



STOIC WEEK

Live Like a Stoic for a Week

The Stoic Week 2023 Handbook

Stoicism and Wellbeing

[Learn Modern Stoicism](#)

Latest Revision: 29th October 2023

Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [This Year's Theme: Stoicism and Wellbeing](#)
- [Central Stoic Ideas](#)
- [Monday: Control](#)
- [Tuesday: Emotions](#)
- [Wednesday: Character and Virtues](#)
- [Thursday: Caring for Ourselves and Others](#)
- [Friday: Seeing the Big Picture Saturday:](#)
- [Stoic it Up!](#)
- [Sunday: Creating Your Stoic Toolkit](#)
- [After Stoic Week](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) [What is](#)
- [Stoicism?](#)
- [Stoic Week: Your Daily Routine](#)
- [The Stoic Self-Monitoring Record](#)
- [Appendix: Further Reading](#)

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Important: The contents of this handbook are not intended as a substitute for medical advice or treatment. Any person with a condition requiring medical attention should consult a qualified medical practitioner or suitable therapist. This experiment is not suitable for anyone who is suffering from psychosis, personality disorder, clinical depression, PTSD, or other severe mental health problems. By undertaking this trial, the participant acknowledges that they are aware of and accept responsibility in relation to the foregoing.

Introduction to Stoic Week

Welcome to Stoic Week 2023!

Stoic Week is an annual online event in which people from all over the world attempt to live like a Stoic for seven days. This is your opportunity to take part in a special experiment. You will be using this *Handbook* as your guide and following ancient Stoic Philosophy as an aid to living in the modern world.

In the last two years the theme of Stoic Week has been wellbeing, and it has been so successful that we have decided to repeat it again with minimal changes to the text. Many Stoic Week participants have spoken of their desire to turn these Stoic ideas into habits. We believe that completing this course – whether for the first or second time - can provide a good foundation to achieve this.

The *Handbook* was developed by [Modern Stoicism](#), a multi-disciplinary team of academic philosophers, classicists, professional psychologists and cognitive therapists. The group was formed in 2012 to help others apply Stoic concepts and practices to the challenges of modern living. In this *Handbook*, you will find advice on how to adapt and follow Stoic principles. It combines general theory with more specific, stepbystep guidance on certain Stoic exercises. These materials have been prepared by experts in the field and give you an unusual and completely free-of-charge opportunity for personal development.

Stoic Week has proven extremely popular – over 25,000 have participated since we started in 2012. Each year we receive a huge amount of online feedback from participants, which we use to revise and improve the *Handbook*.

Here are some of the things previous participants have said:-

“I am calmer, I accept many disagreeable things with good spirits. Not so easily hurt”.

“Having a clear list of daily exercises has been very useful, and this week has started to make these a daily habit”

“Putting personal difficulties with health and treatment into perspective, managing pain and other people's sadness”

“It has made me think, question and discuss, until now, half-formed ideas”

“The guidance of Stoicism makes me happy”

“Being involved daily gave me the opportunity to realise how positive and worthy my life has been and how prepared I am for whatever life presents in the future”

Some of you will be drawn to this experiment because you already know about Stoicism and want to deepen your knowledge and put it into practice more consistently. Others may know very little about Stoicism and are curious to learn more. You are all very welcome and we hope this journey into Stoicism proves really useful and interesting for you.

We will really look forward to meeting you in the chat section for each day, where we can take the opportunity to engage in topical discussions. You can also ask questions and share your thoughts and experiences of taking part this year.

We sincerely hope you enjoy Stoic Week, thank you for joining us.

This Year's Theme: Stoicism and Wellbeing

We have found from the feedback from the many thousands of people who have taken part in previous Stoic Weeks that Stoicism can have a hugely positive effect on wellbeing.

Some of the benefits of completing Stoic Week have included:-

- Less negative emotions such as sadness, anger and fear
- More positive emotions such as feeling contented, happy and joyful
- Feeling more engaged in daily activities
- Better relationships
- Feeling more optimistic and enthusiastic
- Contributing more to the happiness and wellbeing of others
- A greater sense of purpose
- An increased ability to deal with life's challenges

We know about these benefits not only from what people have told us at the end of Stoic Week but also from the surveys that participants fill in at the beginning and end of the week. This year we decided to make **wellbeing** the central theme, which could mean that the benefits might be even greater than usual – we hope so!

Central Stoic Ideas

What is Stoicism? How might it help us to live better, happier lives today?

This year we have focused on 7 key Stoic ideas, that we think are particularly relevant to wellbeing, concentrating on one theme each day.

1. Control

In our lives, there are some things we can control and other things we cannot control. If we try to control what we cannot control, then we will wind up frustrated and will be ineffective. We will improve our wellbeing if we are aware of what we can control and focus on that and let go of everything else.

On Monday, we will discover what exactly the Stoics think is under our control (spoiler alert – not as much as many people think!). We'll also talk about the connection between archery and wellbeing ...

2. Emotions

We often imagine that emotions are just things that happen to us. “She made me angry”, “This weather makes me sad”. There is another, rather empowering, alternative, suggested by the Stoics.

It is our interpretations that affect us, not events. It is how we see things, not what happens to us, that leads to negative emotions.

This insight is our gateway to emotional freedom. By becoming more aware of how our *thinking* creates our emotions, we can learn to take a step back when upset, think differently about what has happened and so experience different, and healthier, emotions.

Emotions, it turns out, are one of the things we *do* have power to control, once we develop the right skills. This is one of the ways that Stoicism can enhance our wellbeing. It was this part of Stoicism that most inspired the creation of modern CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)

On Tuesday we look at how to start managing our emotions more skilfully. We will also find out which are the good and bad Stoic emotions – and we hope any worries about Stoicism turning you into a robot or Mr. Spock will melt away.

3.Character and Virtues

If you wanted to do well at an activity, let’s say cooking for example, do you think it would be helpful to learn some recipes and basic skills? Of course. So why not the same with life in general? The Stoics, along with many other ancient philosophers, believed that such knowledge and skills exist. They called them **the virtues**.

Leave behind any thoughts that this has anything to do with sex or Victorian morality. The virtues are character strengths that enable you to be the best version of yourself. Developing them will help you to do more good *and* be happier. Recent research by psychologists strongly supports this Stoic claim.

The Stoics emphasised 4 key or “cardinal” virtues – namely wisdom, courage, self-control (or moderation) and justice. The Stoics understood these terms in the broadest of senses. For example, wisdom includes good judgement and curiosity. Justice includes fairness, kindness and compassion.

On Wednesday we will learn about these 4 main virtues recommended by the Stoics, as well as ideas about how to make progress in being wise, courageous, self-controlled and just.

4.Caring for Ourselves and Others

The Stoics believe that it’s natural for us to start off being totally selfish -when we are babies we need to be selfish to survive. Then, as we mature, two interesting things happen. First, we can move from self-preservation to caring for oneself in a deeper sense - developing the virtues and virtue-based happiness but still caring for oneself. Secondly, we naturally develop parental love and expand this love to care for others in a deeper and broader sense, including love of our close relatives but also care for one's community and humankind.

This journey from learning how to care for ourselves properly to extending our care to *all* others -is called *oikeiôsis* and is our focus on Thursday. We will be drawing on a very practical idea from an otherwise obscure ancient Stoic named Hierocles.

It's not hard to see how caring for ourselves will improve our wellbeing. At first sight it may be less obvious why caring for others improves our wellbeing. The Stoics did not stress the idea that caring for others improves our wellbeing - they focus on the idea that it is natural for us to be sociable and that virtue just helps us to do this better. Yet research consistently shows that being more pro-social – for example by doing random acts of kindness increases our wellbeing as well as theirs. What is more, as you treat others better, people will often start to treat you better! Film fans might recall such a positive cycle in *Pay It Forward*.

5. Seeing the Big Picture

Another important strand of Stoicism, which we will explore on Friday, is to do with getting in touch with values beyond ourselves. We can create meaning by building connections to the larger universe. For some, this will include religion and spirituality, but Stoicism does not require you to believe in God. Stoicism can help you to change perspective and see the big picture.

Research supports the view that people with values that go beyond themselves are happier than those obsessed with themselves as well as the benefit of being able to change perspective.

On Friday we will look at the Stoic way to move beyond our own narrow viewpoint including the famous “View from Above” meditation.

6. Stoic it up!

There are many ways in which Stoicism can help, whatever your level of commitment. If you just take away from the course one of the ideas we have looked at so far, we believe that Stoicism is likely to be helpful and our research backs this up.

What would happen, though, if you were to fully embrace Stoicism? On Saturday we invite you to go all the way with Stoicism and *live today like a Stoic*.

There is one idea that we haven't looked at yet that was actually super-important for the Stoics. As we saw on Wednesday, Stoics work on their character, especially on developing the key virtues of wisdom, courage, self-control and justice. As we said then, this is likely to increase your wellbeing. Actually, the Stoics believe something much stronger – that cultivating the virtues is *all we need to do* to guarantee our wellbeing. It is our inner qualities that largely determine how we do in life. So, when the Beatles said that “all you need is love” they had it partly right – all you need, according to Stoicism are wisdom, courage, self-control and justice.

As we shall see on Saturday, this idea has a very practical implication. We should redefine success and prioritise being wise, courageous etc. over other things we normally find attractive – such as pleasure and achievement. Would you be interested in seeing how your life changes if, for a day, you embrace Stoicism in this fullest sense. What happens if, for a day, you were to “Stoic it up!”?

7. Creating Your Stoic Toolkit

Stoicism is much more than just a set of techniques or “life hacks”.

It’s a framework for thinking rationally and ethically about how to lead a good life.

Having said that, over the week you will have learned about a lot of ideas and tools and started to develop some good Stoic habits– such as

- focussing on what you can control
- learning how to “mind the gap” between events and emotions
- thinking about how you can cultivate virtues
- caring more for yourself and others
- prioritising Stoic ideas
- daily planning and reviews

- reading Stoic quotations
- keeping a Stoic journal
- listening to Stoic meditations or doing these meditations on one’s own (such as the evening meditation)

We hope that some of you will find time to explore the additional podcasts, YouTube videos and articles recommended at the end of each day’s materials.

In previous years, participants have also benefited from learning from each other by exchanging tips and ideas, for example in the discussion section on *Teachable*.

On Sunday, it’s time to pull all these ideas and tools together. What can the aspiring Stoic do to build on what has been learnt in Stoic Week? What do you want to include in your Stoic Toolkit? What can you continue doing on a regular basis?

Conclusion

Some of the ideas you will come across in Stoic Week might not make sense to you at first, or might seem really weird! You’ll only get to see whether they can help you if you really give it a good go. We have the evidence that this actually works for many people, so we really hope you will try out the activities and reading. You’ll have the opportunity to measure your wellbeing at the start and when you have completed the week, so you have your own record of whether it helped you.

