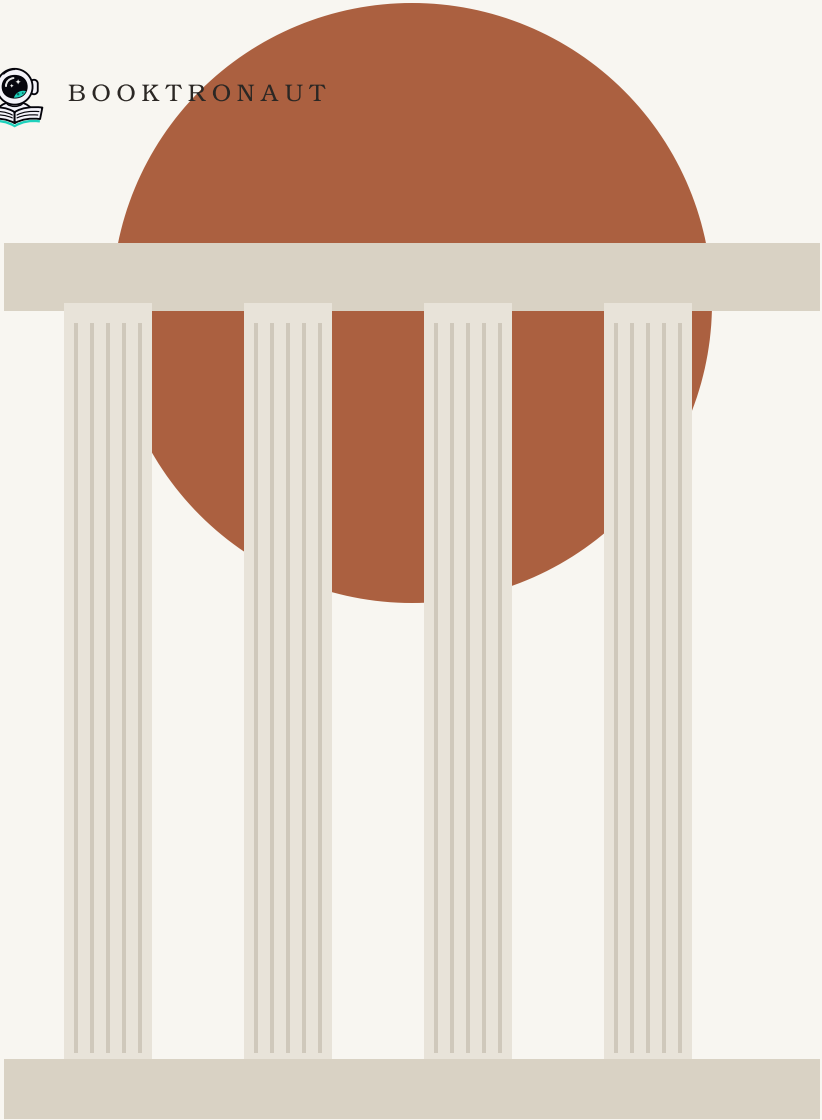
BOOKTRONAUT



THE SPRINT SERIES

Stoic Sprint

30 days. 5 minutes a day. A calmer, stronger mind.

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Stoic practice can help with everyday stress, but it is not therapy or medical treatment. If you are dealing with depression, anxiety or anything that feels too heavy, please reach out to a professional. Quoted lines come from public domain translations. All other summaries of Stoic ideas are written in our own words.

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THE DEAL

Read This First

Two thousand years ago, a former slave, an emperor and a millionaire playwright all arrived at the same idea. Most of your suffering doesn't come from what happens to you. It comes from what you tell yourself about it.

Epictetus was born a slave. Marcus Aurelius ruled the Roman Empire. Seneca was one of the richest men in Rome. Three completely different lives. One shared practice.

They called it Stoicism, and it wasn't a philosophy for sitting in a library. It was training. Daily exercises for a mind that stays calm when life doesn't.

