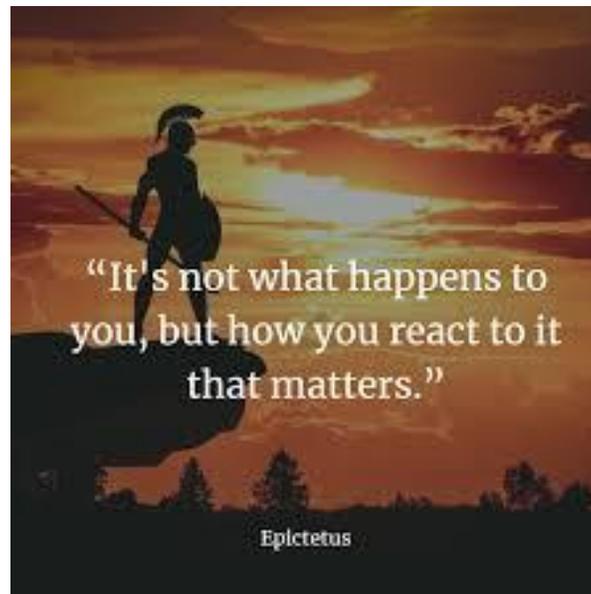


Man-Making Advice from the Stoics



If one cannot rise above, be in full control of,
and handle with ease the circumstances of his outer environment,
he will never be able to succeed in the way of spirituality.

(Sant Kirpal Singh)

ruhanisatsangusa.org/receptive.htm

One who permits himself or herself to be disturbed
by what others say and do,
is without question one who is still controlled by the ego
and has yet to conquer the self,
and learn the rudiments of spirituality.

(Sant Kirpal Singh)

Spiritual Elixir, 104

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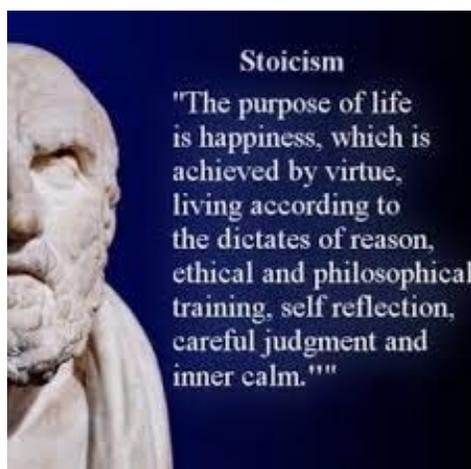
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Distressing Thoughts of the Past or Future

Two things we must therefore root out: fear of distress in the future and the memory of distress in the past. The one concerns me no longer. The other concerns me not yet. (Seneca)

Hope and Fear

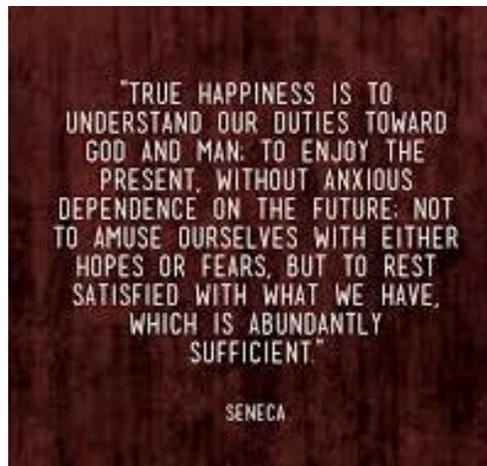
Cease to hope and you will cease to fear. (Hecato)

Fear and hope are bound up with one another, unconnected as they may seem. Widely different though they are, the two of them march in unison like a prisoner and the escort he is handcuffed to. Fear keeps pace with hope. Nor does their so moving together surprise me; both belong to a mind in suspense, to a mind in a state of anxiety through looking into the future. Both are mainly due to projecting our thoughts far ahead of us instead of adapting ourselves to the present. Thus it is that foresight, the greatest blessing humanity has been given, is transformed into a curse. Wild animals run from the dangers they actually see, and once they have escaped them worry no more. We however are tormented alike by what is past and what is to come. A number of our blessings do us harm, for memory brings back the agony of fear while foresight brings it on prematurely. No one confines his unhappiness to the present. (Seneca)