A (very) brief history of Stoicism

Stoicism is a school of ancient Greek philosophy (*philosophy* is what we call trying to understand ourselves, the world, and our relationships to the world and each other). It was founded in Athens by a man called Zeno in around 301 BC. The name comes from the painted porch (*stoa poikile*) where Zeno lectured to his students. Stoicism later became very important in ancient Rome, where it was really popular long after the

disappearance of the original Greek school. Less than one percent of the Stoics' original writings now survive, however. The most important ancient sources that we have today are:

1. The many *Letters, Essays and Dialogues* of the Roman statesman Seneca, who was advisor to the emperor Nero.
2. The *Handbook* and four surviving books of Epictetus' *Discourses* compiled from his lectures by a student called Arrian. Epictetus, a Greek ex-slave, is the only Stoic *teacher* whose thoughts survive in book form.
3. *The Meditations*, a private Stoic notebook or diary of the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, who was strongly influenced by Epictetus.

We recommend that you consider dipping into the books of the Roman Stoics – they are all pretty accessible and easily obtained. You can also find out more about the history and background to Stoicism in the suggested reading.

What is Wellbeing?

This year the theme is Stoicism and Wellbeing. But what is wellbeing?

What do *you* understand by the term wellbeing?

Here are some answers people come up with

- Feeling good
- Being satisfied with your life as a whole
- Having a meaningful life
- Doing good things
- Being a good person

You might think that wellbeing is not just one thing, but needs to be thought of including several dimensions – such as

- **Social** – Living in harmony with others and contributing to the common good
- **Emotional** – Coping well with difficulties and having an appropriate balance of positive and negative emotions
- **Intellectual** – Expanding our knowledge, achieving our potential to understand ourselves and the world
- **Physical** – Looking after our bodies well, attending to diet, exercise and health
- **Spiritual** – finding meaning and purpose, possibly but not necessarily in connection with a religious practice

Stoicism, Wellbeing and Living According to Nature

The Stoic's answer to the question "what is wellbeing?" overlaps with those mentioned above. Yet the Stoic would probably provide a different answer. The Stoic answer is that wellbeing consists in "living according to nature". What does this mean?

Living according to nature means a combination of living consistently with *human nature* and also with *nature as a whole* (the whole universe). If we are to live well, we need to live in accordance with our own nature and that of the universe.

This makes sense. If we were sheep, then our wellbeing might consist in munching grass all day. If we had God-like control over the whole universe, then our wellbeing might well consist in exercising that complete control. But we are neither sheep nor Gods, so our wellbeing does not lie in munching grass all day or trying to control everything.

It is in our nature to be rational (logical) and sociable. So, we are going to have more wellbeing when we start to act 'according to nature', meaning we are kinder to others, make good choices, have control of our own behaviour etc. You might notice some connection between these ideas and some days of Stoic Week – and indeed the Stoics thought that living according to nature meant living according to virtue.

As for the beliefs about the nature of the universe, the ancient Stoics believed many things some modern readers might find difficult to agree with – such as their ideas that

- The universe is a living, rational thing
- There is order, structure and wholeness
- God is present in everything (pantheism)
- The universe is providential (everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds).

Modern Stoics differ in their views about how far to go along with Stoic physics. If you want to pursue this further, see, for example, the article by Chris Gill and the book by Chakrapani and LeBon in the additional resources. So, you don't need to agree with all those things in order to call yourself a Stoic! Many would agree, however, that human beings can care for all forms of life, in a human way, and can aim for order, structure and wholeness in their own lives.

We believe that if you practise Stoicism you are likely to feel better and have less negative emotions and feel more purpose in your life. In other words, Stoicism is likely to improve your wellbeing as the term is used by people who aren't Stoics. However, if you agree with the Stoic definition of wellbeing – as living according to nature and living according to virtue - then practising Stoicism is likely to have an even bigger and direct impact on wellbeing.

For example, consider a successful bank robber or drug dealer. They might well experience wellbeing in the conventional sense in the short-term. They might *feel* good and so they might consider their wellbeing high. However, their feeling good is not stable – if you do not live wisely, you will eventually mess things up. But even before this happens, the bank robber would not have wellbeing in the Stoic sense, because of the way Stoics understand wellbeing. The bank robber is not living according to nature or virtue.

So whether or not you agree or disagree with the Stoic definition of wellbeing, we think that this course is likely to increase your wellbeing - though of course we cannot promise that will happen for everyone.

But what do you think wellbeing is? You might like to jot down your own definition of wellbeing in the box below. Do you want to include Stoic ideas about virtue and living in accordance with nature?

What is wellbeing for me?

If you take the questionnaires, you will have the opportunity to compare your wellbeing as measured by various standardised measures at the beginning and end of Stoic Week.

How the course works

Before you start the week:

Listen to the morning and evening audio meditations, so that you can start to get used to some of the ideas you will come across in the next week

Here are the meditations and exercises, in English, read by Donald Robertson.

- [Stoic Attitudes Meditation \(No Music\)](#)
- [Stoic Attitudes Meditation \(with Music\)](#)
- [Stoic Morning Meditation](#)
- [Stoic Evening Meditation](#)
- [Stoic Mindfulness Premeditation Exercise](#)
- [The View from Above](#)

These meditations and exercises are being translated into French by Jerome Ravenet, and are available as Mp4 files. Here are the files available at this point:

- [Méditation Stoïcienne – Exercice du matin](#)
- [Méditation Stoïcienne – Exercice du Soir](#)

You can also have a go at using [the Stoic Daily Self-Monitoring Record](#), download it [here](#). If you find it useful you can continue to use it, or, you can just fill in the activities for each day. See what works best for you and the amount of time you have available.

Additional Activities to Try During Stoic Week:

Daily Online Discussions

There are online discussion areas on Teachable for each day of the week in the online version of the course. If you're reading the e-book version of the *Handbook* you can either access these by going to the main course page and clicking on the correct day of the week, or you can share your thoughts on social media for discussion

Just post your thoughts about the day's theme or activities, or any questions about the content of the chapter for the day or the corresponding exercises. If you get stuck, you can ask other participants for help here as well.

Daily e-mails

If you have opted in to allow us to contact you by emails, we will also send you an email with each day's materials. People have told us this is a really helpful reminder of what they are meant to be doing each day!

Daily Videos

There are videos which have been recorded by members of the Modern Stoicism team for you to watch for each day of Stoic Week. Look out for these extra videos with the material each day on Teachable and in the daily emails.

Meditations

You will see there are some additional optional meditations to try during the week, which connect closely with the material for that day. You can choose whether to use these meditations or continue with the more general Stoic morning and evening meditations.

Your Daily Routine During Stoic Week

Each day in Stoic Week has its own central theme, and these themes build upon one another as the week progresses. This has the potential to make the whole week the beginning of a deeper journey into Stoicism. You will see that you have the whole of the written material as audio recordings.

Morning Planning & Meditation

When you wake up each morning take a few moments to compose yourself and then rehearse the day ahead, planning how you can make yourself a better person, while also accepting that some things lie beyond your control.

Each day we recommend a specific activity connected with the theme of the day. For example, on day 1, when we are looking at control, we ask you to think about how you can usefully apply this in the day ahead.

We ask you to write this down, because that way you will have a record of what you have done that you can look back on at the end of the day. Alternatively, you could also put a note in your phone, or even record a video or audio. Ideally, give yourself 10-15 minutes to do the morning planning.

During the Day

You should practise observing your own thoughts, actions, and feelings carefully throughout the day, paying particular attention to the theme of the day. For example, on day 1 you could pay particular attention as to whether things that you are worried about or angry about are under your control or not.

Lunchtime

Each day we are providing **a card** containing a quotation or other memorable Stoic idea for you to reflect on during your lunch break, or whenever you get a free moment to take a step back. Try to get the cards printed out and cut up, ready to use, before Stoic Week starts. Can you stick them up somewhere you will see them really easily? If you don't have a printer, could you have them on your computer or phone screen?

Evening Review

You will see that there is a little more to read or listen to in the evening for each theme.

Then you can take some time to think about how the day went. Epictetus and Seneca both mention the benefits of reflecting on your day. This was practised each evening by Stoics; Set aside 5-10 minutes going over the last 24 hours each evening.

1. Ask yourself **What did I do well?**

What situations did I handle well? This might be “controlling the controllables” or living with good character such as wisdom, courage, justice and self-control – or using other related qualities like good judgement, integrity and kindness.

2. Ask yourself **What could I do differently?**

What, on reflection, could I have handled better? What opportunities did I miss to be more Stoic? What will help me put that situation right (for example, apologising) or handle similar situations better in future? **It can be really helpful to start to keep a Stoic journal to record such observations.**

As Seneca puts it, by asking yourself these questions, you are adopting the role of a friend and wise advisor toward yourself, rather than a mean and critical person who is trying to punish you. Criticise your specific *actions* rather than yourself as a *person* in general and focus on ways in which you can improve.

When you wake up the next day, you'll find it natural to base your morning meditation on your reflections from the previous night. These meditations combine to form a ‘learning cycle’ as you plan how to live and act more wisely, put this into practice during the day, and then reflect on the outcome afterwards, leading to the same cycle the following day.

Modern research-based psychotherapy advises that you'll need to be careful to avoid reflection turning into morbid ‘rumination’ (going over and over things in your mind) or worry. Don't think about things for too long or go around in circles! Rather, try to keep a practical focus and arrive at clear decisions; if you are not able, then set your thoughts aside and return to them in the morning.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I know that living like a Stoic will benefit me?

A: You *can't* know for certain until you try. Indeed, one of the reasons we're conducting the experiment is to find out whether, and how, Stoic practices can help us to live better lives.

Having said that, in previous years, our participants have consistently reported benefits. For example, in 2020 our research findings showed that, on average, life satisfaction increased by 13%, flourishing by 11%, positive emotions by 11%, and negative emotions decreased by 19%. Data collected from the 2017 SMRT course showed that when we extended the exercises to four weeks, life satisfaction increased by 16%, positive emotions by 19%, flourishing by 15%, and negative emotions decreased by 20%. A follow-up study we conducted 3 months after the SMRT course of 2017 showed that improvement across these measures had been maintained to a considerable extent. Every year we have run Stoic Week participants have (on average) reported increases in wellbeing, however wellbeing is measured.

