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Happy Teachers in Happy Schools: how ancient philosophy can be helpful in the present time

The most effective teachers are the ones who allow themselves to be the happiest. Their wellbeing is innately linked to the essential satisfaction they draw from their professional role.
A. Bethune, E. Kell

Teacher Wellbeing is broadly understood as teachers' responses to the cognitive, emotional, health and social conditions pertaining to their work and their profession. It influences their health, self efficacy, teaching practices as well as experiences and achievements of students.
Wellbeing and mental health at school, Guidelines for school leaders, teachers and educators, European Commission

Think back to why you teach at all: the value of any task that doesn't have a direct, demonstrable and positive impact on the progress and growth of your students needs to be questioned.
A. Bethune, E. Kell

Human first, teacher second
Mary Myatt, Ofsted Inspector

Stoic philosophy is a useful guide to living a good life because it has answers for the questions that the so-called five pillars of Positive Psychology* and REBT** may raise. Joy and well-being, a sense of meaning, how to develop perseverance and resilience, how to curb anger and grief, these are the main topics in Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca's philosophy.

Classic wisdom can be inspirational for our hectic life, as many self-help books recently published have shown: Positive Psychology has taught us a different approach to well-being, its findings combined with the ancient Stoicism*** can help to ride the everyday storm, or, better yet, to ponder over what is really important in life. Not too bad for a school of philosophy founded in the third century BC.

If you compare all the strategies you can learn from the new psychological trends in order to cope with stress, such as meditation, mindfulness, digital detox, exercises for mental-physical-emotional well-being, with Stoic philosophy you will find it surprisingly modern, as Paul Dubois stated in 1909. Nothing new under the sun when it comes to human beings' issues, one could argue. Nevertheless, this is a comforting thought for two different reasons. First of all, it underpins the importance of classics and their role outside the academic institutions; secondly, it is solid proof of how our fundamental needs have never changed over the centuries, as some recent study carried out by the *Birbeck Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory*, University of London, has demonstrated. Mindfulness is the stoic *prosoché* and for this reason the knowledge of ancient wisdom is of the essence:

without knowledge there are no social skills or technical competence and in the end there is no happiness.

From Epictetus to the digital age we always look for joy and relief in life, very often we run into difficulties, sometimes we have to cope with stressful situations and definitely we need more resilience every day. As teachers we experience all the gamut of these feelings and as teachers we know how well-being can improve teaching as well as learning in our classes.

Here below is an overview of Stoic wisdom as it can be applied to our ordinary life in order to flourish. We flourish when we cultivate our talents and strenghts, develop deep and meaningful relationships, feel pleasure and enjoyment, and make a meaningful contribution to the world. It is a process that requires action. Therefore, before Stoicism, an overview of some issues we experience every day, with the connected solutions provided by some contemporary trends in psychology. Over the years, experts on education and psychologists have been elaborating a vocabulary bank we are quite familiar with, along with some strategies that can be helpful to manage our stress successfully. We cannot be effective teachers when we feel overwhelmed and exhausted, therefore wellbeing and self-care should be always our priority. And we cannot be effective teachers if we do not feel we are doing a good job, if at the end of the day, no matter how many initiatives we have taken part in, we do not feel that our efforts are worth it.

Happy Teachers in Happy Schools: if not sheer joy, a shared path towards flourishing.

Issues

- Life moving too fast
- Uncertainty about future
- Overthinking
- Busy schedule
- Too many roles to play
- Work-Life balance
- Troubled Sleep
- Health Problems
- Negative relationships
- Difficult situations at school
- External pressure
- Sense of failure
- Disappointing education system
- Disappointing school community
- …

Solutions

Meditation/Breathing tecniques/E+R=O/W.I.N./Mindfulness/Circle of Influence/PTO/Food+Exercise+Rest/Relaxation/ Setting boundaries/Saying No/Having some "me time"/Changing your perspective /Quiet education/Time Management/Reducing the have-tos/The 80:20 rule/One bag theory/Being a humourous teacher/Being an otherish giver/Positive Psychology…

Glossary and Key Concepts

Mindfulness= to be in the moment. It's the practice of being aware of your body-mind-feelings in the present moment in order to create a sensation of calm without suffering from FOMO = Fear of Missing Out (by Jon Kabat Zinn); doing one thing at a time and paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment without being judgmental but being instead openhearted (by Daniel J. Siegel). It can be a Formal or an Informal Practice in every moment of your day. There are different genres of Mindfulness: food mindfulness, creative mindfulness… Its benefits are: more concentration, a better control of your thoughts-emotions-behaviours, healthy physical effects. In order to cope with stressors, before practice Mindfulness, we can apply the PBS tecnique: Pause-Breathe-Smile.

The Fundamentals of Well-being: sleep, diet, exercise.