The sprint

This book gives you one exercise a day for 30 days. Each day takes about five minutes.

Morning. Read the idea and the practice. Two minutes.

Day. Do the practice once. It fits into whatever you're already doing.

Evening. Answer the question on the lines. Three minutes.

That's it. No candles, no robes, no special equipment. Just you, a pen and a little honesty.

If you miss a day

You will miss a day. The Stoics would laugh at you for feeling guilty about it. Just do today's page. Then keep going.

> *Of things some are in our power, and others are not. Epictetus, as translated by George Long. The whole book grows from this one sentence.*

CONTROL

Week One

The first week is about the most useful idea in Stoicism. Some things are up to you. Most things aren't. Peace begins when you stop wasting energy on the second group.

Day 1. The two lists

Idea. Every worry you have belongs to one of two lists. Things you control, like your actions, your words and your effort. And things you don't, like other people, the weather, the past and the outcome.

Practice. Write down your three biggest worries right now. Next to each, mark what part you control and what part you don't.

Evening. What did you spend energy on today that wasn't in your control?

Day 2. The archer

Idea. The Stoics compared life to an archer. The archer controls the training, the aim and the release. Once the arrow leaves the bow, the wind decides. A good archer judges themselves on the shot, not the hit.

Practice. Pick one goal today. Define what doing your best looks like, without the result.

Evening. Did you take a good shot today, whatever the wind did?

Day 3. The pause

Idea. Between what happens and how you react, there's a tiny space. The Stoics trained to make that space bigger. A thing happens. You notice your first reaction. Then you choose.

Practice. The next time something annoys you today, count to five before you respond.

Evening. When did you pause today? When did you forget to?

Day 4. Not yet a fact

Idea. Your first impression is not a fact. "He's ignoring me" might be "he's busy". "This is a disaster" might be "this is a problem". Epictetus taught his students to say to every upsetting impression something like, you are only an impression, not the thing itself.

Practice. Catch one dramatic thought today and rewrite it as a plain description.

Evening. What story did you tell yourself today that wasn't quite true?

Day 5. Imagination

Idea. Seneca wrote to a friend that "we suffer more often in imagination than in reality" in the Gummere translation. Most disasters we fear never arrive. The ones that do are rarely as bad as the rehearsal.

Practice. Notice one worry today that is only happening in your head.

Evening. How much of today's stress was about things that haven't happened?

Day 6. Other people

Idea. You cannot control what other people think, say or do. You can control how you treat them and what you let their behavior mean to you.

Practice. When someone frustrates you today, ask yourself what part of this is actually yours to handle.

Evening. Whose behavior took up too much space in your head today?

Day 7. Week one review

Look back at your week. Which practice was the most useful? Which was the hardest?

PERSPECTIVE

Week Two

Week two is about zooming out. Most problems look huge up close and small from far away. The Stoics had exercises to change the distance on purpose.

Day 8. The view from above

Idea. Marcus Aurelius often imagined looking down on the world from high above. Cities, armies, markets, weddings and funerals, all tiny and all temporary. From up there, most of today's stress shrinks.

Practice. Close your eyes for one minute. Imagine rising above your house, your city, your country, the planet. Then look at your biggest problem from there.

Evening. What looked smaller today after you zoomed out?

Day 9. Ten years from now

Idea. Ask whether today's problem will matter in ten years. If not, it deserves ten minutes of your worry, not ten hours.

Practice. Use the ten year question on one problem today.

Evening. Which of today's worries will you have forgotten by next year?

Day 10. Bad days pass

Idea. Everything changes. Good times, bad times, moods, seasons. The Stoics found comfort in this. Whatever you're going through, it is already on its way out.

Practice. When you feel low today, say to yourself, this too is temporary.

Evening. What feeling today came and went faster than you expected?

