

## Stoic Philosophy of Mind

A few years ago I read a lot of spiritual and philosophy books and eventually started reading about stoicism as well. I was really curious and fascinated about it. The first Stoic I read and introduced me into Stoicism was Epictetus.

**Epictetus** was a Greek speaking Stoic philosopher. He believed that as for human beings, the capacity to choose is our fundamental characteristic, the essence of nature. The principle of cause and effect does operate in nature, but our decisions are free of external compulsion.

*"Freedom is secured not by the fulfilling of men's desires, but by the removal of desire."* -Epictetus

The Modern Stoics list includes: Bill Clinton, Nassim Taleb and Tim Ferriss.

I'm ready to become a "modern Stoic", how can I practice Stoic philosophy in my daily life?

### 1. Release your attachments

Stoicism teaches us not to get attached to people or situations, or things. All people tend to have big emotional swings when they lose their "important" things, need to adjust to new situations or people they're close to them depart this life. This doesn't mean we shouldn't love our loved ones or don't have any possessions, but Stoicism teaches us that we should not be overly attached to these possessions and accept the fact that everyone is mortal.

When we are holding onto something or we need it to make us happy then we place all our power outside of ourselves. The less attachments you have the less vulnerable you will feel.

### 2. Face every obstacle as an opportunity

Stoicism teaches us that we can see every "disaster" as an opportunity and always say "this too shall pass". We cannot avoid or change what will happen to us but we can change our reaction to it.

Here's an example, let's say that one day you go to work and your manager announces that the company will close and you're losing your job. There's nothing you can do about it other than accepting this situation. You might even see it as an opportunity to start something of your own or try a new job.

### 3. Be prepared for anything

*"Everyone faces up more bravely to a thing for which he has long prepared himself, sufferings, even, being withstood if they have been trained for in advance."* -Seneca 4BC - 65AD

Stoics also embrace negative thinking. Our society has been lately "idolising" positive thinking, "The Power of Positive Thinking", "The Secret", "10 Tips to Overcome Negative Thoughts" and a lot of other books talking about positive thinking. Stoics believe that you should not take anything for granted and actually make a negative visualisation. Once you don't take anything for granted, your food, your health, your relationship, eventually you will be more grateful for everything you have in your life. I compare this "technique" to this old Persian proverb: "I felt sorry because I had no shoes, then I met a man who had no feet".

#### **4. Understand that almost all your problems "come from within"**

*"Today I escaped anxiety. Or no, I discarded it, because it was within me, in my own perceptions — not outside."* — Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

We're the ones that create all our problems and feelings. Most of the problems exist only in our heads, for example you're anxious because you won't finish your project on time, or you won't pay your bills, or something else might happen to you.

We talk to ourselves about ourselves a lot, we allow our thoughts to create and maintain our life story and who we are. Does the commentary or even the character and problems it describes exist anywhere other than our heads? most of the time no. The self talk you've in your mind is called "self-made prison".

Conclusion, don't believe everything you think. Acknowledge your real problems and the problems that exist only in your "self-made prison".

#### **5. Put your effort only in to things you control**

One great lesson from Stoicism is to remind yourself at all times of what you can control and what you can't. Of course we cannot control the world economy, we can't control the weather and we can't control other people. We need to acknowledge that the world is an unpredictable environment that's constantly changing.

The only thing we can have total control of are our own thoughts and emotions. If we remind ourselves of that, and focus our energy and attention on our own thoughts and emotions, then we can learn to cope wisely with whatever the world throws at us.

Stoicism can also help us become better entrepreneurs, prepare for negative events and **focus** only on what is important.

Suggested Books:

[Epictetus - A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life](#)

Suggested Videos:

[Tim Ferriss on The Practicality of Pessimism: Stoicism as a Productivity System. Ep 20](#)

[10 Themes of Stoicism](#)

