

Clarity Map: 4 steps to navigate your woes

You may have a lot on your mind. When worries swirl in our heads, they can feel overwhelming and all-consuming. The Clarity Map helps you get those thoughts out of your head and onto paper, honouring everything you're feeling without judgement. By mapping your concerns, you can begin to see what's within your control and what's not. This process supports an emotional reset, allowing you to reclaim your energy and refocus it on the actions that matter most.

1 Dump It Out

Write down all your worries. Get them out of your head. Big or small, rational or irrational. Don't censor.

Prompt:

What are all the things taking up space in your mind right now?

2 Analyse

Add some columns to your list or create a table like this to examine each worry:

Example worry	How big is it? (1-5)	Can I control or influence it?	Action I can take (if any)
Feeling overwhelmed with work	5	Yes – influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritise tasks• Delegate one thing• Take a walk
Worried about a friend going through a tough time	3	No – but can support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reach out• Offer to listen• Check in again next week
Concerned about the economy	2	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit news intake• Focus on financial habits I can control

3 Emotional Reset

Remember: Most emotions last about 90 seconds. Thoughts can re-trigger them. Notice when you're ruminating. **Quick Reset:**

- Pause.
- Breathe.
- Label the emotion: "I notice I'm feeling _____ because _____."
- Reframe using Ethan Kross's distancing technique:
"What would I tell a friend in this situation?"

4 Reclaim Your Energy

Let go of what you can't control and redirect your focus.

Prompt:

Which of these worries are not yours to carry today? Where will you place your attention instead?

- I will release: _____
- I will focus on: _____

Nudge Tools

Shifting Emotions

Dr. Ethan Kross is an award-winning psychologist and neuroscientist at the University of Michigan. He introduces the idea of shifting emotions, acknowledging what we feel without getting stuck. Instead of dwelling, we can choose when to engage and when to gently redirect our focus. This helps protect energy, reduce rumination, and restore clarity.

In Shift, he outlines six evidence-based tools, called Emotional Shifters, to help manage our emotional state.

1. **Distanced Self-Talk:** Referring to oneself in the third person to gain perspective and reduce emotional intensity.
2. **Mental Time Travel:** Imagining how one will feel about a situation in the future to diminish its current emotional impact.
3. **Environmental Shifts:** Changing one's surroundings to influence mood and emotional responses.
4. **Sensory Engagement:** Using music, scents, or tactile experiences to alter emotional states.
5. **Writing and Journaling:** Expressing emotions through writing to process and understand them better.
6. **Selective Avoidance:** Temporarily diverting attention from certain emotions to prevent them from becoming overwhelming.

Introducing WOOP

WOOP is a science-based mental strategy developed by psychologist Dr. Gabriele Oettingen, grounded in over 20 years of research in motivation and behaviour change. It is different from other exercises: it involves thoughts and images rather than rational or effortful thinking. It involves going slow, creating time and space for thinking and imagining as you consider each step in as much rich detail as possible. WOOP stands for:

Wish – What is your wish, a wish that is challenging, but feasible?

Outcome – What would be the best outcome of fulfilling your wish?

Obstacle – What is your main inner obstacle that holds you back from fulfilling your wish?

Plan – What can you do to overcome your obstacle?

It's simple, effective, and evidence-based, especially helpful for shifting from passive worry into proactive emotional regulation and goal-directed behaviour.

Why WOOP Works for Emotional Shifting

WOOP bridges the gap between positive visualisation and realistic action planning, helping you:

- Increase clarity and motivation
- Identify inner emotional blockers (e.g., fear, self-doubt)
- Create implementation intentions (i.e., "If X happens, then I will Y")
- Reduce stress by giving emotions a clear channel for expression and redirection

Example: Feeling overwhelmed with work

Wish	I want to feel calm and in control at work
Outcome	I'll be able to focus and complete tasks with clarity
Obstacle	My tendency to jump between tasks and catastrophise
Plan	If I notice I'm spiralling, then I'll take 3 deep breaths and write down the next tiny step

Brain Boosters

- [Book – Shift by Ethan Kross](#)
- [Book – Chatter by Ethan Kross](#)
- [Book – Positive Optimism by Dr Sue Varma](#)
- [Book – Emotional Agility by Susan David](#)
- [Book – Atlas of the Heart by Brené Brown](#)
- [The Saboteur Assessment by Shirzad Chamine](#)
- [Free Download - Riders & Elephants Emotional Culture Deck](#)
- [Resource – Feelings Wheel](#)
- [Website - WOOP](#)
- [PositivePsychology.com - Understanding the Circles of Control, Influence & Concern](#)
- [Podcast - Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe - Your Life Moves In The Direction of Your Strongest Emotion](#)