Day 11. Remember death

Idea. The Stoics practiced memento mori, remembering that life is short. Not to be sad, but to stop wasting it. Seneca wrote that we don't have too little time, we waste much of it.

Practice. Ask yourself once today, if this were one of my last days, would I spend this hour like this?

Evening. What did you do today that was truly worth your time?

Day 12. The borrowed things

Idea. Epictetus taught that everything you have is on loan. Your health, your home, even the people you love. This isn't meant to depress you. It's meant to make you

grateful while you have them.

Practice. Spend one minute today appreciating something you usually take for granted.

Evening. What would you miss most if it were gone tomorrow?

Day 13. Other people's shoes

Idea. Marcus reminded himself each morning that he would meet difficult people. They act the way they do because of what they believe is right. Understanding that makes anger harder to hold.

Practice. Think of someone who annoys you. Imagine one reason why they act that way that has nothing to do with you.

Evening. Who did you understand a little better today?

Day 14. Week two review

Which perspective exercise worked best for you? Where did you notice yourself zooming out without trying?

COURAGE

Week Three

The Stoics had four main virtues. Wisdom, justice, courage and self control. This week focuses on courage. Not the movie kind. The everyday kind that makes you do the hard, right thing.

Day 15. The voluntary discomfort

Idea. Seneca suggested practicing hardship on purpose, like eating simple food or sleeping on a hard bed for a few days. When you know you can handle discomfort, you stop fearing it.

Practice. Choose one small discomfort today. A cold shower, skipping dessert or walking instead of driving.

Evening. How did it feel? Was it as bad as you thought?

Day 16. The obstacle is the road

Idea. Marcus wrote that what stands in the way can become the way. Every obstacle is a chance to practice patience, creativity or courage.

Practice. Pick one obstacle in your life. Ask yourself, what virtue can I practice here?

Evening. What did the obstacle teach you today?

Day 17. Say the true thing

Idea. Courage often means saying something uncomfortable. Telling the truth kindly, admitting a mistake or asking for what you need.

Practice. Say one honest thing today that you've been avoiding.

Evening. What happened when you said it? What did you avoid saying?

Day 18. Rehearse the worst

Idea. The Stoics practiced premeditatio malorum, imagining what could go wrong ahead of time. Not to worry, but to be ready. When you've already pictured it, it loses its power to shock you.

Practice. Before something important today, imagine what could go wrong and how you'd handle it calmly.

Evening. Did preparing for the worst make the day feel easier?

Day 19. Start before you're ready

Idea. Waiting until you feel ready is a trap. Courage is acting while you're still afraid.

Practice. Start one thing today that you've been putting off. Just the first five minutes.

Evening. What did starting feel like compared to thinking about it?

Day 20. Criticism

Idea. Epictetus taught that if someone criticizes you and they're right, learn from it. If they're wrong, their mistake is their problem.

Practice. The next time someone criticizes you, ask yourself, is any part of this true?

Evening. What useful thing did you learn from someone's criticism recently?

Day 21. Week three review

Where did you act with courage this week? Where did fear still win?

CHARACTER

Week Four

The final week is about who you are becoming. The Stoics believed character is the only thing truly yours. Not money, not status, not reputation. Who you are when nobody's watching.

Day 22. The inner citadel

Idea. Marcus described the mind as a fortress that nobody can enter without your permission. Insults, setbacks and chaos stay outside unless you let them in.

Practice. When something disturbs you today, picture closing the gates of your inner fortress.

Evening. What did you refuse to let in today?

Day 23. Enough

Idea. Seneca, one of the richest men in Rome, wrote often about having enough. Wanting less is a kind of wealth nobody can take away.

Practice. Notice one thing you want today. Ask yourself, do I really need this, or do I just want the feeling?

Evening. What do you already have that is enough?

Day 24. Do the work

Idea. Marcus wrote reminders to himself to get out of bed and do the work of a human being. Duty isn't a burden. It's what you're here for.

Practice. Do one task today fully, without complaining, even in your head.