The Present Moment

The man who is only happy with present things sets narrow limits to his enjoyment. Both the future and the past can delight us – one in anticipation, the other in memory – but one is uncertain and may not happen, while the other cannot fail to have been. What madness it is, therefore, to lose our grip on that which is the surest thing of all! (Seneca)

Think about individuals; consider men in general; there is not one whose life is not focused on tomorrow. What harm is there in that, you ask? Infinite harm. They are not really living. They are about to live. (Seneca)



Externals

You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength. (Marcus Aurelius)

If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment. (Marcus Aurelius)

There is only one road to happiness – let this rule be at hand morning, noon, and night: Stay detached from things that are not up to you. (Epictetus)

There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will. (Epictetus)

There are things up to us and things not up to us. Things up to us are our opinions, desires, aversions, and, in short, whatever is our own doing. Things not up to us are our bodies, possessions, reputations, offices, or, in short, whatever is not our own doing. (Epictetus)

Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one principle: Some things are within your control and some things are not. (Epictetus)

Whoever then wishes to be free, let him neither wish for anything nor flee from anything that depends upon others: otherwise he must be a slave. (Epictetus)

If you gape after externals, you will inevitable be forced up and down according to the will of your master. And who is your master? Whoever has power over the things you are trying to gain or avoid. (Epictetus)

So in life our first job is this, to divide and distinguish things into two categories: externals I cannot control, but the choices I make with regard to them I do control. Where will I find good and bad? In me, in my choices. Don't ever speak of "good" or "bad", "advantage" or "harm", and so on, of anything that is not your responsibility. (Epictetus)

Who is there left for me to fear, and over what has he control? Not what is in my power, because no one controls that except myself. As for what is not in my power, in that I take no interest. (Epictetus)

What philosophy has taught me, though, is to be indifferent to events beyond my control. (Epictetus)

What does it mean to be getting an education? It means...distinguishing what is in our power from what is not. The operations of the will are in our power; not in our power are the body, the body's parts, property, parents, siblings, children, country or friends. (Epictetus)

For what else are tragedies but the ordeals of people who have come to overvalue externals, tricked out in a tragic manner. (Epictetus)

Dealing with Insults

It is the mark of a great mind to rise above insults; the most humiliating kind of revenge is to treat your adversary as not worthy taking revenge upon. Many have taken slight injuries too deeply to heart in the course of punishing them. The great and noble are those who, like a lordly beast, listen unmoved to the barking of little dogs. (Seneca)

The sage is not moved by an insult from anyone. For men may differ from one another, but the sage regards them as all equal on account of their equal stupidity. If he were to lower himself enough to be moved by insult or injury even once, there would never be an end to his worries. (Seneca)

If you hear that someone has spoken ill of you, do not make excuses about what was said, but answer: “Evidently he didn’t know about my other faults, or he wouldn’t have spoken only of the ones he did.” (Epictetus)

You need not be a sage to take insults lightly, but merely someone of sense – one who might say: “Do I deserve these things that happen to me? If I deserve them, there is no insult; it is justice. If I don’t deserve them, let the one who does the injustice blush.” (Seneca)

Someone will disdain me? That is his concern. My concern is that I not be found doing or saying anything worthy of disdain. (Marcus Aurelius)

In general, remember that it is we who torment, we who make difficulties for ourselves – that is, our opinions do. What, for instance, does it mean to be insulted? Stand by a rock and insult it, and what have you accomplished? If someone responds to insult like a rock, what has the abuser gained with his invective? If, however, he has his victim’s weakness to exploit, then his efforts are worth his while. (Epictetus)

Whenever someone does you a wrong or speaks ill of you, remember that he is doing what he thinks is proper. He can’t possibly be guided by what appears right to you, but only by what appears right to him. So if he sees things wrongly, he is the one who is hurt, because he is the one who has been deceived. Starting from this reasoning, you will be mild toward whoever insults you. Say each time, “So it seemed to him.” (Epictetus)