Learning about Stoicism might help you in different ways. The benefit for you could be educational, if it helps you to understand what Stoicism means. It may help you to become more emotionally resilient and improve your wellbeing. It may be moral, and you may find that the week helps you work on becoming the best version of yourself ethically. Some people may, of course, find that Stoicism just isn't for them, which

might in itself be a valuable discovery. However, from the questionnaire data we've collected and previous participants' testimonies we can see that most people who participated in Stoic Week and related events found their experiences very enjoyable and beneficial.

Q: What's the basic idea?

A: You need to do the following:

Follow the daily schedule as described above and on each day of the handbook.

We would also appreciate it if you would complete the online questionnaires. This will help us with our research and help you to assess your degree of Stoicism and how much the course has helped you.

You should read or listen to each chapter in advance of the next day. For example, you might want to read Monday's chapter on Sunday night, or perhaps on Monday morning. Some people also like to read the whole workbook through in advance as well.

Q: What if I'm worried I won't have time to do everything?

A: It will probably be helpful for you to think of this as a definite, short-term commitment – similar perhaps to the effort you would put into preparing for an exam or training for a sporting event. Typically, participants take just over 10 minutes in the morning and evening, and whatever other time they can spare throughout the day. Some people have told us they can only spare five or ten minutes, which is absolutely fine. Data from previous participants in Stoic Week showed the average amount of time they actually spent on the course was precisely 36 minutes per day.

If it will help you to use the audio version, you could listen to it whilst on a train to work or cleaning your teeth, washing up or even cooking dinner if you are pushed for time but would still like to take part!

Q: How can I make use of modern technology for Stoic Week?

Here are some ideas:

- **Video.** Record a video diary of your experiences of living like a Stoic and publish it on [YouTube](#) or another video-sharing site
- **Blogging.** Blog about your experiences on your own site, or send them to our WordPress blog: [Stoicism Today](#)
- **Twitter.** Tweet about your experiences, or post Stoic ideas and quotes on Twitter as you go along, using [#Stoicweek](#)
- **Facebook.** Discuss ideas or raise questions on one of the many groups on Facebook associated with Stoicism, such as the [Facebook Stoicism group](#) which is run by Donald Robertson to share your ideas and experiences. Mark your comments [#StoicWeek](#)
- **Mobile.** Use your phone to set reminders to start your Stoic practices
- **Other Social Media.** Although we don't currently use other social networks like Instagram and Snapchat and LinkedIn, there's nothing to stop you from doing so as part of Stoic Week.

There are also Stoic groups on [Reddit](#) which you may find useful

Which of these appeal to you? How many other ways can you use technology to help you live like a Stoic? If you are doing the experiment with other people, it might help to discuss your experiences regularly. Perhaps you could have a ten-minute Stoic coffee break each day where you touch base with others to discuss how you are doing.

Q: Can I take part offline or by using my mobile device?

A: Absolutely. Most people with internet access work through the handbook on our main website. Stoic Week is currently hosted on a platform called *Teachable*. You can download the [Teachable app for iOS](#) and use this to access our course on iPhones or iPad. (Android support will be coming eventually.) **NB:** Some features for the app are still pending, such as the ability to access Comments for discussion areas.

We also provide e-book versions of the Stoic Week handbook, which can be used *offline* on mobile phones, tablets, and e-readers. This can be very useful if you're travelling and won't always have internet access. There are three e-book file formats provided. We recommend the PDF version for printing and reading on almost any device. We will also aim to provide, on a best endeavours basis (there may be some glitches in the formatting), MOBI for Amazon Kindle devices and EPUB for use on all other e-readers and Android and Apple iOS devices. We also recommend that at the start of Stoic Week you begin by downloading all the available offline formats, just in case you need them. We are also planning to email reminders of the material for the day and some bonus materials each day during Stoic Week – so check your email each day. The audio versions should play from any device.

Q: What if I have problems?

A: We're here to provide help and support. Just email the course administrator via stoicweek2023@gmail.com

Many thousands of people have successfully used all these resources, readings, and exercises since Stoic Week began in 2012. Nevertheless, individuals do sometimes experience technical problems or have other issues with which they may need some assistance. Your first lesson in Stoicism may be that, rather than give up when you run into an obstacle, there's usually a way forward if you're willing to persevere and seek help from the right people.

Q: How will I know whether it has helped or not?

A: At the beginning and end of the week you will fill in [questionnaires](#), which will help you to see objective measures of change and allow you to reflect on the experience. Your doing so will also help us to evaluate the benefits and limitations of Stoic practices. In Stoic terms, you could even say that participation in the experiment can be seen as contributing toward living a good life.

Q: What if I don't understand or disagree with some of the ideas I read about?

A: Stoicism attempts to answer some big questions, so we are not expecting everyone to agree with everything! You don't have to, to benefit from the experience. This article, written by Massimo Pigliucci, may help to answer some of the more common objections to Stoicism.

<https://medium.com/socrates-cafe/24-common-criticisms-of-stoicism-and-some-answers-22898c3bb25a>

You can also use the discussion forum to ask about anything you like connected to the course.

Q: Is Stoic Week available in languages other than English?

A: We are happy to be able to provide translations of the Handbook in pdf format in Spanish, French and German. If you would like to offer your services to translate the handbook into other languages in future years, please contact us. The Teachable version of Stoic Week is only available in English .

The next few pages contain the seven daily lessons for Stoic Week. You should read each day in advance so that you're ready to begin in the morning.

Complete the Questionnaires

Please complete the following online questionnaires before reading the content for the rest of Stoic Week. This isn't absolutely mandatory, but your data is extremely valuable to our project and it helps us improve Stoic Week for other participants in the future so please just take a few minutes to submit the forms via the link below. For most people this takes about 15-20 minutes. You might like to think of this time as your contribution to Modern Stoicism and also as something that will help to see how you've progressed when you do the questionnaires again at the end of Stoic Week.

[Start of Stoic Week Online Questionnaire https://modernstoicism.checkboxonline.com/stoic-week-2023-start](https://modernstoicism.checkboxonline.com/stoic-week-2023-start)

Additional Resources:

The books and articles mentioned in this introductory session are as follows :-

Useful Article by Massimo Pigliucci answering some of the more common criticisms of Stoicism :-
<https://medium.com/socrates-cafe/24-common-criticisms-of-stoicism-and-some-answers-22898c3bb25a>

Some modern Stoics give their answer to the question "how much Stoicism depends on the ancient Stoic worldview?" :-

Do Stoic Ethics Depend On The Stoic Worldview? by Chris Gill at <https://modernstoicism.com/dostoicethics-depend-on-the-stoic-worldview-by-chris-gill/>

Stoicism: Cobwebs And Gems by Chuck Chakrapani and Tim LeBon – available for at <https://thestoicgym.com/books/stoicism-cobwebs-and-gems-free> We will provide further additional resources at the end of Stoic Week.

Monday: Control

Morning



Yesterday I (Tim) went for a walk to get close to nature and also to reflect on what I might write in this section! It was a pleasant walk. However, when I came back to my car, I was surprised to find shattered plastic next to my car and a young lady writing a note to put on the windscreen! She had bumped her car into the back of my parked car. Time for some Stoicism and to apply a very useful idea about what we **can** and what we **cannot** control.

So, I could **not** control the fact that my car had been damaged.

However, I **could** control **my response** to the situation.

I could respond badly -for example by dwelling on why I had this bad luck, or by showing my annoyance at this poor girl. Or I could choose to respond well, by focusing on the aspects of the situation under my control – such as my being polite and getting the car repaired.

I'm happy to report that on this occasion, I rose to the Stoic challenge. I thanked her for her honesty and didn't spend too long dwelling on what had happened.

The Stoics think that such mini-dramas are repeated many times throughout our day, and that understanding the distinction between what we can and cannot control can be *really* helpful. They call this distinction the "dichotomy of control" – a dichotomy being a contrast between two things that are entirely different. For the Stoics, there is a complete contrast between the things that we can, and the things that we cannot control. Becoming aware of this contrast, or "dichotomy", is our first step towards increasing wellbeing.

What would you say, in general, is under your control? What would you say is *not* under your control?

Under my control	Not under my control

Epictetus, the Stoic most famous for writing about control, puts *only* your opinions, attitudes and actions in the “under my control” column. **Everything else** goes in the other column as not under my control— including your health, reputation, what other people do, what other people think about you and what has happened in the past. Do you agree with Epictetus?

My experience of working with people as a coach and therapist suggests that trying to control *too much* can cause real problems – especially trying to control *other people* and trying to control *the past*.

Let’s look at these two pitfalls more closely, first, trying to control other people. For sure, we can sometimes influence other people – but the Stoics think we do this best when we do it *indirectly* by developing good qualities like being patient, being assertive and being a good role model. Too often people try to take a short-cut for example by making demands or getting angry. Seneca wrote a whole book, **On Anger**, giving all the reasons why getting angry is *not* a such a good idea- it’s well worth a read.

We can also sometimes learn from the past – as in the daily review you are being asked to do each day during Stoic Week. Whilst learning from our experience is a good thing, it becomes unhelpful if it turns into harsh self-criticism and thoughts like “*If only I had done such an such*” and “*Why did this happen to me?*”. Psychologists call this process “*ruminatio*n” and it is strongly linked with depression.

How about you? Do you find that it sometimes backfires for *you* if you try to control other people in the wrong way or go over the past too much in an unhelpful manner?

Morning quote

Some things are in our control and others not. Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions. Epictetus, Handbook 1

Plan your day

Think about things that could happen today and how you might respond to them using the dichotomy of control. Then jot down how you might respond in the table below. The first two rows give a couple of examples.

Situation	Aspects I cannot control	Aspects I can control	What I should do
Train is late	The train being late.	Whether I respond calmly. Reducing impact of being late.	If I am late, I can remind myself that I cannot make the train go any faster so there is no point fretting about it. I can however let anyone expecting me know that I am running late. In addition, doing this premeditation of adversity can motivate me in a positive way to leave some contingency time and leave the house earlier in future.

I'm in a meeting and people don't agree with me	Other people's opinions and actions	My response	Accept that I can't fully control other people Think about how I can be persuasive in future Consider the possibility that they might be right!
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You might have noticed that the way we should respond is not always clear-cut. For example, if people disagree with me, should I accept that I cannot change them or should I try to be more persuasive or should I consider the possibility that they might be right? Or maybe all three? We will be looking at the Serenity Prayer over lunch, which suggests that *wisdom* is the quality we need here. Later in the course, we will be looking at wisdom and other qualities that make up a good character (that is, virtues) more closely.

Now it's your turn to think about or write down a couple of examples of things that may happen to you where you could use the dichotomy of control today in the same way as in the examples above.

Situation	Aspects I cannot control	Aspects I can control	What I should do

Whether or not these things actually happen doesn't matter too much. The point is to prepare yourself for thinking about things in terms of what you can and what you cannot control. Look out for opportunities to put what you have learnt about control into practice today. In the evening, you will get a chance to review your progress.

