



MAKE A CONFIDENCE PLAN: WOOP AND THE POWER OF MENTAL CONTRASTING

Your question now might be, “So what action am I supposed to take?!?”

Great question!

In this step, we take your dreams out of the clouds and make it concrete. You will break down the steps to your goal into small, achievable steps, creating a bridge between where you are now and where you want to be.

Why Didn't We Start Here?

You might be asking why we didn't just start off at this step, Making a Confidence Plan. And there is a really good reason! The steps that you completed earlier in this course set you up to get to this point. You gained the knowledge you needed to understand fear and anxiety in week one. In week two you identified your signature strengths, you wrote about your best possible future self, and created your vision board, all of which are important steps to help you to clarify what you want to achieve, what your goal is.

This is really important, because it set you up to utilize the power of mental contrasting to set and plan out your goals.

See, if you start off by focusing on what you want, and having a really clear picture in your mind of the goal, then you contrast it to where you are now, you are setting up your brain to look for solutions to make it a reality.

If, however, we spent a lot of time focused on where you are right now, how you are feeling, your situation at this moment, and then tried to make a plan to get to your goal, your goal would seem really big and un-achievable. You wouldn't have much motivation, and your brain would be set up to focus on the problems, the obstacles, and the reasons why your goal isn't possible.

Mental Contrasting and WOOP

Mental Contrasting takes the power of positive thinking, and mixes in some realism, and honestly, some negative thinking.

If we only thought about the positive, we wouldn't achieve anything. If we didn't think or feel any negative thoughts, we wouldn't have any reason or motivation to change.

In her book "Rethinking Positive Thinking" researcher Gabriele Oettingen explains that when you balance positive thinking about a desired outcome with a realistic look at the challenges and obstacles that might arise, you are much more likely to achieve your goals. Gabriele balanced this by creating her goal setting framework called WOOP.

The steps to WOOP are: Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, and Plan. In the next few pages you will learn how WOOP works, then I have included blank pages for you to fill in the steps and start to WOOP!

How WOOP Works

The first part of WOOP is writing down your WISH for your horsemanship journey. Good wishes are challenging, but also realistic. If your horsemanship dream is really big, it might be helpful to write down several specific wishes-in fact, most of us do have several wishes!

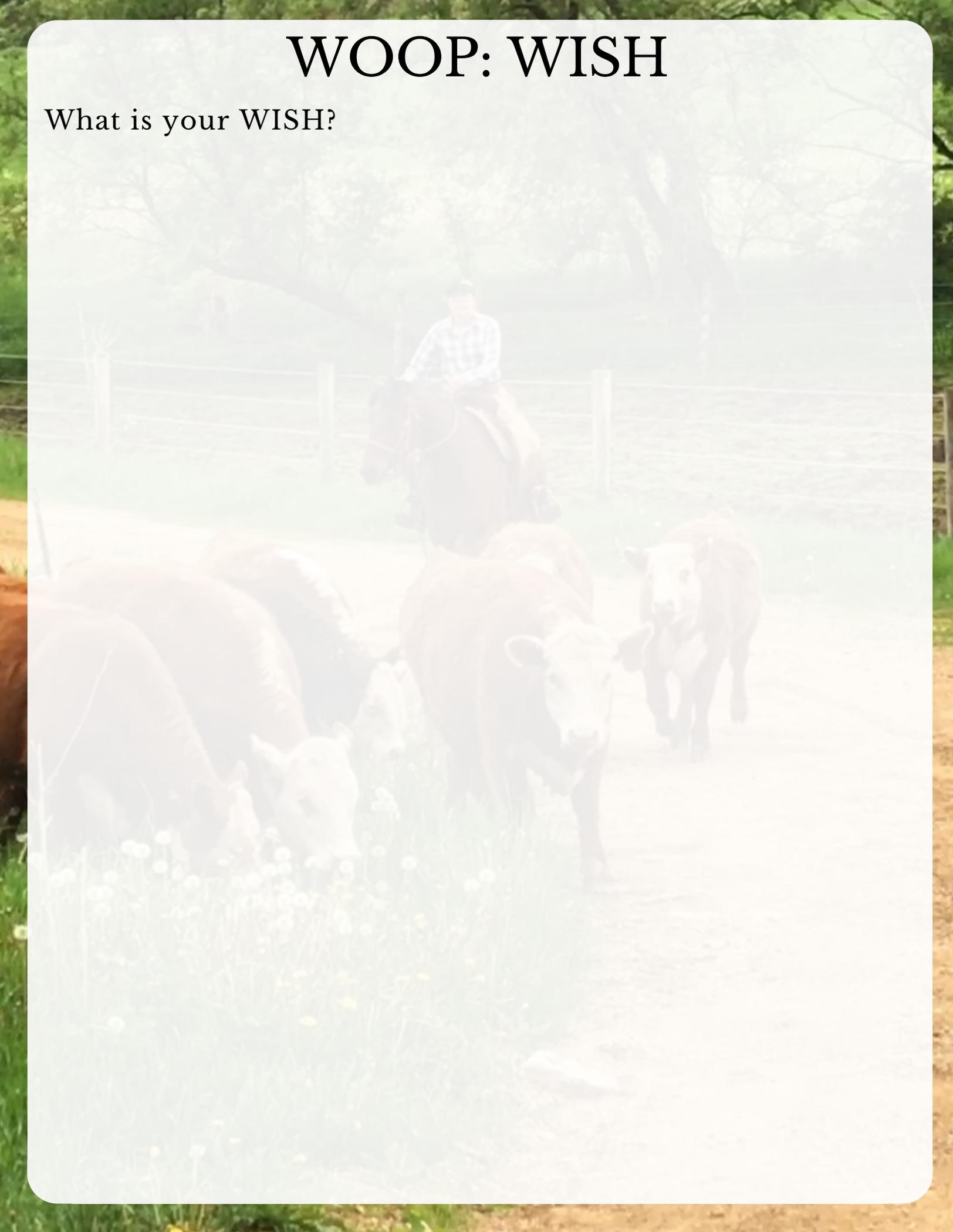
Then, write down the OUTCOME. Identify the Best Possible Consequences of this wish coming true. (These two steps should feel familiar-you should have clearly identified your wish and outcome as a result of completing the My Best Possible Future Self Exercise).

