

Stoicism in a Nutshell (A Short Summary In 500 Words)

Stoicism is a [philosophy of life](#). Practiced for over 2300 years, its popular appeal stems from its universal principles of peaceful coexistence.

Stoicism is the art of living in the moment, harmonizing oneself with cosmic wisdom, being grateful for the good people and things in life, and remaining indifferent to earthly riches and recognitions.

Stoicism starts with the belief that we can find good in all human experiences and live meaningful lives if we practice Virtue or moral excellence. The Stoics firmly believe that Virtue is the only true good in life, and its lack, the only bad.

One of the simplest ways to apply Stoicism to your life is to find joy in [doing the right thing](#), *whether anyone is watching or not.*



Contrary to common belief, the Stoics do not discourage people from experiencing and expressing their emotions, but rather encourage them. They know how to [remain mindful](#) of the effects that their thoughts have on their feelings and responses.

They know how to suffer and to rejoice, and yet do both in moderation.

The Stoics recognize that many of our negative emotions, which they called “*pathe*” (suffering), are a product of our voluntary judgments about the world. So they avoid making judgments about situations and people, and

instead, prefer accepting them as they are. It shields them from the severe effects of lingering emotions.

The Stoics believe in the idea of loving their fate, or **amor fati**. The premise is that if you accept what you can't change, then you won't be frustrated when it happens. This allows the Stoics to keep an optimistic outlook on their situation, no matter how bleak it seems, and to keep working for a brighter tomorrow.

Stoicism can help you live a **life of serenity and peace**. Stoic happiness comes from their understanding of their role in the universe and fulfilling it to the best of their ability.

Stoic philosophy emphasizes self-control and the rule of reason. It tells us to not let our emotions dictate us, and to **use reason to make any decision** that we make.

Be tolerant with others and strict with yourself.

— Marcus Aurelius

It teaches us how to live forward without being burdened by shame, remorse, disgust, or guilt about the past. It tells us we cannot control what happens to us, but we can control *our response to* what happens to us.

The masters of Stoicism repeatedly remind us that the only **things we have control over** are our thoughts, choices, and actions in the present moment.

CONTROL AND CHOICE

“The chief task in life is simply this: to identify and separate matters so that I can say clearly to myself which are externals not under my control, and which have to do with the choices I actually control. Where then do I look for good and evil? Not to uncontrollable externals, but within myself to the choices that are my own . . .”

—EPICTETUS, *DISCOURSES*, 2.5.4–5

The Stoics believe [life is short](#), unpredictable, and often painful. Wasting it doing useless things only adds to our pain. So, they advise:

- Stop whining about people spoiling your day or mood – they are what they are. Instead, expect to come across some “[wicked, ignorant, ungrateful](#)” people every day. Our good comes from us, not others.
- Don't turn away from the harsh times. Instead, meet adversities with the wisdom that they will pass, and hold the same thought for the good times. The trivial and the vital, the blissful and the painful, all fade away.

Think often on the swiftness with which the things that exist and that are coming into existence are swept past us and carried out of sight. For all substance is as a river in ceaseless flow, its activities ever-changing and its causes subject to countless variations, and scarcely anything stable.

— Marcus Aurelius

Finally, for a Stoic, the purpose of life is to live in simple harmony with nature, which can only come from a life of virtue, which then leads to a life of joy (eudaimonia) that is free of suffering (apatheia).

[This is our last post of the year 2021. See you next year!]

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