Ikigai= it is a Japanese concept that can be translated as your "reason for being", something worth living for: it is a mix of vocation-profession-passion-mission and it's a a process of discovery (vd. Workbook and Materials).

Mindfulness= the practice of being aware of your body-mind-feelings in the present moment in order to create a sensation of calm without suffering from FOMO = Fear of Missing Out (by Jon Kabat Zinn); doing one thing at a time and paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment without being judgmental but being instead openhearted (by Daniel J. Siegel).

Eustress=positive stress that helps us to concentrate, be alert and perform a tour best Stress Indicators: they can come from your mind and from your body, we can manage them in three steps: 1. Recognise the signs and be proactive; 2. Get rid of the bad habits such as eating junk food or watching rubbish television; 3. Choose nourishing activities such as mindfulness or a daily moment of stillness.

Quiet Education=building quiet time consciously into your day, having a moment of stillness with the students before starting lessons or taking time for meditation; slow down the pace of your life and pause for a while in order to find your clarity of vision.

Breathing Tecniques: it works for mindfulness as well as for meditation. In a quiet place breathe in and out for three minutes at different points of the day, becoming aware of what is going on in your mind and trying to notice the sensations in your body. Belly Breathing: take some conscious, deep breaths slowly, using your diaphragam fully and being focussedon the breath.

Selfless Givers vs. Otherish Givers (by A. Grant): "selfless givers" tend to sacrifice themselves to help others and they are more likely to burn out, while "otherish givers" set clear boundaries to protect their own wellbeing.

Resilience=how you react against all odds, it's your ability to cope with life adversities, a set of strenghts to achieve an inner balance between the highs and the lows in life as well as at work.

Learned Hopefulness=thinking positive because you know that there's always something you can do.

Self-empowerment=it's your ability to take control over your decisions without external conditions in order to achieve your goals; knowing your strenghts and being able to understand the context around you in order to deploy the right strategies to succeed.

Appreciative Inquiry=whilst Problem Solving attitude is outdated, you should focus on what is already working, on the positive aspects to improve your performances, because, as science has already demonstrated, we can work better when we have positive feelings.

Growth Mindset= how to improve yourself by learning from failures, relishing challenges you come across and embracing all the difficulties with an open mind: when I fail, I learn and if you succeed, I am inspired.

YOLO=You Only Live Once, Seize the day.

Quiet Quitting=it's a recent trend in the labour market and it is a form of employee disengagement where team members fulfill the bare minimum requirements to keep their jobs; it's the opposite of the so called Hustle Culture.

The Great Exhaustion=it is a new term coined by analysts and economist to describe a pervasive form of burnout that starts with stress directly related to work and piles up wider anxieties about the state of the world.

You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf (by Jon Kabat Zinn): managing the stress without fighting against it.

The Circle of Influence: control the controllable: there are things you cannot control and you shouldn't focus your energy and time on; most effective people focus their energy on areas they can make a difference and in doing so their cicle of influence grows (by Stephen Covey).

E + R = O
Event + Response or Reaction = Outcome
You can keep under control the outcomes by changing your response to the events of your life.

OPPORTUNITYISNOWHERE: it has two different meanings and two different perspectives; it's the so called "reframing": when we change consciously how we view a situation, often we turn a negative one into a more optimistic viewpoint

STOPP tecnique: Stop, Take a Breath, Observe what you think and what you feel, Put in some Perspective, Proceed. This technique is a tool to take back your control when you are experiencing a stressful situation.

How to say "no" with grace: setting boundaries, buying time, offering an alternative or saying "not now", finding a compromise, telling a white lie, using the word "reasonable".

W.I.N. = What's Important Now (what I really want): applying your ability to say "no" in order to deliver your message.

Digital detox: it takes us 68 seconds to recover from each email that lands in our boxes (by Dmitri Leonov, SaneBox), your mental wellbeing needs PTO = Predictable Time Off = no technology, no screen time.

Three Good Things: this activity can gradually increase wellbeing when practised regularly by eradicating your "negative bias". It consists of writing down three things that have gone well and why.

CPD=Continuing Professional Development: teaching is always a work in progress and instead of being a perfectionist, try to be a "good enough" teacher who has life and interests outside of school.

Digital Cleansing: filter out your emails, weed out unwanted and unread messages, unsyncronise your work email from your personal mobile phone.

The Have-tos vs. the Want-tos (by Tal Ben Shahar): our life is filled with things we feel we "have to" do, on the other hand, there are things we "want to" do. Reducing the have-tos whilst increasing the want-tos is key to enhancing wellbeing.

The 80:20 rule (or Pareto Principle): 20% of what we do is likely to be worth the rest of the 80% put together, so we need to be doing less: just a lot better, by prioritising your tasks, being concentrated, keep the main thing the main thing and "eating the frog" (by Tony Crabbe).

The One Bag theory (by Karen Edge): carrying one bag can help rationalise workload, make work feel do-able and help us define the boundaries betwee work and home; the Guilt Bag is the one you haul out of school on Saturday and you leave in a corner of your hallway all weekend.