Lunchtime Card

“

LUNCHTIME CARD: MONDAY

Grant me the serenity
to accept the things I
cannot change, courage
to change the things I
can, and the wisdom to
know the difference

Reinhold Niebuhr

”

This is called the ‘Serenity Prayer’ and is often used to support people with alcoholism and other addictions. It is a powerful quote for all of us. Try and apply this as often as you can today.

Evening

Link to Wellbeing

We should model ourselves on the **Stoic Archer**. An archer cannot control whether she hits the target – there may be an unpredictable gust of wind, or the target may move. There is no point worrying about the outcome, it is outside our control. But that does not mean we take no action or give up. No, the Stoic archer focuses on what she can control- her training schedule and how she prepares mentally whilst taking aim.

Having the Stoic archer as your role model can be really helpful. Like the Stoic archer, you can try to change things as well as you can, and then be kind to yourself if your best efforts do not succeed.

Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on how you think today's lesson could help you and those around you in terms of wellbeing.

Jot down your thoughts in the box below.

Day 1: Control - how today's lesson could help

Evening review

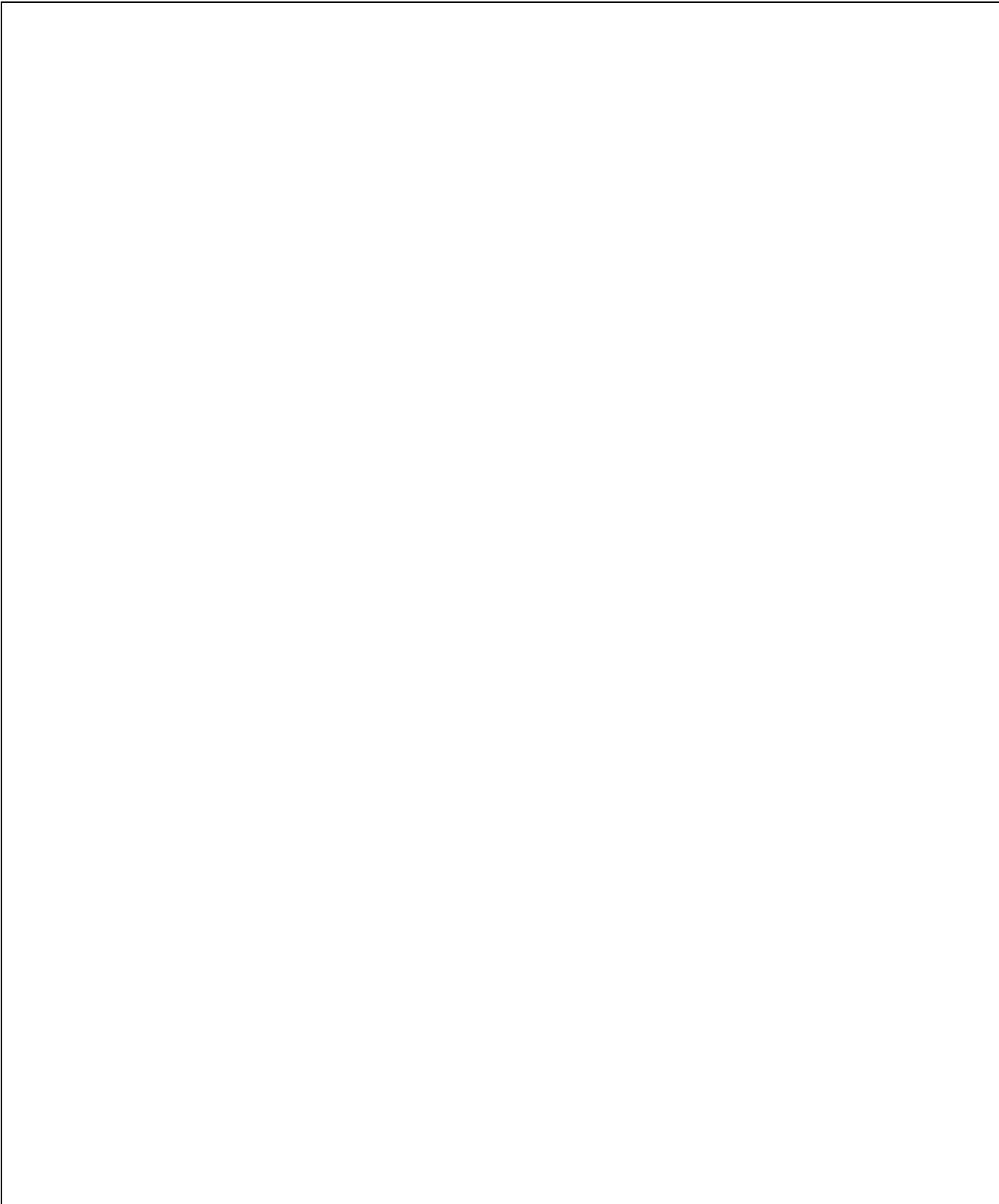
How did you get on with the plan you developed earlier today? Did any of the situations you imagined actually happen? What other situations occurred where the dichotomy of control might have been useful?

Follow the practice of Seneca, Epictetus and other ancient Stoics and ask yourself these 2 questions.

<p>1. What did I do well?</p> <p>What situations did I handle well?</p> <p>Did I manage to let go of something <i>outside my control</i>?</p> <p>Did I manage to act well or make a helpful response to an aspect of a situation <i>within my control</i>?</p> <p>Did I remember to use the Serenity Prayer?</p>	
<p>2. What could I do differently?</p> <p>What, on reflection, could I have handled better?</p> <p>What can I learn from these situations?</p> <p>Are there any future situations like these where I can do something else in future?</p> <p><i>Remember to speak to yourself like a good friend would, trying to make progress and never being too harsh on yourself. Reflecting constructively on our mistakes is an important part of making progress.</i></p>	

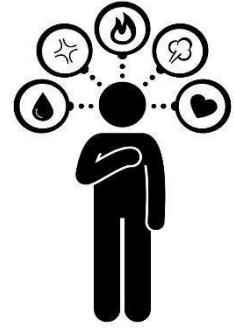
Stoic Journal

Do you have any other thoughts or reflections for this day? Add them in your journal or in the box below:



Additional Resources - optional extra reading for today:

Massimo Pigliucci explains everything you need to know about the dichotomy of control in this article <https://howtobeastoc.wordpress.com/2017/07/24/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-dichotomyofcontrol/>



This article provides a nice explanation about how Epictetus uses the dichotomy of control <https://www.ionbrooks.com/epictetus-dichotomy-of-control/>

John Sellars expands on the “Stoic Archer” in this article - <https://modernstoicism.com/stoicism-andtheheart-of-archery/>

This article explains an idea related to today’s topic, called “the Reserve Clause”, clearly <https://steemit.com/philosophy/@brado/stoic-philosophy-practice-the-reserve-clause-exercise>

For a longer treatment of today’s ideas, view this excellent Greg Sadler webinar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTz2RNOQTNI>

Chuck Chakrapani’s engaging talk from Stoicon 2017 includes a discussion the dichotomy of control in his talk entitled “Stoic Minimalism” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWiAeo7M_W8

Seneca’s *On Anger* can be found in the various editions. One of the best is in a collection entitled *Anger, Mercy, Revenge* by Seneca , translated by [Robert A. Kaster](#) and [Martha C. Nussbaum](#)

Tuesday: Emotions

Morning

This week I (Eve) have been going through all the fun of buying a house. Despite trying to ***Stoic it up***, I still had a time when I was *taken over* by anxiety, which I experience as a tight feeling in my chest and thoughts that things are going to go wrong, and that I won’t be able to deal with it. Do any emotions tend to ***take you over***?

COMMON EMOTIONS	HOW I EXPERIENCE THEM
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The Stoics tell us emotions follow judgements (thoughts about things) which are either *true* or *false*. When we say “bad” emotions, we’re not trying to be like a robot. The goal is to **think** about or **judge** things correctly, having better emotions then follows as a ‘bonus’. This is a truly **LIFE CHANGING** idea! When I’m mentoring clients, they have often experienced a lifetime of anxiety or depression. Finding a way to be able to change that can be the key to true wellbeing.

If a difficult emotion *always* follows an untrue thought, it makes sense to work on it. Bad emotions are based on the false belief that wellbeing depends on things like fame and money. They tend to be really intense and unstable.

Bad emotions:

Desire: for example: getting really angry or caring so much about your reputation that you’re really stressed, or wanting pleasures without caring about how they fit in with a well-lived life

Fear: for example: being upset by what someone said or constantly thinking something bad might happen.

Pleasure (in the wrong things): for example: being pleased at someone falling over or at getting money no matter how unscrupulously we got it. Thinking possessions or money are the whole point of life.

Pain: for example: Getting upset about things that don’t stop us leading a well-lived life, like jealousy that someone has more friends or going back over a **sad** memory so it upsets you all over again!

Positive emotions are based on correct judgments. They come from two things: firstly, developing a good character and secondly, making judgments in line with that character. They're calmer, more stable and consistent.

Wishing: This means wishing for the right things, but we understand that it may not happen, so we don't set our heart on them. For example, feeling good for other people, being kind to others and appreciating them.

Caution: This means appropriate concern about not doing the wrong thing, for example, respecting yourself so you don't let someone bully you, having dignity, preparing well for things and making sure that your actions match your best standards.

Joy: This is 'zest' or enjoyment in a well-lived life, that is a life in line with virtue (good character). For example, enjoying how you or other people are handling life. Loving being in nature and connecting with others.

The more you *notice* these good emotions and why they're happening, the more you will feel them!

Morning Quote

*"It isn't ...things ... that disturb people, but the judgements that they form about them...whenever we are ... disturbed or distressed, we should never blame anyone else but only ourselves, that is, our judgements. It is an act of a poorly educated person to blame others when things are going badly for her; one who has taken the first step towards being properly educated blames herself, **while one who is fully educated blames neither anyone else nor herself**".*

Epictetus, Handbook, 5

Plan your day

Think of two examples of emotions and judgements that might come up for you today, and jot your plans down:

BAD EMOTION	INCORRECT JUDGEMENT IT'S BASED ON	HOW I COULD THINK DIFFERENTLY
<p>Example: Anxiety</p>	<p>I am likely to be anxious about experiencing technical problems with a very large Zoom meeting I am hosting. This is based on me thinking that things 'going wrong' are an actually BAD thing; it REALLY matters!!</p>	<p>It is outside of my control when IT things go wrong, it doesn't matter if people think it is my fault or not. What really matters is having a good character. Therefore, I will prepare well, and remember to deal with any challenges that do come, with selfcontrol and wisdom.</p>



LUNCHTIME CARD: TUESDAY

Practise, then, from the very beginning to say to every disagreeable impression, 'You're an impression and not at all what you appear to be.'... and if it relates to anything that isn't within our power, be ready to reply, 'That's nothing to me'

Epictetus Handbook 1.5



Evening Link to Wellbeing

Improving our wellbeing by changing our emotional pattern from bad to good emotions is not something that happens overnight. It depends on making progress in understanding what **living in agreement with nature** really means, developing our own self-awareness, our self-compassion and our care for others. It comes from us working on finding true **MEANING**. However, there are things we can do to speed up this process; by **planning** how we are going to respond, and then seeing if it worked out.