When someone does you wrong in some way, consider at once the understanding of good or evil that caused him to wrong you. For once you see this, you will have pity on him, and you will be neither surprised nor angry. For you yourself probably have the same understanding of the good as he does, or another of the same sort. If so, you must pardon him. And if you no longer understand the same things to be good and evil, you will more easily be gracious to one whom you know to be mistaken. (Marcus Aurelius)

Fault Finding/Judging Others 1

What grounds do we have for being angry with anyone? We use labels like “thief” and “robber” in connection with them, but what do these words mean? They merely signify that people are confused about what is good and what is bad. So should we be angry with them, or should we pity them instead? Show them where they go wrong and you will find that they’ll reform. But unless they see it, they are stuck with nothing better than their usual opinion as their practical guide.

“Well, shouldn’t we do away with thieves and degenerates?”

Try putting the question this way: “Shouldn’t we rid ourselves of people deceived about what’s most important, people who are blind – not in their faculty of vision, their ability to distinguish white from black – but in the moral capacity to distinguish good from bad?” Put it that way, and you’ll realize how inhumane your position is. It is as if you were to say, “Shouldn’t this blind man, and this deaf man, be executed?”

Because if loss of the greatest asset involves the greatest harm, and someone is deprived of their moral bearings, which is the most important capacity they have – well, why add anger to their loss? If you must be affected by other people’s misfortunes, show them pity instead of contempt. (Epictetus)



Mistakes are nothing to get angry about. What, now, should we be angry with those whose footsteps falter in the dark? With the deaf, when they don’t listen to orders? With children, because – neglecting a proper attention to their duties – they watch the games and silly jokes of their fellows? Do you want to be angry with those who are weary because they are sick and growing old? (Seneca)

It’s silly to try to escape other people’s faults. They are inescapable. Just try to escape your own. (Marcus Aurelius)

Be tolerant with others and strict with yourself. (Marcus Aurelius)

How much trouble he avoids by not looking to see what his neighbor does or thinks – by looking only to what he does himself, that it may be just and pure. The part of the good man is not to peer into the character of others, but to run straight down the line without glancing to one side or the other. (Marcus Aurelius)

Human affairs are not so happily ordered that the better things are pleasing to the many; a proof of the worst choice is the crowd. (Seneca)

Among the other misfortunes of humanity there is this one too – a darkness of our minds, not so much a compulsion to go wrong as a desire to do so. Lest you be angry with men individually, you must pardon mankind as a whole, you must grant indulgence to the human race. (Seneca)

Fault Finding/Judging Others 2

It is a peculiarity of man to love even those who stumble. This happens when it occurs to you that they are kinsmen, that they do wrong through ignorance and without intent, that in a little while you will both have died, and above all, that he has done you no harm – for he has not made your ruling faculty any worse than it was before.

Whenever you take offense at someone else's fault, turn immediately to find the fault most similar in yourself – such as attachment to money, or pleasure, or reputation, or whatever it might be. In seeing this, you will quickly forget your anger. (Marcus Aurelius)

We are all inconsiderate and unthinking, all untrustworthy, complaining, ambitious – why hide the universal sore in softer words? – we are all wicked. Each of us will find inside ourselves whatever fault we rebuke in another...And so let us be more kindly toward one another; being wicked, we live among the wicked. Only one thing can bring us peace – a compact of mutual good nature. (Seneca)

Whenever you are offended at someone's lack of shame, you should immediately ask yourself: "So is it possible for there to be no shameless people in the world?" It is not possible. Do not then ask for the impossible. This person is just one of the shameless inevitable existing in the world. Have the same thought ready for the rogue, the traitor, every sort of offender. The recognition that this class of people must necessarily exist will immediately make you kinder to them as individuals...Anyway, where is the harm or surprise in the ignorant behaving as the ignorant do? Think about it. Should you not rather blame yourself, for not anticipating that this man would make this error? Your reason gave you the resources to reckon this mistake likely from this man, yet you forgot and are now surprised that he went wrong. (Marcus Aurelius)

"When you wake up in the morning, tell yourself: The people I deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous, and surly. They are like this because they can't tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good and the ugliness of evil, and have recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own – not of the same blood or birth, but the same mind, and possessing a share of the divine. And so none of them can hurt me. No one can implicate me in ugliness. Nor can I feel angry at my relative, or hate him. We were born to work together like feet, hands, and eyes, like the two rows of teeth, upper and lower. To obstruct each other is unnatural. To feel anger at someone, to turn your back on him: these are obstructions."