Presenteeism=it's the act of being seen to spend more time at work than is necessary and it's a bad habit which is very common amongst teachers: more doesn't mean better and you are likely to be moving backwards rather then forwards.

The Reset Button: when stress starts to build up, book one whole day out of work of all kinds and another half day to review the way you are organising your workload.

Emotionally Positive Classrooms (by M. Smith): since positive relationships and a sense of belonging play an important role in learning, there are three interrelated properties that make a classroom an emotionally positive one: Caring (when students feel trusted and teachers are supportive), Pro-social (when students and teachers are kind to one another), Learning-focused (when students and teachers have clear the goals they are working towards).

Humourous Teachers (by L. Cozolino): neuroscience shows that sharing humour in class can actually stimulate learning, because it reduces tension and highlights a shared humanity. Find opportunities to laugh at yourself and to laugh with your students, this attitude makes you more human and improve the students' performances.

Teacher Agency: agency is the sense that teachers have a voice and control over decisions which affect their professional role and it's a key factor in achieving positive wellbeing. In order to being able to take action, a teacher needs to find the right school for him/her, to be aware of his/her circle of influence, to be assertive, to be able to say "no" from time to time, to take control of his/her professional development (CPD), to be optimistic.

SWB (Subjective Well Being)=it relies on three pillars: frequent positive feelings, infrequent negative feelings, life satisfaction.

Worry Coping Cards: a practical activity to help you and your students deal with negative feelings (vd. Materials).

Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions=there are six basic emotions which are in the inner circle plus other several emotions with a different level of intensity (vd. Materials).

Gratitude=it is an emotion with social/environmental connotation, a cognitive-affective state. Practising it improves the sense of well-being and makes you more optimistic.

SMART Goals=Specific-Achievable-Realistic/Relevant-Time frame: teachers have always to set SMART goals, because only these can lead to success avoiding anxiety.

WHO's Life Skills: Effective Communication, Interpersonal Relationships, Coping with Stress, Coping with Emotions, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Decision Making, Problem Solving, Self-Awareness (vd. Materials).

SODAS Method=it is a problem solving attitude:
Situations/Options/Disadvantages/Advantages/Solutions. It helps you to deal with critical situations.

Teachers Change Lives: some data collected by the London School of Economics show that primary and secondary teachers have a huge impact on students' happiness. It means that a teacher's impact on their students is far more important than just the knowledge and skills they pass on: teachers can help shape their students into flourishing adults.

European Commission,
Guidelines on Wellbeing and Mental Health at School, a Summary

After the latest PISA results (December 2023) and some resarch that revealed a decline in basic skills , student and teacher wellbeing (*the realisation of a person's unique potential trough physical, emotional, mental and spiritual relation to the self, others and the environment*), have become one of the core objectives in education because we all know the link between performance and wellbeing; these guidelines were thus developed by the Commission Expert Group in order to support it at school and they are aligned with the EU Strategy, the WHO and UNESCO.

We are now moving towards a more holistic view of education, which means a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional competences to become successful learners. Wellbeing at school, from the perspective of both learners and teachers, is key to improving academic performances and it can only be achieved sustainably through a **whole-school approach (WSA),** which is an approach embedded in the Pathways to School Success Council Recommendation.

The 11 EU recommendations:

1. Establish a positive school climate rooted in the active partecipation and empowerment of learners
2. Integrate social and emotional education into curriculum starting from early childhood education
3. Foster collaborative partnerships among schools, communities and stakeholders to enhance wellbeing
4. Fully integrate wellbeing principles into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes
5. Strenghten the capacity of school leaders to address wellbeing at school to create inclusive and supportive environments
6. Ensure the creation of safe schools to prevent and adress various forms of violence at school, including gender-based violence, and cyberbullying
7. Promote wellbeing in the digital age
8. Uphold fundamental rights by safeguarding core enablers of wellbeing: nutrition, play and rest, physical activity and arts
9. Provide continuous professional development (CPD) and support educators on wellbeing
10. Prioritise equity, inclusion and diversity as essential conditions for wellbeing, ensuring that no one is marginalised or excluded
11. Guarantee access to support services for learners with mental health needs

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Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
WHO, 1946

From this assumption, Martin Seligman founded in the 70s the **Positive Psychology**, which is *the scientific study of what makes life most worth living (Peterson, 2008).* It focusses on the positive events and influences in life, such as positive experiences (happiness, joy, inspiration and love) and positive states and traits (gratitude, resilience and compassion). Positive Psychology is based on the idea that building on our strenghts is often a more effective path to success than trying to become excellent in areas we are simply not suited for. Its aim is to help people to flourish in life. "Flourishing" is a state we are in when we pay attention to each aspect of the PERMA Model and we build up a solid sense of wellbeing. These are the main concepts, which can be applied in several different settings, including classroom, workplace and our own home:

1. Mental health is a presence and not absence of disease: traditional psychotherapy is designed to curtail misery while Positive Psychology builds strength
2. Happiness and well-being are not the same thing: the first one is a single element, the second one is a construct, like the weather
3. Happiness is a chaotic term, it's overused, it's always linked to a cheerful mood, it's subjective, it's too volatile
4. We have to rethink happiness: Positive Psychology analyzes it into five positive elements which are measurable and not merely subjective
5. PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, accomplishment
6. The topic of Positive Psychology is not happiness, but well-being and its goal is to increase flourishing in people: happiness is only subjective whereas well-being is not and flourishing doesn't mean minimizing suffering. It has a different approach from the traditional one because it is not goal oriented; its aim is not to treat your weaknesses but to strengthen your virtue. It can be also applied to Education (Positive Education), whose motto is: if you feel good, you do good. It can help to prevent anxiety at failure at school.
7. Well-being should be taught in school because it could be a way to curb the current flood of depression and to develop better learning as well as creative thinking
8. Exercises to raise your well-being: celebrating gratitude, being focussed on what goes right, using your signature strength more frequently, being optimistic, practicing active and constructive responding, dealing with negative emotions
9. Positive Psychology movement, founded in 1990s by Dr. Martin Seligman, is rooted in scientific evidence and its approach is based on two key points: being focussed on positive evidence and making you more optimistic and stronger so as to prevent misery in life

10. To flourish=prosperare; it is an umbrella term, but all the meanings are linked to a state of well-being: to be healthy, to grow well, to thrive, to be successful, to bloom, to be vigorous
11. The five pillars:
    positive emotions=what we feel, the pleasant life
    engagement=being in flow, focussed on your "object"
    positive **r**elationships=the master strength is the capacity of being loved
    meaning=serving something that you believe is bigger than yourself, having your **ikigai** (something worth living for)
    achievement=skills x effort: self-discipline (grit), practice, time

The PERMA Model of Wellbeing in details

1.
Positive Emotions=”a multicomponent response tendency”, a mental experience which is intense and pleasurable.

What is an emotion? It has three components: cognitive-behavioural-physiological and the gamut is wide, but being aware and being able to give them a proper name can be helpful to manage the negative ones.

Negative Emotions: we should learn how to manage them by STOPP Method: Pause for 6 seconds, Take a breath, Observe your feelings/reactions, Put them in perspective, Proceed.

2.
Engagement=to be in the flow state. It is a holistic experience that people feel when they act with total involvement: your mind is totally focussed on the task and you do not care about the results, you do not pay attention to time passing because you enjoy the process in and of itself. The key is this: the challenge has to match your skills, otherwise you can experience anxiety or boredom.

How to reach this state in a classroom, with the students? You have to find the SMART task, be crystal clear about goals and time frame, encourage everyone, avoid distractions, choose a pleasant environment, be the role model, rely on and enhance their strenghts.

3.
Positive Relationships=the indicators of a positive relationship can be to feel free to be yourself, a sense of trust and safety, empathy and compassion, no judgment, mutual support…but the key is how to communicate in a constructive way.

Active Constructive Responding (ACR)=how to communicate successfully with everyone in order to build positive relationships and to develop your assertiveness (vd. Materials).

Practising ACR, Gratitude, Mindfulness at school leads to stronger self-control, reduces level of stress, improves well-being, makes relationships more meaningful. How can we practice Gratitude and Mindfulness at school? For example, we could start our lessons by stating one thing we are grateful for and encouraging the students to do the same; we also could say “thank you” more often or introduce a few minutes of meditation as good practice. Or, again, we could develop a mindful way of living in our students by applying some strategies of Positive Psychology.

4.
Meaning=to have a sense of purpose in life. It is always connected to your values and beliefs. Finding your ikigay is the key factor.

How to find your ikigai? By answering the following four questions.
What do you love doing?

What are you good at?
What can you be paid for?
What does the world need?

You have found your ikigay when these four elements overlap, as it is shown in the picture (vd. Materials)

5.
Accomplishment=the development of an individual potential through striving for and achieving meaningful otucomes. It needs a Growth Mindset and it is connected to your strenghts.

Strengths=positive qualities that can promote well-being in themselves and in the others. They have an impact on how you think/feel/behave (vd. Materials).

This model gives us a comprehensive framework for understanding wellbeing as well as a foundation for improving it. If you're looking to enhance your own sense of wellbeing (not happiness, because happiness alone wont't lead you towards flourishing), all you need to do is to focus on:
experiencing more positive emotions doing more of things that make you happy;
working on upping your engagement and on developing your skills, even at work;
improve the quality of your relationships;
seeking out meaning, at work or in volunteering opportunities;
keeping your focus on achieving your goals without pushing too hard on yourself.

