

FREE FIRST CHAPTER

YOUR DAILY DOSE OF STOIC WISDOM

# Introduction & Day 1: Happiness

30 Days Of Quotes To Inspire A Stoic Mindset — Chapter One. About a 7-minute read.

Stoic philosophy is arguably one of the most underrated and underappreciated systems of thinking.

Not only does the implementation of this canon of ethics foster advanced human development, but it also stimulates mental acuity. This is because Stoic principles rely on the development of discernment – a critical skill for the advancement of knowledge.

The fact that Stoic principles are as relevant today as they were more than 2,000 years ago is a testament to the timeless wisdom instilled within its discourse. What the Stoa essentially taught is how to move through life in a state of happiness. These invaluable lessons on how to master the self through virtue and reason make Stoicism a balanced modality for success.

Happiness is the ultimate goal of Stoicism. This means that every thought, spoken word, action, and behavior either brings us closer to our goal, or farther from it. When practiced with determination and honesty, Stoic philosophy has the power to transform our lived reality\*. In this way, it remains an efficacious framework to refine the human condition.

In short, Stoic philosophy is the ultimate approach to living a life of inner prosperity. It is a blueprint for cultivating a lifestyle governed by pragmatism, whilst at the same time enriching our lives with felicity.

My name is Dr. Rabiah Ryklief and I am a Character Refinement specialist based in the Garden Route, South Africa. My work primarily focuses on bringing people closer to their purpose by working with them to fortify their integrity.

Across the numerous sessions with my clientele, there is always one thing that they have in common: the longing, and sometimes desperation, to experience lasting happiness. It's not that they expect to always be happy. But rather, to cultivate a happy disposition in relation to their lived reality.

In this regard, my professional experience has taught me that the difference between success and failure lies in self-mastery. Our willingness to prioritize the quality of our human condition will either challenge our personal development or strengthen it. Thus, how we choose to spend our time will determine how prepared we are for life's obstacles and opportunities.

Investing our time in character development equips us to handle life's ups and downs. Not only does it build resilience, but it also nurtures harmony. It is at this very point that my life's work intersects with Stoic philosophy. And so, I have developed this book for the sole purpose of bringing to life the deep wisdom embedded within the tenets of Stoicism.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you into the world of the virtue of morality. Here, I'll introduce you to the foundational concepts of Stoic philosophy and teach you how to make meaningful adjustments to your lifestyle. By working through this book, you will acquire:

### Diplomacy

To maintain your personal standard of integrity despite your circumstances.

### Self-confidence

To uphold your ethics and forgo influence by others.

### Accountability

To take charge of your life regardless of your shortcomings.

## Happiness

To generate experiences of heartfelt joy and gratitude.

This book is not a compendium on Stoic philosophy or its proponents. Nor is it a theoretical handbook of Stoic literature. Rather, it is a 30-day guide to creating a lifestyle centered around Stoic values.

This book is a synthesis of Stoic ideals that serves to bridge the gap between ancient philosophy and 21st-century living. It brings together a selection of quotes on timeless wisdom, leading the way forward in the face of modern-day struggles. Each day is dedicated to an aspect of our human development and is accompanied by thoughtful exercises. These actionable steps are simple yet dynamic and are specifically designed to be repeated at all stages of personal growth. No matter how many times you work through this book, you will continue to develop and refine your human condition.

By the end of this 30-day guide, you will gain a new perspective on life. You will understand the world from a point of reflection and sincerity. Your experience of life will be more pleasant, enhancing your connection to yourself and others. You will embody a stronger value system. And you will learn how to follow a framework of ethics that promotes social justice and equity.

## Happiness Is Our Duty

*"It does not depend on you to be rich, but it depends on you to be happy." — Epictetus*

There is a general misconception that to be rich is to be happy. This stems from the idea that our wealth is a measure of our success. And so, Epictetus addresses this fallacy by emphasizing that our pathway to success lies in attaining happiness, not wealth.

The Stoic perspective of happiness is quite different from our contemporary understanding of the concept. Their pathway to happiness depends on refining the human condition to embody goodness in reason\*. This not only involves using reason to ascertain goodness but also enacting goodness as directed by reason\*.