Evening Quote

“Remember that what insults you isn’t the person who abuses you or hits you, but your judgement that such people are insulting you. So, whenever someone irritates you, recognise that it is your opinion that has irritated you. Try above all, then, not to allow yourself to be carried away by the impression...You’ll find it easier to gain control of yourself.”

Epictetus, Handbook, 20

It’s quite tricky to get your head around the idea that the thing that “hurts” us is the thoughts in our heads, rather than the person who has said something horrible to us. For example, if a small child said something insulting to us, we would be likely to say to ourselves, *“They don’t know any better.”* So, can we try saying that to ourselves with adults too? **It isn’t about being passive** and letting people bully us, we can and should still take action where needed, it’s about how we can FEEL better every day. It’s a bit like when Eleanor Roosevelt said *‘No one can make you feel inferior without your consent’*.

Reflection on how the day went

Did you manage to pay attention to your emotions and try to make some changes throughout the day? Did any of the quotations or exercises help? Spend a few moments asking yourself these two key questions – what did I do well, and what could I do differently?

<p>1. Ask yourself What did I do well?</p> <p>What situations did I handle well?</p> <p>This might be “controlling the controllables” or noticing the judgments on which your emotions are based.</p> <p>Did you feel more “good emotions” and less “bad emotions” as a result?</p>	
<p>2. Ask yourself What could I do differently?</p> <p>What, on reflection, could I have handled better?</p> <p>Where I felt “bad” emotions, how I could I handle them better next time?</p> <p>Are there any patterns to when I feel these emotions (for example, does a particular emotion happen a lot, or something trigger me a lot)?</p> <p>How can Monday’s lesson about control help me with emotions?</p>	

Stoic Journal

Are there any other thoughts or reflections for this day? Add them below:

Useful resources

YouTube Video:

There is a brilliant talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_jC8e2UgcU&t=1777s by John Sellars on Stoicism and Emotions, where he explains everything in a really clear and interesting way.

Book:

Although this isn't 'light reading', Margaret Graver's 'Stoicism and Emotion' (2008) is well worth a read if you are studying Stoicism in more detail, as it is a comprehensive academic guide to this topic. You can also find YouTube videos where people discuss her main ideas. The table of bad and good emotions on pp. 56 and 58 is very helpful and the discussion really clear.

Podcast:

This section of an interview with Greg Sadler: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1eCwtRXySM> is a good introduction to Simon Drew's very interesting Stoicism based podcast

Blog

A really useful article from Modern Stoicism: <https://modernstoicism.com/category/stoicismandemotions/> about Stoicism and emotions, well worth the read

Wednesday: Character and Virtues

Becoming the best version of yourself

Morning

How do you get to be really good at something? To become an expert at, say, playing the piano, you have to possess specific knowledge – such as knowledge of the scales – and certain skills – keyboard and listening skills, for instance.

How do you become really good at being a human being, *an expert at living well*. The Stoic answer is -in exactly the same way as in anything else - by learning the right knowledge and skills.

The name given for the knowledge and skills to live well is *virtue*. The Greek word for virtue is *arete* – literally excellence. So, learning about the virtues is all about developing a good character and learning how to be an excellent human being.



The Stoics recommended four main virtues

- Wisdom -
Courage
- Self-Control
- & -
Justice

These 4 main – or cardinal - virtues include a whole bunch of related qualities. For example, wisdom includes good judgement; courage includes willingness to take risks for a good cause; self-control includes respect for other people and justice includes kindness and generosity.

You can see a list of 24 such qualities developed recently by psychologists at <https://www.viacharacter.org/> You might like to visit that site to learn more about these qualities and to do a free self-assessment.

The Stoics believed that if you have these qualities your well-being will be increased –at the same time you will lead a good life, a life that is good for you as well as for other people Developing the virtues is an allround win-win.

Wisdom helps you to be rational and to understand what matters most and have good judgement in specific situations.

Courage and Self-Control enable you to act well in situations where fear and desire might be present.

Justice allows you to live well with other people.

You might put it this way :-

“Without the virtues you will not be happy. If you don’t have virtue you will ‘foul up’ and make a mess of your life “.

For example, can you have lasting good friendships without being kind or fair (justice)? Can you reach your goals reliably without courage? Can you lead a healthy life without self-control? And how can you do anything well without good judgement?

Morning quote

Whatever happens to you, remember to look inside yourself and see what capacity you have to enable you to deal with it. If you catch sight of a beautiful boy or girl, you’ll find that you have self-control to deal with that; if hard work lies in store for you, you’ll find endurance, if you are insulted you’ll find patience. If you get in the habit of responding this way, you won’t get swept away by your impressions of things Epictetus, Handbook 10

Whatever happens to you, you have something in your good character that means you can handle it...

For example, if you are thinking of asking someone out on a date, you can find *courage*.

Quiz: What virtue might you need in these scenarios?

- a) Your internet is *very* slow
- b) Your child has not tidied up their room
- c) Your friend is going through a tough time

In all of these you need wisdom to decide which virtue to use and judgement about how to use it, so we can't give a definite answer without knowing more – but a reasonable answer would be a) self-control b) courage

- c) kindness (part of justice)

Plan your day

Today's Stoic challenge is to try to apply the virtues as best you can throughout the day.

Run through your day, thinking of various challenges you might face, and which virtue to call on. For example

Situation	What virtue(s) I might need (wisdom, courage, self-control or justice)	What I could do
Example I feel like snacking between meals	Self-Control	Remind myself that this is a situation where self-control is needed. Resist the temptation.

At the end of the day, we'll be asking you to review how you got on. Again, it doesn't really matter whether or not the situations you imagined actually happened or not. By thinking of the challenges you might face in terms of the virtues you can use, you are preparing yourself to act well ***whatever happens.***

Lunchtime Card

LUNCHTIME CARD: WEDNESDAY

“

THE VIRTUES

Wisdom:

Judgement & Curiosity

Courage:

Bravery & Persistence

Self-Control:

Self-discipline & Moderation

Justice:

Fairness & Kindness

”

See every situation as an opportunity to put a virtue into action!

Evening

Link with Wellbeing

Research shows that there is a strong link between virtues and wellbeing. Each of the virtues is positively associated with increased life satisfaction, better mood and flourishing.

For example

- **Justice** helps us to thrive **socially**
- **Self-control** lets us take care of ourselves **physically**

- Courage helps us **emotionally**, for example when we are anxious
- Wisdom can help us in many ways especially in the **spiritual** sense of understanding what matters in life and to develop **intellectually**

Evening Quote

“Consider, though, what Socrates says to Alcibiades, that most beautiful of men in the bloom of his youth: ‘Strive, then, to make yourself beautiful.’ What does he mean by that? Curl your locks and pluck the hair from your legs? Heaven forbid! But rather, beautify your moral choice, and eradicate your bad judgements”

Epictetus. Discourses 3.1

Do you agree with Epictetus (and Socrates) that *inner beauty* is more important than *external* beauty? You shouldn't identify yourself with what you look like or what you own, but with your inner qualities, your character.

Evening review

Reflection on how the day went

Did you manage to pay attention to the virtues throughout the day?

<p>1. Ask yourself What did I do well?</p> <p>What situations did I handle well?</p> <p>This might be “controlling the controllables” (Monday’s lesson) or managing emotions (Tuesday)</p> <p>Did you notice yourself using virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice and self-control?</p> <p>Or related qualities like like good judgement, integrity, patience and kindness</p>	
<p>2. Ask yourself What could I do differently?</p> <p>What, on reflection, could I have handled better?</p> <p>What opportunities did I miss to be more Stoic?</p> <p>What will help me put that situation right if I can (for example, apologising)</p> <p>What virtues do I need to work on more?</p> <p>What will help me to remember to put the ideas from today into practice more consistently in future?</p> <p><i>Always remembering to talk to yourself as you would to a good friend, with self-compassion</i></p>	

Stoic Journal

Are there any other thoughts or reflections for this day? Add them below:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their thoughts or reflections for the day.

Additional Resources

Take the VIA test

Contemporary psychologists have developed questionnaires to help you discover how virtuous you are (or at least how virtuous you think you are).

The VIA list 24 character strengths grouped together in 6 virtues. Take the virtue today at <https://www.viacharacter.org/> (it's free)

Many aspiring Stoics ask at this stage for tips about how to develop the specific virtues. This article by Chris Gill and Tim LeBon is a good way into this topic <https://modernstoicism.com/how-to-develop-virtue-in-stoic-way-by-chris-gill-and-tim-lebon/>

Greg Sadler has recorded a series of YouTube videos on Cicero that serve as a good introduction, for example at [Stoic Week 2015 – Day 3: Cicero's On Duties \(De Officiis\)](#)

On research that shows that virtues increase wellbeing, see Kesebir and Diener (2014) A Virtuous Cycle: The Relationship Between Happiness and Virtue https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2309566

Ryan Holiday gives a simple explanation of the 4 main Stoic virtues in this video [What Are the Four Virtues of Stoicism? | Ryan Holiday | Daily Stoic - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaG7f3uivPU) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaG7f3uivPU>

In this video, Simon Drew gives an explanation of key Stoic ideas including the virtues [\(70\) The Core Ideas of Stoicism | The Practical Stoic Podcast with Simon J. E. Drew - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9pIh3cFo0w) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9pIh3cFo0w>

Thursday Caring for ourselves and others



Morning

You might have heard the phrase ‘**put your own oxygen mask on first**’ when people are talking about self-care and caring for others? It’s a reminder that we need to remember to take good care of our own needs, *AND* to then extend that care to other people.

I (Eve) always have to remind myself about this, it’s so easy to think we are doing the right thing by neglecting our own needs and running around doing things to care for other people. I often find with my clients that they’re putting themselves **last on the list** in terms of care, and as a result they’re burned out and unable to show up for either themselves or the people they love.