The next step is OBSTACLES. This step is where you will identify the obstacles to your wish. What is blocking you from achieving your goal? It could be your own thoughts and emotions, it could be knowledge, skills and abilities that you haven't mastered yet. Write them ALL down.

The last step is PLAN. For each of the obstacles you wrote down, make a plan. How can you overcome the obstacle? Break the process to overcoming the obstacle down into the smallest possible baby steps. Be as specific, realistic, and practical as possible. Also write down an Implementation Intention for each obstacles, using this format: "If (obstacle) occurs, then I will (action or thought)."

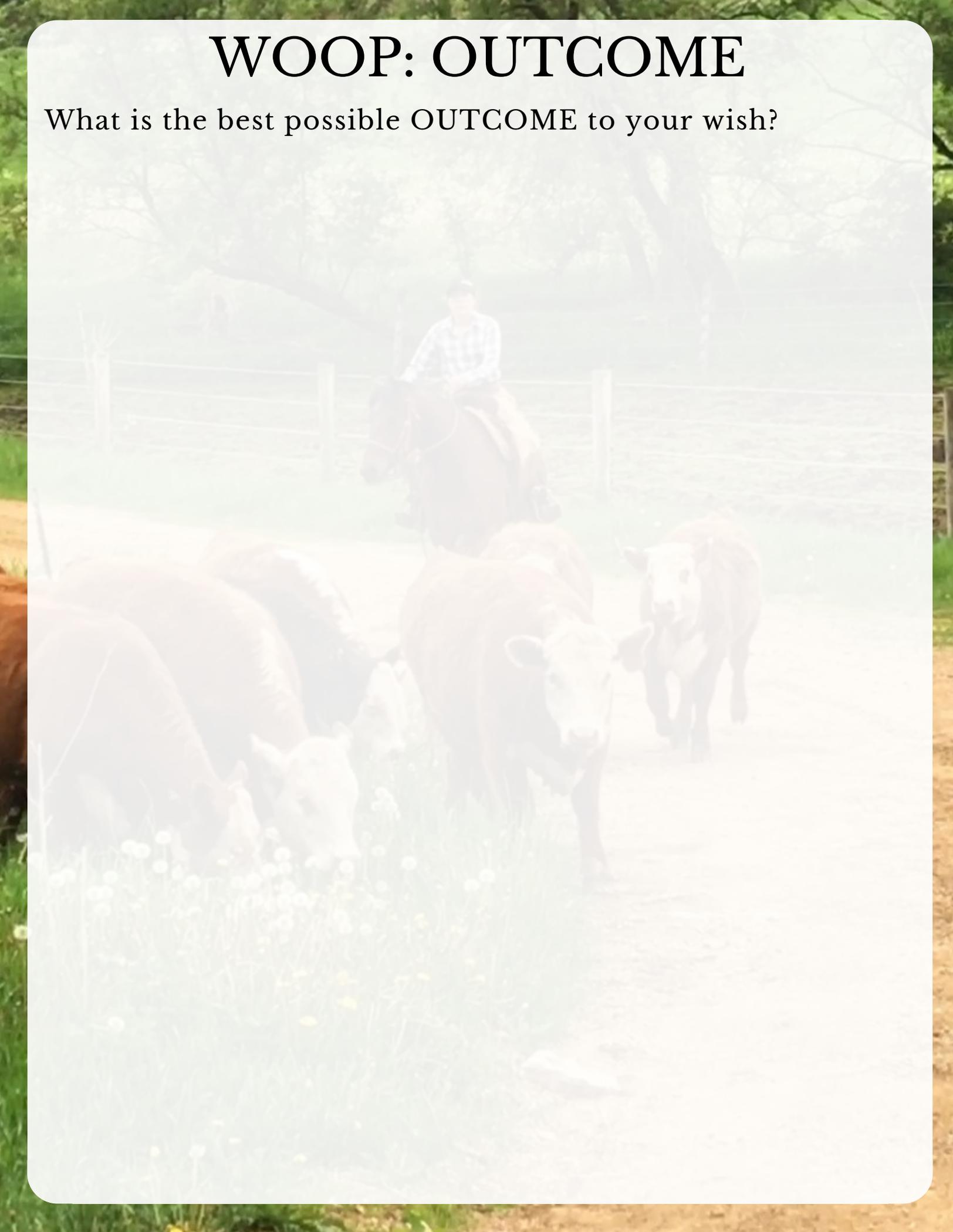
WOOP: WISH

What is your WISH?