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REBT=Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, by Albert Ellis

This therapy, born in the '50, is rooted in philosophy and it has many acronyms. These are its three pillars: unconditional self-acceptance (your goals or performances or others' approval do not matter), unconditional other-acceptance (never rating other people, only their traits and doings), unconditional life-acceptance (there are things you can't change, vd. Epictetus).

The only way to cope with problems is to make fully aware of your own needless tendencies to upset yourself with dogmatic *shoulds*, *oughts* and *musts* that the world demand by creating irrational beliefs. Instead of feeling miserable, stick to the facts, think rationally and accept what is going on (WIGO).

Is positive thinking too close to Pollyanna syndrome? Are you fully aware of your healthy and unhealthy feelings? Strong feelings are not unhealthy, feelings are harmful only when they stem from unrealistic commands and make you inactive. But you are in control: people are disturbed not by things, but by the views they take of them (Epictetus) and we can change our feelings by accepting what cannot be changed and by using rational thinking to be proactive. Stubbornly refusing to make yourself miserable is a daily practice that can improve our tough life.

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Stoicism=an ancient school of philosophy that flourished in Greece and in Rome, founded by Zeno of Citium in the early third century BC. Its name comes from *Stoa*, a porch where Zeno first taught his students. Amongst its adherents Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

They believed that the practice of four virtues in everyday life (wisdom, courage, self-control, justice) plus living in accordance with Nature were the right path towards a well-lived life. Our ability to use our reason to choose how we respond to external events is the only thing we can rely on, they stated. Making its way from Greece to Rome, Stoicism became much more practical and it offered a set of tools for daily use to face a harsh reality during Nero's (Seneca) and Domitian's time (Epictetus). The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 121 – 180), who had to rule the empire during a period troubled by natural disasters and by invasions of barbarians, took great advantage from this philosophy as we can see in his *Meditations*. Recently a study carried out by *Birbeck Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory, University of Londo*n, has shown how Stoic philosophy applied to patiens suffering from anxiety is conducive to very good results in terms of relaxation and cognitive abilities.

The Stoic meditations

Well-being is realized by small steps, but is truly no small thing.
Zeno, quoted in Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, 7.1.26

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

Let all your efforts be directed to something, let it keep that end in view. It's not activity that disturbs people, but falce conceptions of things that drive them mad.
Seneca, On tranquillity of Mind, 12.5

Some things are in our control, while others are not. We control our opinion, choice, desire, aversion, and, in a word, everything of our own. We don't control our body, property, reputation, position, and, in a word, everything not of our own doing. Even more, the things in our control are by nature free, unhindered, and unobstructed, while those not in our control are weak, slavish, can be hindered, and are no our own
Epictetus, Enchiridion, 1.1-2

If you wish to improve, be content to appear clueless or stupid in extraneous matters-don't wish to seem knowledgeable. And if some regard you as important, distrust yourself.
Epictetus, Enchiridion, 13°

When I see an anxious person, I ask myself, what do they want? For if a person wasn't wanting something outside of their own control, why would they be stricken by anxiety?
Epictetus, Discourses, 2.13.1

Keep constant guard over your perceptions, for it is no small thing you are protecting, but your respect, trustworthiness and steadiness, peace of mind, freedom from pain and fear, in a word your freedom. For wht would you sell these things?
Epictetus, Discourses, 4.3.6b-8

It is quite impossible to unite happiness with a yearning for what we don't have. Happiness has all that it wants, and resembling the well-fed, there shouldn't be hunger or thirst.
Epictetus, Discourses, 3.24.17

Remember to conduct yourself in life as ifa t a banquet. As something being passed around comes to you, reach out your hand and take a moderate helping. Does it pass you by? Don't stop it. It hasn't yet come? Don't burn in desire for, but wait untili t arrives in front of you.

Epictetus, Enchiridion, 15

You shouldn't give circumstances the power to rouse anger, for they don't care at all
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 7.38

The person is free who live as they wish, neither compelled, nor hindered, nor limited-whose choices aren't hampered, whose desires succeed, and who don't fall into what repels them.
Epictetus, Discourses, 4.1.1-3°

You are not your body and hair-style, but your capacity for choosing well. If your choices are beautiful, so too will you be.
Epictetus, Discourses, 3.1.39b-4a

People seek retreats for themselves in the country, by the sea, or in the mountains. You are very much in the habit of yearning for those same things. But this is entirely the trait of a base person, when you can, at any moment, find such retreat in yourself. For nowhere can you find a more peaceful and less busy retreat than in your own soul-especially if on close inspection it is filled with ease, which I say is nothing more than being well-ordered. Treat yourself often to this retreat and be renewed.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 4.3.1

…freedom isn't secured by filling up on your heart's desire but by removing your desire.
Epictetus, Discourses, 4.1.175