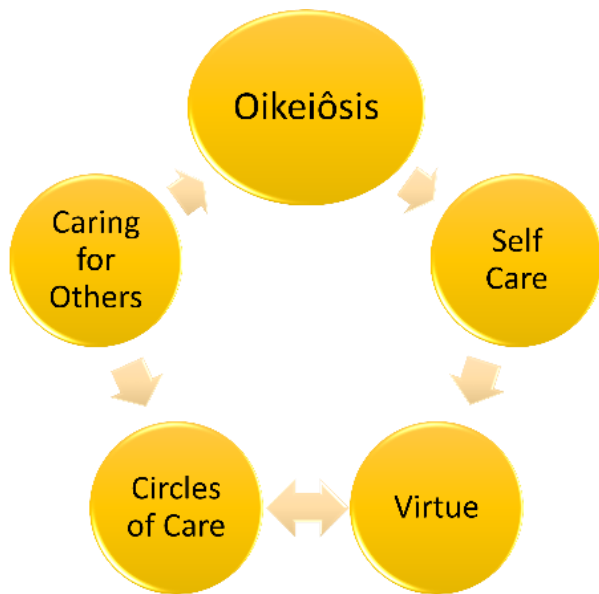
Think about how you care for yourself and for others. For example, caring for physical needs, emotional needs or spiritual / ethical needs:

How I care for myself	How I care for others

The Stoics believed all humans have a natural drive to move towards wellbeing and having good character. They thought this journey is about living out our **true nature**. This process is about developing what we feel **belongs** to us; what we care about **as if it was ours**. (in Greek, the word for this is **oikeiōsis**).

There are two parts; learning to care for and understand ourselves, and caring for others.

Our journey of caring for ourselves begins from us learning to understand what can help us live well in the way we use things like health, money or possessions, whilst making wise, kind, fair, self-controlled, brave choices.

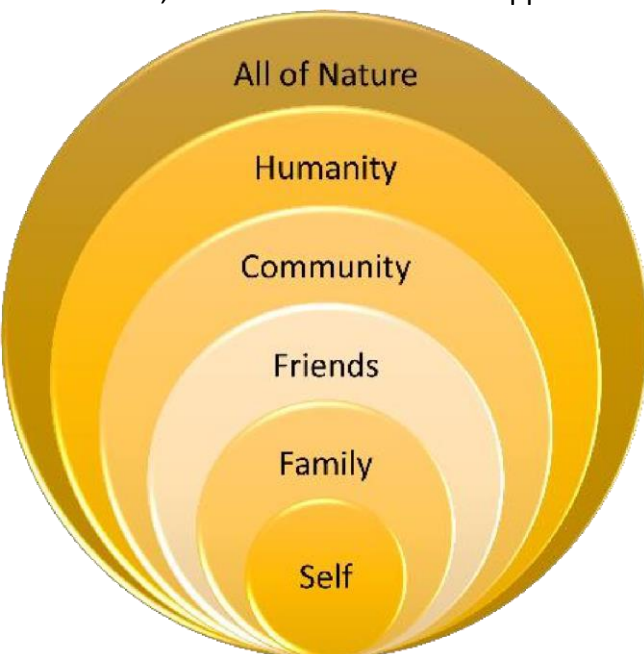


To start with this is **just a matter of selfpreservation and survival**, but gradually we realise what *really* matters is having good character **and understanding**.

The Stoics thought we have a natural tendency to care for offspring, but we can *extend* this to care for friends, neighbours and eventually all humans, as if they are our family.

These two strands of care are dependent on each other:

Part of having a good character is to care for others **AND** caring for ourselves involves building and nurturing relationships with others and with nature. When we care for others, we need to do it with good character. For example, you can't do it in an unwise way or with no self- control. For example, many people think that by sacrificing their own wellbeing 'for the cause', they can help other people, but this doesn't work, and tends to lead to unhappiness on all sides. Caring needs to be **sustainable and wise!**



Hierocles suggested we should think of ourselves inside a series of circles, and we should try to '**draw the circles toward the centre**', making the way we use language a part of this; e.g. calling elderly women in your community 'grandmother', calling your friend your brother or sister. Modern Stoics have added the outer circle 'All of Nature', as only focusing on the interests of humans, and trying to separate that from the interests of all of nature, doesn't make sense.

There's a meditation to listen to today, which will take you through this process. The Stoics didn't think *any* of this was *easy*, even though it's natural, we need to work on it!

Morning

Quote

"it makes no difference whether a person lives here or there, provided that, wherever she lives, she lives as a citizen of the world"

Marcus Aurelius Meditations 10:15

This idea reminds us how we act as consumers **matters**; what we eat, how we go on holiday etc. The *whole earth* is our community, and we need to show it the care that we would for our own home.

Plan your day

Let's start to expand our care for others with some '*random acts of kindness*', which research shows is really good for you, as well as being good for people around you.

Remember it's about good character, we've all witnessed 'virtue signalling' where people publicly do 'good' to boost their ego. Could you do the act without anyone knowing it was you?

Let's look at examples...

What will I plan to do?	How will I do it?
Pay for a coffee for a stranger	You can pay for the next person's drink in a café as a nice surprise.
Send messages to friends I have not been in touch with recently	I will remind them that I care for them, and remind myself that they are like family to me.

Jot some ideas down: (there's loads of inspiration online)

What will I plan to do	How will I do it?



LUNCHTIME CARD: THURSDAY

**There is no such
thing as good or
bad fortune for the
individual;
we live in common**

Seneca Letters: 48



Evening

Link to Wellbeing

Aside from psychological and social wellbeing, we know loneliness and of course poor self-care affects **physical** wellbeing, making us less likely to live a long and healthy life. So, caring for ourselves and others even helps us to care for our bodies. It's a win win!

Getting all this right really helps us to find MEANING in life too. Caring for others is very important to most people in terms of what life is all about for them, and how they would like to be remembered. It's the kind of thing you'd like to think people would say at your funeral, that you are involved with your community and treated others with kindness and compassion.

Evening Quote

"...nature creates in parents affection for their children; and parental affection is the source from which we trace the shared community of the human race ... As it is obvious that it is natural to us to shrink from pain, so it is clear that we derive from nature itself the motive to love those to whom we have given birth. From this motive is developed the mutual concern which unites human beings as such. The fact of their common humanity means that one person should feel another to be his relative. " Cicero, On Ends, 3.62-3.

If you are going to study Stoicism further, I recommend having a go at **Cicero' writings**. Greg Sadler did an excellent series about his work on YouTube. Here, Cicero is reminding us that it is in our nature to care for our offspring, and that our care for others develops from this until we feel a connection to all of humanity.

Reflection on how the day went

Think about how far you have succeeded in extending the boundaries of your care:

<p>1. Ask yourself What did I do well?</p> <p>What situations did I handle well?</p> <p>This might be “controlling the controllables” (Monday’s lesson) or managing emotions (Tuesday) or using the virtues (Wednesday)/</p> <p>From today’s lesson, how did manage to “put on your oxygen mask first” and look after yourself well?</p> <p>How did your random acts of kindness go?</p> <p>How else did you care for others today? (don’t forget about small things like encouraging people)</p>	
<p>2. Ask yourself What could I do differently?</p> <p>What, on reflection, could I have handled better?</p> <p>What opportunities did I miss to be more Stoic?</p> <p>What will help me to remember to put the ideas from today into practice more consistently in future?</p> <p><i>Always remembering to talk to yourself as you would to a good friend, with self-compassion</i></p>	

Stoic Journal

Are there any other thoughts or reflections for this day? Add them below:

Additional Resources

YouTube Video:

There is a brilliant talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaOl29jT_IU&t=20s by Greg Sadler on Stoicism and Oikeiosis, where he explains what this term means for Stoics. It is part of a very useful series of short lectures on Stoicism that he has uploaded to YouTube.

Book:

Kai Whiting and Leonidas Konstantakos have written a book about how Stoicism can show us how to make the world better called 'Being Better: Stoicism for a World Worth Living In' (2021). It's full of really interesting and inspiring real-life stories.

Website

Alongside Brittany Polat and Paul Wilson, I run '[Stoicare.com](https://www.stoicare.com)', a website all about Stoicism and caring, which includes links and resources for people in the caring professions alongside ideas for volunteering both online and in the real world.

Podcast

Talking of Brittany, here is her podcast with Modern Stoicism about *oikeiosis*, <https://modernstoicism.com/podcast-6-brittany-polat-oikeiosis-and-human-nature/> well worth a listen.

Friday – Seeing the Bigger Picture



Morning

For me, (Eve) when I look out to sea, I feel humbled as I know the waves will continue long after I'm gone, as they did before I existed. This can have a 'magical' effect on things I'm worried about; a shift of perspective. Connecting with the world like this shows us the immediate world around us, as we experience it, is not '***all there is***'. We are living out our tiny and short lives, and beyond that is the ***whole*** of time and ***all*** of nature. This can help us understand our place as ***part of the whole***. The beauty and intelligence of nature tells us something important about our ***own true nature***.

Another way of expanding our perspective is to imagine things from other people's point of view, and to remember our connection with others. Let's think about the circles of care, as we take a '***view from above***', and think about all the other humans who are struggling and growing and living lives just like our own, all over the world.

We can also find in the middle of the most challenging circumstances that humour can help us to rise above events. I always try to say to myself '***grasp your sense of humour firmly***' when leaving the house (this is SUPER important for a long cane user, the other day a dog thought it found *a nice stick with a ball on the end...*).

What helps you to gain a different perspective?

What changes my perspective?	How does it help?

Stoicism brings us this great gift of **transcendence**; being able to step outside the concerns of our lives and see the ‘bigger picture’. This gives us a chance to see things **as they really are**. We are more able to care for and connect to others as we move beyond only seeing things from **our own point of view**. Whilst a lot of the things we worry about seem pretty unimportant viewed on a **cosmic** scale, acting with good character **still really matters**. Looking at the bigger picture, we are citizens of the universe, and acting with virtue is our **contribution to the greater good!**

We can find that despite our best intentions, we can still **‘fall off the Stoic horse’** when suddenly in a challenging situation. Taking the long view / view from above can provide a shortcut to **WISDOM**.

Morning Quote

“to see them from above: the thousands of animal herds, the rituals, the voyages on calm or stormy seas, the different ways we come into the world, share it with one another, and leave it. Consider the lives led once by others, long ago, the lives to be led by others after you, the lives led even now, in foreign lands. How many people don’t even know your name: How many will soon have forgotten it. How many offer you praise now – and tomorrow, perhaps contempt”

Marcus Aurelius Meditations 9:30

Plan your day

Plan to notice how a shift of perspective affects how you think, feel and behave. Let's look at an example....