- Marcus Aurelius -

Opinions/Judgments

You always own the option of having no opinion. There is never any need to get worked up or to trouble your soul about things you can't control. These things are not asking to be judged by you. Leave them alone. (Marcus Aurelius)

It is not what men do that disturbs us (for those acts are matters of their own control and reasoning), but our opinions of what they do. Take away those opinions – dismiss your judgment that this is something terrible – and your anger goes away as well. (Marcus Aurelius)

Men are disturbed not by the things that happen but by their opinions about those things. For example, death is nothing terrible; for if it were, it would have seemed so even to Socrates. Rather, the opinion that death is terrible – that is the terrible thing. So when we are impeded or upset or aggrieved, let us never blame others, but ourselves – that is, our opinions. (Epictetus)

Things themselves don't hurt or hinder us. Nor do other people. How we view these things is another matter. It is our attitude and reactions that give us trouble. (Epictetus)

Remember that you are insulted not by the person who strikes or abuses you but by your opinion that these things are insulting. So whenever another provokes you, be assured that it is your own opinion that has provoked you. (Epictetus)

Whenever we do something wrong, then, from now on we will not blame anything except the opinion on which it's based; and we will try to root out wrong opinions with more determination than we remove tumors or infections from the body. By the same token, we will acknowledge opinions as the source of our good behavior too. But wife, child, neighbor – in the future we won't name any of them as authors of the evil in our lives, in the knowledge that, unless we judge things in a particular light, we won't act in the corresponding manner. And we, not externals, are the master of our judgments. (Epictetus)

The tranquility
that comes
when you stop
caring what they say,
Or think, or do.
Only what you do.

-Marcus Aurelius

Good vs. Bad

Consider those things outside your control that you regard as good or bad. When the bad things happen, or the good ones don't, you inevitably will blame the gods and hate the people responsible (or who are suspected of it). We do great injustice through our disputes about these things. But if we judge as good and bad only what is in our power, there is no occasion left to accuse God or take a fighting stance toward men. (Marcus Aurelius)

Here is a rule to remember when anything tempts you to feel bitter: not, "This is a misfortune," but, "To bear this worthily is good fortune." (Marcus Aurelius)

Where is the good? In our choices. Where is the evil? In our choices. Where is neither of them? In those things we do not choose. (Epictetus)

"Is health good, and disease evil?" No, you can do better than that. "What then?" To use health well is good, to use it badly is evil. (Epictetus)

Who is not aware that nothing thought to be good or bad looks the same to the sage as it does to everyone else? He pays no mind to what others consider shameful or wretched; he does not walk with the crowd; just as the planets make their way against the whirl of heaven, he proceeds contrary to the opinion of the world. (Seneca)

"How unfortunate I am, that this has happened to me!" Not at all – rather, "How fortunate I am, that although this has happened to me I am still unhurt, neither broken by the present nor dreading what is to come." For something of this sort might have happened to anyone, but not everyone would remain unhurt in spite of it...Remember then, on each occasion that might lead you to grief, to make use of this idea: "This is no misfortune; to bear it nobly, rather is good fortune." (Marcus Aurelius)

Everything can be classified as good, bad or indifferent. The virtues, and the things that share in them, are good. The vices and what shares in them are bad. Everything in between is indifferent, like wealth, health, life, death, and poverty. (Epictetus)

Just think: we aren't filled with fear except by things that are bad; and not by them, either, as long as it is in our power to avoid them. So, if externals are neither good nor bad, while everything within the sphere of choice is in our power and cannot be taken away by anyone, or imposed on us without our compliance – then what's left to be nervous about? (Epictetus)