Life without a design is erratic. As soon as one is in place, principles become necessary. I think you'll concede that nothing is more shameful than uncertain and wavering conduct, and beating a cowardly retreat. This will happen in all our affairs unless we remove the faults that seize and detain our spirits, preventing them from pushing forward and making an all-out effort.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 95.46

If you should ever turn your will to things outside your control in order to impress someone, be sure that you have wrecked your whole purpose in life. Be content, then, to be a philosopher in all that you do, and if you wish also to be seen as one, show yourself first that you are and you will succeed.
Epictetus, Enchiridion, 23

Your mind will take the shape of what you frequently hold in thought, for the human spirit is coloured by such impressions.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.16

When you first rise in the morning tell yourself: I will encounter busybodies, ingrates, egomaniacs, liars, the jealous and cranks. They are all stricken with these afflictions because they don't know the difference between good and evil. Because I have understood the beauty of good and the ugliness of evil, I know that none can do me harm, or implicate

me in ugliness-nor can I be angry at my relatives or hate them. For we are made for cooperation.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 2.1

Don't act grudgingly, selfishly, without due diligence, or to be a contrarian. Don't overdress your thought in fine language. Don't be a person of too many words and too many deeds…Be cheerful, not wanting outside help or the relief others might bring. A peron needs to stand on their own, not be propped up.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 3.5

What is bad luck? Opinion. What are conflict, dispute, blame, accusation, irreverence, and frivolity? They are all opinions, and more than that, they are opinions that lie outside of our own reasoned choice, presented as if they were good or evil. Let a person shift their opinions only to what belongs in the field of their own choice, and I guarantee that person will have peace of mind, whatever is happening around them.
Epictetus, Discourses, 3.3.18b-19

When you let your attention slide for a bit, don't think you will get back a grip on it whenever you wish-instead, bear in mind that because of today's mistake everything that follows will be necessary worse…Is it possible to be free from error? Not by any means, but it is possible to be a person always stretching to avoid errors. For we must be content to at least escape a few mistakes by never letting our attention slide.
Epictetus, Discourses, 4.12.1; 19

These are the characteristics of the rational soul: self-awareness, self-examination, and self-determination. It reaps its own harvest…It succeeds in its own purpose…
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 11.1-2

You have been formed of three parts-body. Breath, and mind. Of these, the first two are yours insofar as they are only in your care. The third alone is truly yours.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 12.3

If anyone can prove and show to me that I think and act in error, I will gladly change it-for I seek the truth, by which no one has ever been harmed. The one who is armed is the one who abides in deceit and ignorance.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 6.21

Watch the stars in their courses and imagine yourself running alongside them. Think constantly on the changes of the elements into each other, for such thoughts wash away the dust of earthly life.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 7.47

The gratest portion of peace of mind is doing nothing wrong. Those who lack self-control live disoriented and disturbed lives.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 105.7

Kindness is invincible, but only when it's sincere, with no hypocrisy or faking. For what can even the most malicious person do if you keep showing kindness and, if given the chance, you gently point out where they went wrong-right as they are trying to harm you?
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 11.18.5.9a

Every habit and capability is confirmed and grows in its corresponding actions, walking by walking, and running by running…therefore, if you want to do something make a habit of it, if you don't want to do that, don't, but make a habit of something else instead. The same principle is at work in our state of mind. When you get angry, you've only experienced that evil, but you've also reinforced a bad habit, adding fuel to the fire.
Epictetus, Discourses, 2.18.1-5

Those obsessed with glory attach their well-being to the regard of others, those who love pleasure tie it to feelings, but the one with true understanding seeks it only in their own actions…Think on the character of the people one wishes to please, the possessions one means to gain, and the tactics one employs to such ends. How quickly time erases such things, and how many will yet be wiped away.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 6:51, 59

Don't set your mind on things you don't possess as if they were yours, but count the blessings you actually possess and think how much you would desire them if they weren't already yours. But watch yourself, that you don't value these things to the point of being troubled if you should lose them.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 7.27

If you don't wish to be a hot-head, don't feed your habit. Try as a first step to remain calm and count the days you haven't been angry. I used to be angry every day, now every other day, then every third or fourth…if you make it as far as 30 days, thank God! For habit is first weakened and then obliterated. When you can say "I didn't lose my temper today, or the next day, or for three or four months, but kept my cool under provocation", you will know you are in better health.
Epictetus, Discourses, 2.18.11b-14

That's why the philosophers warn us not to be satisfied with mere learning, but to add practice and then training. For as time passes we forget what we learned and end up doing the opposite, and hold opinions the opposite of what we should.
Epictetus, Discourses, 2.9.13-14

Joy for human beings lies in proper human work. And proper human work consists in: acts of kindness to other human beings, disdain for the stirrings of the senses, identifying trustworthy impressions, and contemplating the natural order and all that happens in keeping with it.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.26

I'm constantly amazed by how easily we love ourselves above all others, yet put more stock in the opinions of others than in our own estimation of self…How much credence we give to the opinions our peers have of us and how little to our very own!