What situation might I have a reaction to?	What are my common thoughts?	What shift of perspective can I try?
I can feel anxious when I am in pain.	This is only going to get worse, that I won't be able to work, that I can't cope.	<p>I can remind myself 'this too shall pass', as in my previous experience the pain does not last.</p> <p>I can try listening to 'the view from above' meditation (see audio file).</p>

Think of your own examples, and jot your plans down:

What situation might I have a reaction to?	What are my common thoughts?	What shift of perspective can I try?



LUNCHTIME CARD: FRIDAY

I seem to have been only like
a boy playing on the seashore,
and diverting myself in now
and then finding a smoother
pebble or a prettier shell,
whilst the great ocean of
truth lay all undiscovered
before me

Isaac Newton



Evening The Link to Wellbeing

Taking a different perspective helps our **psychological** wellbeing, as it gives us a chance to rise above our circumstances when we are feeling overwhelmed. A new perspective also helps social wellbeing as it allows us to see things from the perspective of others. This can be hugely important when we feel like arguing with other people!

Changing our perspective has an important link to **meaning**, in that it reminds us what really matters. We can take ourselves out of a situation, remember the 'north star' of what has meaning for us, and then return to deal with the challenges of life with this at the forefront of our minds. We can ask ourselves; "what do you want your life to stand for?" and "how do you want to be remembered?"

Evening Quote

*"Constantly reflect on how swiftly all that exists and is coming to be is swept past us and disappears from sight. For substance is like a **river in perpetual flow**, and its activities are ever changing, and its causes infinite in their variations, and hardly anything at all stands still; and ever at our side is the **immeasurable span of the past and the yawning gulf of the future**, into which all things vanish away. Then how is he not a fool who in the midst of all this is puffed up with pride, or tormented, or bewails his lot as though his troubles will endure for any great while?"*

Marcus Aurelius Meditations 5:23

I think Marcus is stopping himself from getting upset about things when, viewed from the perspective of all of time, they don't really matter. It is a version of 'this too shall pass', something I often say to myself when life seems overwhelming.

Reflection on how the day went

Date	What situation did I have a reaction to?	What were my thoughts and beliefs?	What shift of perspective did I try?	Did I notice any difference? Would I try it again?

How does this link with the other ideas in Stoicism?

We can remember that things like health, money and reputation, that do not in and of themselves **make the difference** to living the good life, all seem pretty **unimportant** when viewed from the perspective of the vastness of time and space. So, we have a link back to the virtues and living with good character, and how this is what really matters. Another idea is to imagine you are connecting with your 'core self'. Is there a part of you who knows the truth of this situation and is able to provide the perspective you need? What would this 'voice' inside you say about the importance of this situation in the larger scheme of things? This connects with **living in accordance with our true nature**.

Evening Review

Think about how far you have succeeded in seeing the big picture?

1. Ask yourself What did I do well?

What situations did I handle well?

This might be “controlling the controllables” (Monday’s lesson) or managing emotions (Tuesday) or using the virtues (Wednesday) or extending your care (Thursday)

From today’s lesson, were there any situations where you changed your perspective?

Did you gain any clarity over the “big picture” for you?

2. Ask yourself What could I do differently?

Always remembering to talk to yourself as you would to a good friend, with self-compassion

What, on reflection, could I have handled better?

What opportunities did I miss to be more Stoic?

What will help me to remember to put the ideas from today into practice more consistently in future?

Stoic Journal

Are there any other thoughts or reflections for this day? Add them below:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their thoughts or reflections for the day.

Additional Resources

YouTube Video:

Donald Robertson did a video about the view from above, with a discussion. This is a good supplement to the recording you will see in the resources for this day. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPYjiNHs4IU>

Blogs:

Brittany Polat wrote this beautiful article about Stoic transcendence and taking a different perspective. If you read one advanced reading resource for this day, read this <https://thesideview.co/journal/onstoictranscendence/>

And another great blog post from Celine Leboeuf about the view from above:

<https://medium.com/stoicism-philosophy-as-a-way-of-life/take-a-view-from-above-d24d423f978a>

Here is a useful video which looks at not only the 'view from above' in terms of our place in the universe, but also the journey inside the body: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Are9dDbW24>

There is the famous Carl Sagan 'Pale Blue Dot' video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO5FwsblpT8> , which you must try if you haven't seen it before.

A resource I often use for helping to grasp the finite and short amount of time we have on the earth is covered very well in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOksW_NabEk

Another useful idea is looking at the history of the earth as it would be over 24 hours: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jtNs5k2KHxU>

Saturday

Stoic It Up!

Morning

Sometimes it's not *that* hard to be a good Stoic. 10 minutes Stoicism in the morning, an act of kindness, remembering to write something in your journal...

Yet at other times it's not so easy to be a good Stoic. Consider these two scenarios



1. You have committed to going out for a walk every day as part of your self-care practice. But you are feeling tired and really can't be bothered to get off the sofa. How easy is to be **wise** in that situation?
2. You know that you should call your mother or father but that will be a *such* long conversation and you might get told off for having left it so long since you last called them. How easy is it to be **kind and courageous** faced with that dilemma?

Eve has a memorable phrase to help us in such cases: **"Stoic it up!"**

How can you do that?

The Stoics, as usual, have the answer. We need to always bear in mind the difference between what is *really* important in life and what may *seem* to be important, but actually isn't.

The Stoics believe that many things we think of as being really important may be of value, but they don't matter quite so much as we often assume. This includes things like status, pleasure, comfort, what others think about us and money.

I (Tim) find it helpful to think of such things as being in the "second division", when it comes to what is important in life. So, what is in the "first division", what is really good? You may not be too surprised to learn that it is our **character and understanding**, specifically the four main virtues of wisdom, courage, selfcontrol and justice. This table sums up this idea.

DIVISION 1	DIVISION 2
THINGS THAT ARE ALWAYS GOOD These always take priority over the things in division 2.	THINGS THAT MAY BE OF SOME VALUE but of <i>less</i> value than the virtues in division 1.
Being wise, just, courageous and self-controlled – and associated qualities such as fairness, kindness, compassion and patience	Everything else – including going after money, status and pleasure, what other people think about you and comfort

Do you see how this can help in the scenarios presented at the start of the day? Once you really buy into the idea that all that **really** matters is being a person of good character, then being less comfortable or getting told off a little aren't that important.

Another way of expressing this idea is to think about a set of scales. The virtues are on one side of the scales, and these should always outweigh the things on the other side, such as feeling comfortable or having lots of money.

A word about "preferred indifferents"

The things I have described as being in "division 2" are usually referred to in modern Stoic books and articles as "**preferred indifferents**". We have avoided using this phrase, so far, since we know many people find the phrase confusing. It is *not* true that Stoics are indifferent to the indifferents. Stoics will **prefer** them if it is natural to want them and they can be obtained virtuously. They will avoid the "indifferents" in other cases, such as when pleasure is gained at the expense of someone else. Things like money and pleasure are indifferent only in the sense that they **do not make the difference** between having higher wellbeing or not. A life full of courage, wisdom self-control and justice is a life worth living, regardless of what else goes with it.

Morning quote

"If you can find anything in human life better than justice, truthfulness, self-control, courage ... if you can see anything better than this, turn to it with all your heart and enjoy the supreme good that you have found... if you find all other things to be trivial and valueless in comparison with this, give no room to anything else, since, once you turn towards that and divert from your proper path, you will no longer be able without inner conflict to give the highest honour to that which is properly good. It is not right to set up as a rival to the rational and social good anything alien to its nature, such as the praise of the many, or positions of power, wealth, or enjoyment of pleasures. All of these, even if they seem to suit our nature for a little while, suddenly take control of us and carry us away. But in your case simply and freely choose what is better and hold on to that. 'But what is better is what benefits me'. If it benefits you as a rational creature, then maintain this. But if it does so as an animal, reject it and hold to your decision without a big fuss. Only take care that your enquiry is conducted securely"

Marcus Aurelius: Meditations 3.6

Plan your day

Are you ready to "**Stoic it up!**"? Today's Stoic challenge is to classify things in your day as good or bad ("division 1") or of lesser value ("division 2"). Throughout the day, give more weight to the things that are good or bad. Try to be less attached to the other things that don't matter so much, the indifferents.

The first example provides an answer to one of the scenarios introduced above. Spend a few moments thinking about how you might "Stoic it up" by choosing the virtues, in division 1, over the indifferents, in division 2, in various situations you might face today.

Situation	What is good and bad in this situation? (in “division 1”) This will always be something to do with the virtues (wisdom, courage, self-control, justice and their related qualities)	What is of lesser value than the virtues - in “division 2” This may include things like pleasure, status and money and what others think about you	How can I “Stoic it up”? This means giving priority to things the virtues
You are sitting on your sofa and don't feel very motivated to go for a walk, even though a daily walk is part of your self-care programme	Self-care is good and is part of wisdom	Feeling comfortable on your sofa is of lesser value than looking after yourself properly	Go for the walk anyway even though you don't feel like go it.

What would be your answer to the other scenario we mentioned at the beginning about ringing your father or mother when you haven't rung them for a while? You might like to write your answer in your journal or share it in the discussion on Teachable.

Lunchtime Card

“

LUNCHTIME CARD: SATURDAY

STOIC IT UP!

**Waste no more time
arguing about what
a good person
should be.**

Be one.

Marcus Aurelius: Meditations 10:16

”

Evening

Link with Wellbeing

The Stoics propose that in a very real sense developing and using the virtues is *equivalent* to wellbeing. To live a good life is as simple as being wise, courageous, self-controlled and just.

The benefits we saw when looking at the virtues on Wednesday will also apply today – only more so as today are applying the virtues more consistently.

Evening Quote

“The happiness of those who want to be popular depends on others; the happiness of those who seek pleasure fluctuates with moods outside their control; but the happiness of the wise grows out of their own free acts.”

Marcus Aurelius: Meditations 6.51

If you make being well thought of, or pleasure or any of the other indifferents (things in “division 2”) your main goal in life, then wellbeing is outside of your control. But if you redefine success to be all about your character, then wellbeing is within your grasp. You will not only be a better person, you are also likely to be happier as well.

Evening review

How did you get on with the plan developed earlier?