Make a bad beginning and you'll contend with trouble ever after. (Hesiod)

Be Desireless

No person has the power to have everything they want, but it is in their power not to want what they don't have, and to cheerfully put to good use what they do have. (Seneca)

You will learn the truth by experience: the things that people value highly and try hardest to get do them no good once they have them. Those who don't have them imagine that, once they do, everything good will be theirs; then they do get them, and the heat of their desires is the same, their agitation is the same, their disgust with what they possess is the same, and their wish for what they don't have is the same. (Epictetus)

Let the possessions of many wealthy men be piled up together for you! Assume fortune takes you far beyond a mere private income: it covers you in gold, dresses you in purple, brings you to that stage of luxury and riches at which you hide the ground under marble floors, so that you're able not only to have wealth but to walk on it. Add statues and paintings and whatever art has devised in the service of luxury. What you will learn from these things is to long for more. Natural desires are finite; those born of false opinion have no place to stop. There is no terminus to what is false. When you are traveling on a road, there must be an end; but wanderings have no limit. (Seneca)

What I will teach you is the ability to become rich as speedily as possible. How excited you are to hear the news! And rightly so; I will lead you by a shortcut to the greatest wealth. My dear Lucilius, not wanting something is just as good as having it. The important thing either way is the same – freedom from worry. (Seneca)

It is not one who has little, but one who craves more, who is poor. What does it matter how much you have laid up in your safe or in your warehouse, how large are your flocks or your investments, if you covet your neighbor's property, and if you count not what you have but what remains for you to have? (Seneca)

Don't imagine having things that you don't have. Rather, pick the best of the things that you do have and think of how much you would want them if you didn't have them. (Marcus Aurelius)

The greatest wealth is a poverty of desires. (Seneca)

Freedom is not procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired, but by controlling the desire. (Epictetus)

Progress

First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do. (Epictetus)

Making noble resolutions is not as important as keeping the resolutions you have made already. You have to persevere and fortify your pertinacity until the will to do good becomes a disposition to good. (Seneca)

I advise and urge you not to allow your spiritual enthusiasm to cool off or fall away. Keep a hold on it and put it on a firm footing, so that what is at present an enthusiasm may become a settled spiritual disposition. (Seneca)

What we want to discover, then, is how the mind may always maintain an even and favorable course, may be well-disposed toward itself, may be happy in contemplating its own condition, and may have this happiness without interruption – how it can stay calmly in that position, never carrying itself off and never cast down. This will be peace of mind. (Seneca)

Here is the result of wisdom: a constant and unvarying kind of joy. The mind of the wise man is like the heavens beyond the moon: the sky up there is always clear... This joy is produced only by a consciousness of the virtues. (Seneca)

What progress have I made? I am beginning to be my own friend. (Seneca)

A wrong-doer is often a man that has left something undone, not always he that has done something wrong. (Marcus Aurelius)

How much better to pursue a straight course and eventually reach that destination where the things that are pleasant and the things that are honorable finally become, for you, the same. (Seneca)

We might define the disease this way: to strive too hard for things that are only worth wanting a little or not at all, or to value things highly that ought to be valued only somewhat or not at all. (Seneca)

There is nothing for which nature deserves greater praise than this: knowing the hardships to which we were born, it invented habit as a slave to disasters; we quickly accustom ourselves to even the severest misfortunes. No one could withstand adversity if its persistence were felt with all the same force as its first blow. (Seneca)

Our life is what our thoughts make it. (Marcus Aurelius)

The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts. (Marcus Aurelius)

Remember this – that very little is needed to make a happy life. It is all in your way of thinking. (Marcus Aurelius)

Virtue

What is the goal of virtue, after all, except a life that flows smoothly? (Epictetus)

This may be taught quickly and in a few words. Virtue is the only good, or at least there is no good without virtue; virtue itself is situated in our nobler part, that is, the rational part. And what will this virtue be? True and steadfast judgment. From this will spring the impulses of the mind; by this, every external appearance that stirs such an impulse will be reduced to transparency. (Seneca)

