals. If you can't formulate an 'if ... then' plan, then your goal might not be possible at all! Use the grid on the next page to record your thoughts and ideas:

1. WISH

Spend a minute or two thinking in detail about something you want to accomplish. (For example, this could be the grade you want to achieve in a particular subject.)

2. OUTCOME

Vividly imagine the best thing you associate with having achieved that outcome. (That 'best thing' might be anything related to the outcome. It might mean getting into the university of your dreams!)

3. OBSTACLE

Ask yourself what internal obstacles are most likely to get in the way. (That weakness inside you that holds you back from higher grades or a better exam performance.)

4. PLAN

Formulate an if ... then plan for what you will do when that obstacle arises. ('If I find myself checking Twitter, Facebook or going on Netflix, I'll get up immediately and turn off the Wi-Fi.')

Vision

1. Wish	2. Outcome
3. Obstacle	4. Plan

Final Thoughts

Creating a vision this way allows you to record and recognise the elements of your own personality that are likely to prevent you from reaching your goals.

What do you consider to be one of your most significant weaknesses?

.....
.....

How might you overcome it?

.....
.....