Stoicism sought solutions for the cause of unhappiness within the human condition\*. They believed that through moral and virtuous conduct, unhappiness is alleviated. They recommended a lifestyle governed by the exclusive promotion of virtue alongside the elimination of vice. This was the Stoic prerequisite to attaining happiness.

Epictetus' words also speak of where our duty lies. Our duty does not lie in affluence. Therefore, it is inconsequential whether we accumulate wealth or remain financially bereft. Rather, our duty lies in attaining happiness, obligating us to cultivate a lifestyle governed by high moral standards\*.

According to Stoic philosophy, happiness is only attained through virtue\*. In this light, we understand that happiness is a complex concept, encompassing far more than what we understand today.

## Happiness Is Our Choice

*"The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not." — Seneca*

The Stoa believed that our greatest blessing is our ability to attain happiness. Happiness is seen as the ultimate goodness that the human condition can embody\*. Here, the expression of goodness is intrinsically linked to virtue.

The tools to cultivate virtue within the human being lie in character refinement\*. More specifically, by understanding what is good in relation to what is immoral. Our character development is not exclusive to our understanding, as it also extends to our behavior. Stoics believed that our actions should reflect our goodness, emphasizing our duty to be happy through cultivating actionable virtue\*.

Stoic philosophy further teaches that our ability to attain happiness is within our reach. Our freedom of choice plays an integral part in realizing this. As such, the perfection of our reason depends on how refined our character is. By deliberating between our choices through the lens of virtue and vice, we access the freedom to choose happiness.

Our understanding of where the boundaries between virtue and vice lie indicate our degree of wisdom. Wisdom, in the Stoic sense, is the application of perfect reason\*. Thus, a wise man represents someone who has attained happiness and excellence in his character through actionable virtue\*.

Concerning wisdom, Seneca's words also address the concept of contentment. Remember, the Stoic view of happiness solely depends on the internal qualities that constitute our human condition\*. In this context, to be content with our lot is to act according to virtue.

In contrast, discontentment arises from the realm of vice\*. Here, Stoicism identifies desire as the active vice. The nature of desire is external to what constitutes our human condition and lies beyond our control. This establishes precedence for discontent as we are subjected to the fluctuations inherent in wishing for what we have not.

## Cultivating Happiness

*"Happiness is not to acquire and enjoy, but nothing to be desired, as it is to be free." — Epictetus*

Epictetus continues to provide us with valuable advice on how to cultivate happiness. Here, we learn three key lessons on where happiness lies and where it does not.

Firstly, we cannot achieve happiness through acquisition. This relates to buying what we don't need, accumulating beyond what is sufficient, and hoarding what we no longer use. These behaviors are counter-productive to a lifestyle of moral conduct as it promotes vices such as selfishness and miserliness.

Secondly, our transient enjoyment experience does not equate to the stately experience of happiness. Enjoyment arises from indulgence and sensory gratification, both of which are borne from vice. There is no leniency toward developing desire as the Stoic path to happiness is directed by righteousness\*.

And lastly, to attain happiness, we need to eliminate desire. Desire is the primary driving force for actualizing our vices. Therefore, the Stoa believed that neutralizing our desires would allow us to act upon our virtues instead.

## Action Steps

So how do we cultivate a lifestyle of virtue and moral conduct? We begin by developing our character as an expression of our human condition.

1. **Embody goodness.** Our freedom of choice allows us to choose goodness as the foundation of our conduct. Every decision we make will either bring us closer to goodness or farther away from it. Practice making decisions that embody goodness until it becomes your lifestyle.
2. **Limit your desire.** Learn to understand the difference between what you desire and what you actually need to sustain yourself. Pay close consideration to the basis of your decision-making: is it driven by what you want or what is needed?
3. **Live in moderation.** Take stock of your lifestyle to assess which areas are prone to excess and which areas align with moderation. Balance areas in excess by reducing behaviors that lead to accumulation. In relation to hoarding, opt to donate instead of throwing it away if it is still in good standing.

## References

### Introduction

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### Day 1: Happiness

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