“But you too cultivate virtue,” he replies, “only because you hope to gain some pleasure from it.” First of all, even though virtue will assure pleasure, it is not on account of pleasure that virtue is pursued. It is not pleasure that it assures, but pleasure as well; nor does virtue exert itself for pleasure, but its effort – though it aims at something else – achieves this too... Thus pleasure is not the reward or cause of virtue, but the byproduct of it. (Seneca)

Virtue depends partly upon training and partly upon practice; you must learn first, and then strengthen your learning by action. (Seneca)

This is how I came to lose my lamp: the thief was better than I am in staying awake. But he acquired the lamp at a price: he became a thief for its sake, for its sake, he lost his ability to be trusted, for a lamp he became a brute. And he imagined he came out ahead! (Epictetus)

Consider at what price you sell your integrity; but please, for God’s sake, don’t sell it cheap. The grand gesture, the ultimate sacrifice – that, perhaps, belongs to others, to people of Socrates’ class. But if we are endowed by nature with the potential for greatness, why do only some of us achieve it? Well, do all horses become stallions? Are all dogs greyhounds? Even if I lack the talent, I will not abandon the effort on that account... In short, we do not abandon any discipline for despair of ever being the best in it. (Epictetus)

You are the one who knows yourself – which is to say, you know how much you are worth in your own estimation, and therefore at what price you will sell yourself; because people sell themselves at different rates. (Epictetus)

I am pointing out to others the right path, which I have recognized only late in life, when I am worn out with my wanderings. (Seneca)

I persist on praising not the life I lead, but that which I ought to lead. I follow it at a mighty distance, crawling. (Seneca)

The mind unlearns with difficulty what has long been impressed on it. (Seneca)

If thou art a man, admire those who attempt great things, even though they fail. (Seneca)

Surrender

I am always content with what happens; for I know that what God chooses is better than what I choose. (Epictetus)

Say nothing more to yourself than what first appearances report. Suppose it is reported that a certain person is saying terrible things about you. This much is reported; but it is not reported that you have been hurt. I see that my child is sick. I see that much; but that he is in danger, I do not see. So always stay with first appearances, and add nothing from within yourself – nothing happens to you. Or rather add something, but do it like someone who knows of all that happens in the world. (Marcus Aurelius)

What madness to be dragged when one could follow! As much, I swear, as it is folly and ignorance of one's lot to grieve because you lack something, or because something affects you adversely, or to be surprised and indignant at those things that happen to the good and the bad alike – I mean deaths, funerals, infirmities, and all the other accidents besetting human life. Whatever the ways of the universe may require us to suffer, let us take it up with high-mindedness. This is the oath by which we are bound: to bear with the human condition, and not to be disturbed by what we do not have the power to avoid. (Seneca)

Whatever happens, let your mind suppose it was bound to happen, and do not rail at nature. (Seneca)

Don't insist that what happens should happen as you wish; wish that things happen as they actually happen. Then your life will go well. (Epictetus)

I am always content with what happens; for I know that what God chooses is better than what I choose. (Epictetus)



Self-Introspection

A consciousness of wrongdoing is the first step to salvation... You have to catch yourself doing it before you can correct it. (Seneca)

We should every night call ourselves to an account; what infirmity have I mastered today? What passions opposed? What temptation resisted? What virtue acquired? Our vices will abort themselves if they be brought every day to the shrift. (Seneca)

The mind should be summoned every day to render an accounting. Sextius used to do this. At the end of the day, when he had withdrawn to his nightly rest, he would interrogate his own mind: "Which of your wrongs did you correct today? Which fault did you resist? In what way are you better?" Anger will leave off and be more moderate, if it knows that it must each day come before a judge. Is there anything finer than this habit of searching through the entire day, retracing all my deeds and words? (Seneca)

Resisting Temptation

When you are tempted by some apparent pleasure, guard yourself – just as with other impressions – against being carried away by it. Let the thing wait for you, and give yourself some delay. Then think about two times to come: the time when you will enjoy the pleasure, and the time afterwards when, having enjoyed it, you will regret it and reproach yourself. Compare this with how pleased you will be, and how you will congratulate yourself, if you don't do it. (Epictetus)