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 12.4

The first thing to do: don't get worked up. For everything happens according to the nature of all things, and in a short time you'll be nobody and nowhere, even as the great emperors Hadrian and Augustus. The next thing to do: consider carefully the task at hand for what it is, while remembering that your purpose is to be a good human being. Get straight to doing what nature requires of you, and speak as you see most just and fitting-with kindness, modesty, and sincerity.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.5

You must build up your life action by action, and be content if each one achieves its goal as far as possible-and no one can keep you from this. But there will be some external obstacles! Perhaps, but no obstacle to acting with justice, sel-control, and wisdom. But what if some area of my action is thwarted? Well, gladly, accept the obstacle for what it is and shift your attention to what is given, and another action will immediately take its place, one that better fits the life you are building.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.32

How much more harmful are the consequences of anger and grief than the circumstances that aroused them in us!
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 11.18.8

Every event has two handles-one by which it can be carried, and one by which it can't. if your brother does you wrong, don't grab it by his wronging, because this is the handle incapable of lifting it. Instead, use the other-that he is your brother, that you were raised together, and then you will have hold of the handle that carries.
Epictetus, Enchiridion, 43

Don't be ashamed of needing help. You have a duty to fulfill just like a soldier on the wall of battle. So what if you are injured and can't climb up without another's soldier help?
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 7.7

Don't let your reflection on the whole sweep of life crush you. Don't fill your mind with all the bad things that might still happen. Stay focused on the present situation and ask yourself why it is so unbearable and can't be survived.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.36

We should take wandering outdoor walks, so that the mind might be nourished and refreshed by the open air and deep breathing.
Seneca, On Tranquility of Mind, 17.8

The beautiful and good person neither fights with anyone nor, as much as they are able, permits others to fight…this is the meaning of getting an education-learningwhat is your own affair and what is not.
Epictetus, Discourses, 4.5.1; 7b-8a

While it's true that someone can impede our actions, they can't impede our intentions and our attitudes, which have the power of being conditional and adaptable. For the mind adapts and converts any obstacle to its action into a means of achieving it. That which is an impediment to action is turned to advance action. The obstacle on the path becomes the way.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.20

The task of a philosopher: we should bring our will into harmony with whatever happens, so that nothing happens against your will and nothing that we wish for fails to happen.
Epictetus, Discourses, 2.14.7

On those mornings you struggle with getting up, keep this thought in mind-I am awakening to the work of a human being. Why then I am annoyed that I am going to do what I'm made for, the very things for which I was put into this world? Or was I made for this, to snuggle under the covers and keep warm? It's so pleasurable. Were you then made for pleasure? In short, to be coddled or to exert youself?
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.1

In your actions, don't procrastinate. In your conversations, don't confuse. In your thoughts, don't wander. In your soul, don't be passive or aggressive. In your life, don't be all about business.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.51

Whenever you have trouble getting up in the morning, remind yourself that you've been made by nature for the purpose of working with others, whereas even unthinking animals share sleeping. And it's our own natural purpose that is more fitting and more satisfying.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.12

That cucumber is bitter, so toss it out! There are thorns on the path, then keep away! Enough said. Why ponder the existence of nuisance? Such thinking would make you a laughing-stock to the true student of Nature, just a carpenter or cobbler would laugh if you pointed out the sawdust and chips on the floors of their shops. Yet while those shopkeepers have dustbins for disposal, Nature has no need of them.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.50

At this moment you aren't on a journey, but wandering about, being driven from place to place, even though what you seek-to live well-is found in all places. Is there any place more full of confusion than the Forum? Yet even there you can live at peace, id needed.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 28.5b-6a

Do now what nature demands of you. Get right to it if that's in your power. Don't look around to see if people will know about it. Don't await the perfection of Plato's Republic, but be satisfied with even the smallest step forward and regard the outcome as a small thing.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 9.29

It's ruinous for the soul to be anxious about the future and miserable in advance of misery, engulfed by anxiety that the things it desires might remain its own until the very end. For such a soul will never be at rest-by longing for things to come it will lose the ability to enjoy present things.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 98.5b-6a

It is essential for you to remember that the attention you give to any action should be in due proportion to its worth, for then you won't tire and give up, if you aren't busying yourself with lesser things beyond what should be allowed.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 4.32b

Heraclitus would shed tears whenever he went out in public-Democritus laughed. One saw the whole as a parade of miseries, the other of follies. And so, we should take a lighter view of things and bear them with an easy spirit, for it is more human to laugh at life than to lament it.
Seneca, On Tranquility of Mind, 15.2

The founder of the universe, who assigned to us the laws of life, provided that we should live well, but not in luxury. Everything needed that we should live well, but not in luxury. Everything needed for our well-being is right before us, whereas what luxury requires is gathered by many miseries and anxieties. Let us use this gift of nature and count it among the greatest things.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 119.15b