<p>1. Ask yourself What did I do well?</p> <p>What situations did I handle well?</p> <p>You can start with recalling when you have used any ideas from previous days.</p> <p>Monday -control Tuesday – emotions Wednesday – virtues Thursday – care for self & others Friday – seeing the big picture</p> <p>Did you manage to Stoic it up? Were there situations where you prioritized the virtues?</p> <p>Were you able to be less attached to other things like pleasure, comfort, money and what others think about you?</p>	
<p>2. Ask yourself What could I do differently?</p> <p>What, on reflection, could I have handled better?</p> <p>What opportunities did I miss to be more Stoic?</p> <p>What will help me put that situation right (for example, apologising).</p> <p>What will enable me to handle similar situations better in future?</p>	

Stoic Journal

Are there any other thoughts or reflections for this day? Add them below:

Additional Resources

Chris Gill has written a really helpful article explaining how the contrast mentioned today is as important as the more familiar “dichotomy of control”: <https://modernstoicism.com/marcus-on-the-dichotomy-of-value-and-response-by-chris-gill/>

Brittany Polat takes up the idea of redefining success in this very engaging blog post: <https://www.livinginagreement.com/post/changing-your-definition-of-success>

Massimo Pigliucci provides one of the best explanations of “preferred indifferents” [The Stoic spectrum and the thorny issue of preferred indifferents | How to Be a Stoic \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.stoicmeditations.com/2018/07/27/the-stoic-spectrum-and-the-thorny-issue-of-preferred-indifferents/)

There are recent dialogues on the Stoic idea of ‘indifferents’ between Tim LeBon and Chris Gill on the ‘Stoicism Today’ blog that you might find helpful:

<https://modernstoicism.com/a-stoic-values-clarification-dialogue-and-workshop-by-christopher-gill-and-tim-lebon/>

In this video, Greg Sadler discusses Epictetus and preferred indifferents: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfSBbUxmQE>

In this podcast, Massimo Pigliucci explains Cicero’s account of Stoic value: <https://player.fm/series/stoicmeditations/why-some-indifferents-are-preferred>

Morning Quote

“Today I escaped from anxiety. Or no, I discarded it, because it was within me, in my own perception – not outside”

Marcus Aurelius Meditations 9:13

Part of creating a Stoic toolkit is to spend some time working on the exact phrases and quotes that are of most use to you. I have chosen this quote for us today because it is in **MY** toolkit. I (Eve) do struggle with anxiety more than any other emotion, and I love the idea that I can remember it can be my choice to ‘discard it’. Is this quote useful for you?

Plan your day

We need to be able to carefully consider the challenges we might face, not just today, but **after** Stoic Week has finished, and how we might use Stoicism to help. This could be in managing our emotions, so things like anger, jealousy or anxiety. It may be that we're dealing with physical illnesses or difficulties at work or home.

It could be that you struggle with self-control or that you are looking to increase your contribution to the greater good by getting involved in community projects. It would be useful to read over the other days to remind yourself what we have worked on this week. Here is an example ...

<p style="text-align: center;">What do I feel I still want to work on today and in the coming weeks, and why? Is there a pattern?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What is the main way I'm acting without good character?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Can I think of a phrase or quote for this situation? How can I encourage or help myself next time?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Why am I stuck?</p>
<p>I (Eve) still want to work on anxiety, as this is the 'bad' emotion which comes up most often for me.</p>	<p>I am 'getting on the train' of anxiety and distress.</p> <p>For example, with something to do with my health, I was thinking '<i>this is awful, I can't stand it</i>', and also '<i>what if this gets worse?!</i>'.</p> <p>I am acting with a lack of wisdom or self-control when I get upset about things outside of my control.</p>	<p><i>'It is not THINGS which upset us, but our judgement of them'</i> (Epictetus)</p> <p>I can remind myself that good self-care with managing my emotions will mean I am more able to care for others.</p> <p>I can use journaling each evening to reflect on how I managed my emotions during the day.</p>

<p>What do I feel I still want to work on today and in the coming weeks, and why? Is there a pattern?</p>	<p>What is the main way I'm acting without good character?</p>	<p>Can I think of a phrase or quote for this situation? How can I encourage or help myself next time?</p> <p>Why am I stuck?</p>

Lunchtime Card

“

LUNCHTIME CARD: SUNDAY

**Objective judgement, now at
this very moment.**

**Unselfish action, now at this
very moment.**

**Willing acceptance, now at
this very moment, of all
external events.**

That's all you need

Marcus Aurelius: Meditations 9:6

”

Evening Link to Wellbeing

We can remember the idea of the **STOIC ARCHER** when we are struggling, that we have put in our best effort, but are not in control of the outcome. This might help us when we are struggling with anxiety about outcomes, or feeling angry at someone else's behaviour, which brings us back to the Dichotomy of Control. If the only real good is acting with good character, then it is **WORTH** making some changes in our routines that might mean we spend more time in line with our true nature?

We can see this as our 'job' whilst we are here, our contribution to the greater good is that we act with wisdom, courage, justice and self-control. Someone who was the 'perfect' Stoic (often called the Ideal Sage) would not even need a **TOOLKIT** as they would already be **in** harmony within their minds and with the whole of **NATURE**. However, every time we manage to act with a BIT more of a good character, we are moving in the right direction. ***Even not losing your temper that one time in traffic is a victory!***

Evening Quote

"Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual."

Viktor Frankl: Man's Search for Meaning

Viktor is reminding us here that we are not achieving anything if we spend a great deal of time and effort in studying Stoicism or other forms of self-improvement, without changing the way we behave. I also appreciate the way he is pointing out that life will always present with tasks and problems, we should expect this and take responsibility in finding good ways to deal with them.

Reflection on how the day went

Spend a few moments reflecting on what has gone well from a Stoic point of view, and what can be learnt from today.

<p>1. Ask yourself What did I do well?</p> <p>What situations did I handle well?</p> <p>This might be using ideas from previous days.</p> <p>Monday -control Tuesday – emotions Wednesday – virtues Thursday – care for self & others Friday – seeing the big picture Saturday - Stoic it up!</p> <p>Were there moments of increased selfawareness? Did you manage to start building a Stoic toolkit?</p>	
<p>2. Ask yourself What could I do differently?</p> <p>What, on reflection, could I have handled better?</p> <p>What opportunities did I miss to be more Stoic?</p> <p>What will help me put that situation right (for example, apologising) or handle similar situations better in future?</p>	

Stoic Journal

Are there any other thoughts or reflections for this day? Add them below:

Useful resources

Books

Viktor Frankl's book, 'Man's search for meaning', is both short and life changing. It contains many ideas closely related to Stoicism, and although based on his experiences during World War II, it is uplifting and incredibly hopeful.

Massimo Pigliucci's & Gregory Lopez's book, 'A Handbook for New Stoics: How to Thrive in a World Out of Your Control--52 Week-By-Week Lessons' is a very useful practical resource for people wanting to study Stoicism further and apply it to everyday life

Course

The Aurelius Foundation are running an online course in applied Stoicism, check out their website for more details <https://aureliusfoundation.com/>

After Stoic Week

Now you have spent a week "Living like a Stoic", what next? Have you enjoyed following Stoic Week? Have you found it helpful? If you have, there is no need to stop at the end of this week! One of the reasons for adopting this format is that it gives you a ready-made template that you can continue to follow week after week.

In order to deepen and develop your Stoic practice, the next step is to start exploring some of the ancient Stoic texts for yourself if you don't know them already.

1. Obtain a copy of *The Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. Every day in a spare moment read at least one new section of the text. As many of these are very short you will probably read many more than just once.
2. Start reading *The Handbook* and then *The Discourses* of Epictetus. Set aside some time every weekend to read two new chapters (most only a couple of pages long). There are 95 chapters in the *Discourses* so this will keep you going for much of the coming year.

3. After that do the same with the *Letters* of Seneca to Lucilius – one or two each weekend. There are 124 letters but most modern translations print only a selection. Two a week will occupy you for just over a year. If for whatever reason you would rather start with Seneca then do!

The follow translations are recommended:

- Marcus Aurelius: Oxford World's Classics or Penguin Classics. Note also the edition in the Penguin Great Ideas series.
- Epictetus: Oxford World's Classics or Penguin Classics (only selections).
- There is also a selection in the Penguin Great Ideas series.
- Seneca: Penguin Classics (a selection) or Oxford World's Classics (a selection), both of whom also publish his essays.
- Seneca: Letters on Ethics (the complete letters), Chicago University Press (now in paperback).

Other ways to learn

You can go to The Stoic Fellowship and find an in-person or online Stoicism group to join, or even start your own:

<https://www.stoicfellowship.com/>

You can keep an eye on the Modern Stoicism website and subscribe for updates about events:

<https://modernstoicism.com/>

You can also subscribe to the Aurelius Foundation and find out about their events and courses:

<https://aureliusfoundation.com/>

Appendix: Further Reading

As well as reading the ancient Stoics, there is an excellent and growing collection of modern writings about Stoicism that are readily available.

First of all, we would like to mention the Stoicism Today blog and the Modern Stoicism website. Why not take a look at the blog every week – new articles are posted every Saturday at

<https://modernstoicism.com/stoicism-today/>

If you would like a collection of some of the best articles, you might like *Stoicism Today: Selected Writings*, volumes 1 and 2, edited by Patrick Ussher, two collections of writings from different authors taken from the Stoicism Today blog. These are very good introductions to Stoicism because they approach the subject from many different perspectives in short articles written by authors from different backgrounds.

- P. Ussher, Ed., *Stoicism Today: Selected Writings Vol 1* (2014)
- P. Ussher, Ed., *Stoicism Today: Selected Writings Vol 2* (2015)

Some of the following books should also be on your personal reading list. We have divided the reading into two sections. You might like to start with the introductions to Stoicism and books about Stoicism in

Practice. If you develop to delve deeper, we have also included a selection of more advanced works on Stoicism. Both lists are in alphabetical order.

Introductions to Stoicism & Stoicism in Practice

- E. Buzare, *Stoic Spiritual Exercises* (Lulu, 2011)
- C. Chakrapani, *Unshakable Freedom* (The Stoic Gym, 2016)
- J. Evans, *Philosophy for Life and other Dangerous Situations* (Rider, 2013)
- R. Holiday and S. Hanselman, *The Daily Stoic* (Penguin, 2016)
- W. B. Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- S. Lebell, *Art of Living* (HarperOne, 2007)
- T. LeBon *365 Ways to be More Stoic* (John Murray, 2022)
- A. Macaro, *More than Happiness: Buddhist and Stoic wisdom for a Sceptical age* (Iconbooks, 2018)
- R. Pies, *Everything Has Two Handles: The Stoic's Guide to the Art of Living* (Lanham: Hamilton Books, 2008)
- M. Pigliucci & G. Lopez, *A Handbook for new Stoics* (The Experiment, 2019)
- M. Pigliucci, *How to be a Stoic* (Basic Books, 2017)
- M. Pigliucci, *A Field Guide to a Happy Life* (Basic Books, 2020)
- B. Polat, *Journal Like a Stoic* (Zeitgeist, 2022)
- D. Robertson, *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness* (London: Teach Yourself, 2013)
- D. Robertson, *The Philosophy of Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT): Stoic Philosophy as Rational and Cognitive Psychotherapy* (London: Karnac, 2010)
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The End

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