Still, if it seems that the time is right to do the thing, just take care that the charm and pleasure and attraction of it do not overcome you; compare how much better it is to know you have won this victory against it. (Epictetus)

You are a great man; but how do I know it if fortune gives you no opportunity to show your worth? You have entered the Olympic Games, but you are the only contestant; you gain the crown, not the victory. I congratulate you not as a brave man, but as I would someone who had obtained a consulship or praetorship: "You're getting quite famous!" Likewise I might say to a good man, if no harder circumstance has given him the chance to show his strength of mind, "I judge you unfortunate because you have never been unfortunate: You have passed through life without an antagonist; no one will know what you can do, not even you yourself." (Seneca)



Practicing the Presence of God

We must single out some good man, and have him always in view, so that we may live as if he were watching and do everything as if he saw it...Choose the one whose life, whose speech, whose forthright countenance, all satisfy you; then show him always to yourself as your guardian and model. We need someone, I say, against whose example our own conduct can measure itself. You can't straighten what's crooked without a ruler. (Seneca)

It helps, no doubt, to have appointed a guardian for oneself, to have someone you can look to, someone you regard as taking part in your thoughts. The most noble thing, by far, is to live as if you were being seen by some good man who was always present, but I'm satisfied even with this – that you do whatever you do as if someone were watching. It's when we're alone that we are prompted to evil. (Seneca)

Old Age

As for old age, embrace it and love it. The gradually declining years are among the sweetest in man's life. (Seneca)

We should cherish old age and enjoy it. It is full of pleasure if you know how to use it. Fruit tastes most delicious just when its season is ending. The charms of youth are at their greatest at the time of its passing. It is the final glass which pleases the inveterate drinker, the one that sets the crowning touch on his intoxication and sends him off into oblivion. Every pleasure defers till its last its greatest delights. The time of life which offers the greatest delight is the age that sees the downward movement – not the steep decline – already begun; and in my opinion even the age that stands on the brink has pleasures of its own – or else the very fact of not experiencing the want of any pleasures takes their place. How nice it is to have outworn one's desires and left them behind! (Seneca)

The objective is to live a full life, not just a long one. Survival into old age requires only good luck, whereas living enough demands character. (Seneca)

Death 1

When death appears an evil, we should have ready the fact that it is a duty to avoid evil things, whereas death is necessary and cannot be avoided. (Epictetus)

No, I cannot escape death, but at least I can escape the fear of it – or do I have to die moaning and groaning too? (Epictetus)

Death and pain are not frightening, it's the fear of pain and death we need to fear. Which is why we praise the poet who wrote, 'Death is not fearful, but dying like a coward is.' (Epictetus)

Never say about anything, "I have lost it," but only "I have given it back." Is your child dead? It has been given back. Is your wife dead? She has been returned. (Epictetus)

Your brother has not lost the light of day, but has obtained a more enduring Light. He has not left us, but has gone before us. (Seneca)

Death 2

Death is a punishment to some, to some a gift, and to many a favor. (Seneca)

At the morning shows in the arena we sometimes see a fight between a bull and a bear tied together. After they have roughed each other up, there's someone waiting to finish them off. We do the same thing: we provoke someone tied to us, though a speedy end hangs over both the victor and the vanquished. Let us rather spend what little time remains in peace and calm! Let our corpse be hateful to no one! The cry of "Fire!" in the neighborhood has often broken up a fight; the arrival of a wild beast has separated a bandit from a traveler. There's no time to struggle with lesser evils once a greater threat appears. Why do we concern ourselves with conflict and plotting? That man you are angry with – can you wish for him anything worse than death? He is going to die without you doing a thing. (Seneca)

Death belongs among those things that are not evils in truth, but still have an appearance of evil; for a love of self is implanted in us, and a desire for existence and survival, and a dread of disintegration. Death seems to rob us of many good things and to remove us from all we have come to know. And there is another element that estranges us from death: we are already familiar with the present, but are ignorant of the future into which we will go, and we shrink from the unknown...Even if death is something indifferent, then, it is nevertheless a thing that cannot be easily ignored. (Seneca)