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, Moral Letters, 123.3

I judge you unfortunate because you have never lived through misfortune. You have passed through life without an opponent-no one can ever know what you are capable of, not even you.
Seneca, On Providence, 4.3

Consider who you are. Above all, a human being, carrying no greater power than your own reasoned choice, which oversees all other things, and is free from any other master.
Epictetus, Discourses, 2.10.1

What if someone despises me? Let them see to it. But I will see to it that I won't be found doing or saying anything contemptible. What if someone hates me? Let them see to that. But I will see to it that I'm kind and good-natured to all, and prepared to show even the hater where they went wrong. Not in a critical way, or to show off my patience, but genuinely and usefully.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 11.13

Remember that to change your mind and to follow someone's correction are consistent with a free will. For the action is yours alone-to fulfill its purpose in keeping with your impulse and judgment, and yes, with your intelligence.

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.16

When forced, as it seems, by circumstances into utter confusion, get a hold of yourself quickly. Don't be locked out of the rhythm any longer than necessary. You'll be able to keep the beat if you are constantly returning to it.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 6.11

Show me someone who isn't a slave! One is slave to lust, another to greed, another to power, and we are all slaves to fear…No servitude is more abject than self-imposed.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 47.17

It's in keeping with Nature to show our friends affection and to celebrate their advancement, as if it were our very own. For if we don't do this, virtue, which is strengthened only by exercising our perceptions, will no longer endure in us.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 109.15

How much better to heal than seek revenge from injury. Vengeance wastes a lot of time and exposes you to many more injuries than the first that sparked it. Anger always outlasts hurt. Best to take the opposite course. Would anyone think it normal to return a kick to a mule or a bite to a dog?
Seneca, On Anger, 3.27.2

A benefit should be kept like a buried treasure, only to be dug up in necessity…Nature bids us to do well by all…Wherever there is a human being, we have an opportunity for kindness.
Seneca, On the Happy Life, 24.2-3

People aren't in awe of your sharp mind? So be it. But you have many other qualities you can't claim to have been deprived of at birth. Display then those qualities in your own power: honesty, dignity, endurance, chastity, contentment, frugality, kindness, freedom, persistence, avoiding gossip, and magnanimity.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.5

Don't seek for everything to happen as you wish it would, but rather wish that everything happens as it actually will-then your life will flow well.
Epictetus, Enchiridion, 8

If we judge as good and evil only the things in the power of our own choice, then there is no room left for blaming gods or being hostile to others.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 6.41

Meditate often on the swiftness with which all that exists and is coming into being is swept by us and carried away. For substance is like a river's unending flow, its activities continually changing and causes infinitely shifting so that almost nothing at all stands still.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.23

Hecato says, "cease to hope and you will cease to fear"…The primary cause of both these ills is that instead of adapting ourselves to present circumstances we send out thoughts too far ahead.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 5.7b-8

Our rational nature moves freely forward in its impressions when it:
accept nothing false or uncertain;
directs its impulses only to facts for the common good;
limits its desires and aversions only to what is in its own power;
embraces everything Nature assigns it.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 8.7

Don't trust in your reputation, money or position, but in strength that is yours-namely, your judgments about the things that you control and don't control. For this alone is what makes us free and unfetterd, that picks us up by the neck from the depths and lifts us eye to eye with the rich and powerful.
Epictetus, Discourses, 3.26.34-35

Let us prepare our minds as if we'd come to the very end of life. Let us postpone nothing. Let us balance life's books each day…The one who puts the finishing touches on their life each day is never short of time.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 101.7b-8a

Think of the whole universe of matter and how small your share. Think about the expanse of time and how brief-almost momentary-the part marked for you. Think of the workings of fate and how infinitesimal your role.
Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 5.24

In all things we should try to make ourselves be as grateful as possible. For gratitude is a good thing for oueselves, in a manner in which justice, commonly held to belong to others, is not. Gratitude pays itself back in large measure.
Seneca, Moral Letters, 81.19

The mind must be given relaxation-it will rise improved and sharper after a good break. Just as rich fields must not be forced-for they will quickly lose their fertility if never given a break-so constant work on the anvil will fracture the force of mind. But constant work gives rise to a certain kind of dullness and feebleness in the rational soul.
Seneca, On Tranquility of Mind, 17.5

It's not at all we have too short a time to live, but that we squander a great deal of life. Life is long enough, and it's given in sufficient measure to do many grest things if we spend it well. But when it is poured down the drain of luxury and neglect, when it is employed to no good end, we're finally driven to see that it has passed by before we even recognized it passing. And so it is-we don not receive a short life, we make it so.
Seneca, On the Brevity of Life, 1.3-4a

Aren't you ashamed to reserve for yourself only the remnants of your life and to dedicate to wisdom only that time can't be directed to business?
Seneca, On the Brevity of Life, 3.5b

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