

NOTES FROM: *The Everyday Stoic*, by William Mulligan

SUMMARY: The philosophy of Stoicism has made an *enormously* positive impact on my life - ever since I first read the original works of Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and others in my 20s - and this has got to be one of the most conversational, approachable introductions to it that I've ever read.

Living like a Stoic is all about being *unflappable*, being able to withstand *everything* and still coming back smiling. It's about maintaining your inner peace *no matter what*, and it's also for *everybody*, not just "Serious Students of Philosophy" and other people who are no fun at parties. This is a book for *life*.

Personally, very little in this book was "new" to me. Other than the author's own experiences, of course. But that doesn't even matter, because Stoic ideas are the kind of things that you can (and should) keep coming back to for the rest of your life. You can read this book in less than a day, but if you take the time to sit with its ideas and let them inform your worldview, you'll be able to cultivate an inner strength that lasts for many decades to come.

"Somehow, the owner of the cargo survived. Battered and half-drowned, Zeno, a previously wealthy merchant now made penniless, made his way into the city of Athens, and visited - as you would after surviving a shipwreck - a bookshop. There, he didn't despair about his money having entirely vanished in one bad sea trip, but fell into conversation with the bookshop owner about the latest philosophical teachings."

"People who are content and unafraid might become harder to influence if you've only got fear and consumerism to do it."

Heraclitus: "Day by day, what you choose, what you think, and what you do is who you become."

"Stoics understand that if we prioritize these values, we can't really go wrong - if we're wise, just, courageous, and moderate, it's hard to imagine how we could be existing in a destructive or unhappy way, because the Virtues breed contentment and this contentment encourages more of the Virtues."

Epictetus: "If virtue promises good fortune, peace of mind, and happiness, certainly also the progress towards virtue is progress towards each of these things."

"The keyboard warrior's only legacy is putting more disagreement into the world."

“Let Wisdom, Courage, Moderation, and Justice be the foundations you build on.”

“While it may feel limiting to have so little control over something as large and important as our entire lives, it’s also freeing to know this limited list is something we are able to manage and focus on.”

“What felt like impossible tasks were actually just steps along our chosen path, and we were lucky to be on it.”

“Diogenes was a famous Cynic philosopher, a precursor to Stoic ideas, and was famous for living naked in a large wine-jar in the marketplace and using his simple life to criticize what he saw as a corrupt society. His sole possession was a wooden bowl, which he destroyed when he saw a boy drink instead from his cupped hands, exclaiming, ‘Fool that I am, to have been carrying superfluous baggage all this time!’”

“Despite all his possessions and power, he would always be falling behind in his achievements, never content with what the universe had given him. But Diogenes, naked in a wine-jar and drinking from his hands, wanted only to nap in the sunlight. He had everything he could possibly desire.”

Dostoevsky: “The darker the night, the brighter the stars.”

“Regret is just our way of dragging a past mistake into our future.”

Seneca: “The whole future lies in uncertainty: live immediately.”

“Grief can be a powerful reminder of how much we have loved and been shaped by our love for someone - after all, would you want your loved ones to remember you with overwhelming grief for the rest of their lives, or to gradually be able to celebrate and feel joy that they had known you?”

“The more we practice, the more this way of thinking becomes a habit - we start to view the whole world differently when we get into a habit of gratitude, acceptance, and opportunity.”

“Accept the universe the way it is, and your life will run smoothly.”

“Whatever we try to do about these things, the events will happen anyway, the past will have occurred, the future will happen when it does, and everything will go on regardless of our thoughts. It’s like standing in the sea and trying to fight the waves back, and then wondering why we’re exhausted and nothing is different.”

“Give up control and enjoy all the freedom it gives you.”

“Being dead is like being stupid; it only hurts the people around you.”

“Whether it’s a good experience or a bad one, every occurrence has a final time.”

Matt Kepnes: “The how of what we do is different, but the why of what we do is universal.”

“We all live in one interconnected existence, and every action ripples out across it.”

“But hope is work, and brave people see the good in life, even when they may not have had good luck themselves. Goodness is work, too. If a ‘bad’ person wants money, they can steal it or exploit others into getting them money, while a ‘good’ person doesn’t have those options. ‘Badness’ is easy and requires no moral or internal strength, while ‘goodness’ requires true fortitude.”

“Everyone mostly faces the same problems, and if we can get through them and still be good, still make choices to put goodness out into the world, that shows an immense kind of strength.”

“No matter what Homer throws at him (sometimes literally), Ned believes the best and so is rewarded with the feelings that come with holding that view. Hope and love are not a weakness or a soft option - they require a clear moral philosophy that gives us the tools to see the world as a better place, and one worth bringing more goodness into.”

“A kind comment or smile can stay with us long after the moment passes, just as an unkind gesture does, but that positive gesture of good breaks the spell that the world is a bad place. If the world is so hopeless, why would someone smile at us for no reason?”

Epictetus: “Don’t explain your philosophy. Embody it.”

“We don’t have to look for the good - we can be the good.”

Marcus Aurelius: “I seek the truth, which never harmed anyone; the harm is to persist in one’s own self-deception and ignorance.”

“We want to feel like we’re progressing through life, and the simplest way to feel like we’re making progress is through the accumulation and improvement of our things - and once we develop that habit of thought when we’re young, it’s hard to shift.”

“The people we see online with everything - they aren’t better than us at life. They’re just better at marketing their lives.”

“The goal of social media companies is to get *and keep* our attention. And attention isn’t kept by making us feel good.”

“Stoicism doesn’t make the storm go away, but it does help you to enjoy running out into the rain.”

Jim Carrey: "When I say life doesn't happen to you, it happens for you, I really don't know if that's true. I'm just making a conscious choice to perceive challenges as something beneficial so that I can deal with them in the most productive way."