What is death? A mask to frighten children. Turn it and examine it. See, it does not bite. The poor body must be separated from the spirit as it was before, either now or later. Why then are you troubled if it be now? For if not now, later. (Epictetus)

Does it do any harm to a good man to be smeared by unjust gossip? Then we should not let the same sort of thing do damage to death, either, in our judgment; for death also has a bad reputation, but none of those who malign death have tried it. (Seneca)

Do not despise death, but be content with it, since this too is one of those things nature wills. For what it is to be young and grow old, and to increase and reach maturity, and to have teeth and beard and grey hair, and to father children, and to be pregnant and to give birth, and all the other natural operations the seasons of your life bring – so also is dissolution. This, then, is the way of one who is reflective: to be neither careless nor impatient nor arrogant with respect to death, but to wait for it as one of the operations of nature. (Marcus Aurelius)

If you want a vulgar form of comfort that touches the heart, reconcile yourself to death by observing, above all, the things from which you will be removed, and the morals of those with whom your soul will no longer have to associate. Do not take offense at them – it is your duty, rather, to care for them and to gently put up with them – but nevertheless remember that you will be departing from others who do not have the same opinions you do. That is the one consideration, if any, that would pull the other way and attach us to life – if we could live with those who share our opinions. But when you see how much trouble arises from the discord of all of them living together, it is enough to make you say, "Come quickly, O Death, lest somehow I too forget myself." (Marcus Aurelius)

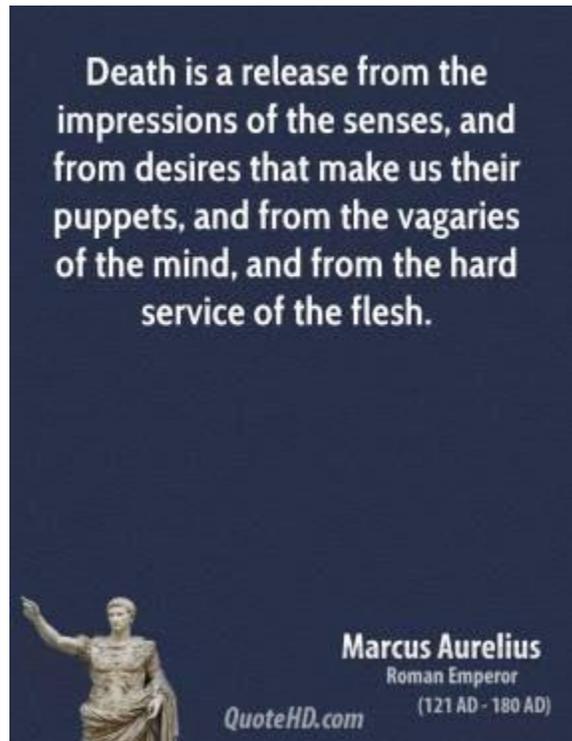
Death 3

You ask what the finest life span would be. To live until you reach wisdom. The one who gets there has arrived, not at the farthest goal, but at the most important. That man, indeed, may boldly congratulate himself, and give thanks to the gods – and to himself along with them – and count in his reckoning with the universe the fact that he has lived. His account will be in credit; he has given it back a better life than he received. (Seneca)

There is no reason for you to think anyone has lived long just because he has grey hairs or wrinkles. He has not lived long; he has existed long. For suppose you should imagine that a man had a great voyage when in fact he was caught by a fierce storm as soon as he left harbor, was swept this way and that by strong winds from different directions, and was driven along the same path in circles. He did not make a great voyage. He was greatly tossed about. (Seneca)

Nothing will give you so much help toward moderation as the frequent thought that life is short and that the little we have is uncertain. Whatever you are doing, be mindful of death. (Seneca)

What is death? Either a transition or an end. I am not afraid of coming to an end, this being the same as never having become; not of transition, for I shall never be in confinement quite so cramped anywhere as I am here. (Seneca)



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