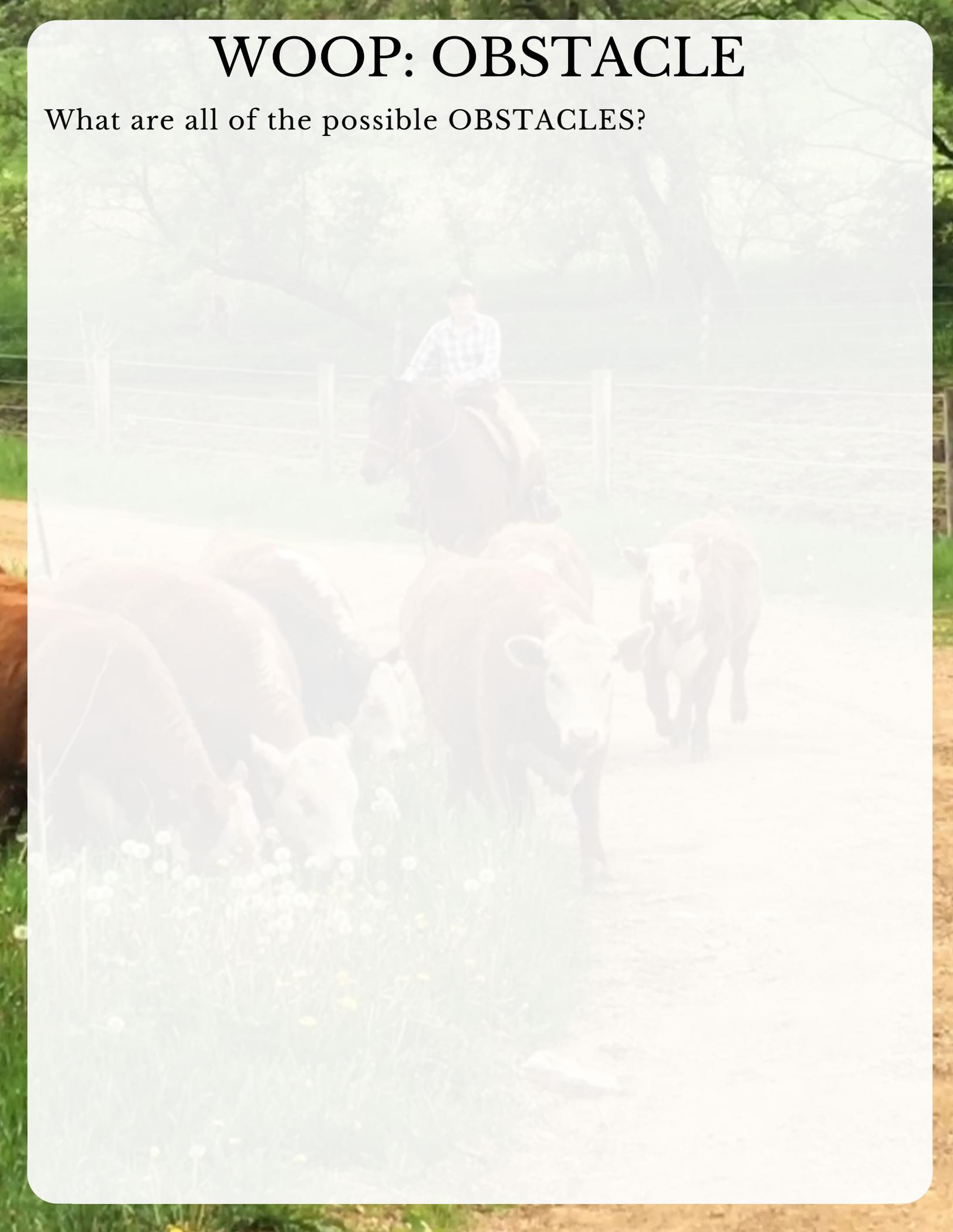
WOOP: OUTCOME

What is the best possible OUTCOME to your wish?



WOOP: OBSTACLE

What are all of the possible OBSTACLES?



WOOP: PLAN

For each of the obstacles you wrote down, make a PLAN. How can you overcome the obstacle? Write down an Implementation Intention for each obstacles, using this format: “If (obstacle) occurs, then I will (action or thought).”

This implementation intention step is key, because it recognizes that you will experience negative thoughts, emotions, and challenges in your process toward your goal, and it prepares you by having a plan to overcome it, a plan that recognizes and relies on your own strengths and abilities. This builds your belief in yourself, and your self-confidence!