Evening. What changed when you stopped complaining?

Day 25. Kindness is strength

Idea. The Stoics believed we are all part of one human community. Helping others isn't weakness. It's what a strong person does.

Practice. Do one quiet kind thing today for someone who won't know it was you.

Evening. How did it feel to help without credit?

Day 26. The mirror of others

Idea. What annoys you in others often shows you something about yourself. The Stoics used this as a chance to look inward.

Practice. Notice something that irritates you in someone today. Ask whether you ever do something similar.

Evening. What did you learn about yourself from someone else?

Day 27. The evening review

Idea. Seneca described ending every day by reviewing it. What did I do well? Where did I fall short? What can I do better tomorrow? He did it gently, like a good teacher, not a harsh judge.

Practice. Tonight, do Seneca's three questions in detail.

Evening. Write your answers below.

Day 28. Your own rules

Idea. Marcus wrote his own private notes, reminders for himself, not for publication. You can do the same.

Practice. Write three short rules for how you want to live. In your own words.

Evening. Write them here.

Day 29. Your Stoic morning

Idea. A good day often starts with a few minutes of preparation. Expect difficulties, choose your virtues, remember what's in your control.

Practice. Design a three minute morning routine using what worked best in this book.

Evening. Write your routine.

Day 30. The end of the sprint

Idea. You've practiced Stoicism for 30 days. That's more than most people ever do. The goal was never to become perfect. It was to become a little steadier.

Practice. Read back through your evening notes from the first week.

Evening. What has changed in you? What do you want to keep practicing?

WHO THEY WERE

The Three Teachers

You've spent a month with these three men. Here is a little more about who they actually were, so the ideas have faces.

Epictetus

Born around the year 50 in what is now Turkey, Epictetus grew up as a slave in Rome. His owner allowed him to study philosophy, and after he was freed he became one of the most famous teachers of his time. When the emperor banished philosophers from Rome, he moved to Greece and opened a school.

He never wrote anything himself. Everything we have comes from notes taken by his student Arrian. He taught with sharp humor and zero patience for excuses. His central idea was simple. You can't choose what happens, but you can always choose your response.

Seneca

Seneca was a writer, a politician and one of the richest men in Rome. He advised the young emperor Nero, which turned out badly. Nero eventually ordered him to take his own life.

Seneca was full of contradictions. He praised simple living while owning huge estates. He knew it, and wrote about it honestly. His letters to his friend Lucilius are some of the most readable things ever written about how to live. They feel surprisingly modern, like messages from a wise older friend.

Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius ruled the Roman Empire from 161 to 180. He spent much of that time at war on the frontier and dealing with a terrible plague. At night, in his tent, he wrote private notes to himself. He never meant for anyone to read them.

Those notes became the book we call Meditations. It's the diary of the most powerful man in the world reminding himself to be patient, humble, kind and to do his job well. If he needed those reminders, the rest of us can forgive ourselves for needing them too.

Where to read them

All three are available in free, public domain English translations. Good places to start are Epictetus in the George Long translation, Seneca's letters in the Richard Mott Gummere translation, and Marcus Aurelius in the George Long translation. Newer translations are often easier to read, so try a few pages of each and pick the voice you like.

KEEP GOING

After the Sprint

Thirty days is not the end. It's the end of the beginning. Here's how to keep the practice alive.

- [ ] Keep the evening review. Three questions, every night.
- [ ] Repeat one week of this book whenever life gets heavy.
- [ ] Read the originals. Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius are all available in free public domain translations.
- [ ] Teach one idea to a friend. Teaching is the fastest way to learn.

Your pocket card

SIX LINES TO CARRY

Some things are up to me. Most aren't. Judge the shot, not the hit. Pause before you react. Zoom out. The obstacle is the way. Do the right thing. Then let it go.

> *Be steady, not perfect.*



Thank you for reading

The Stoics never promised an easy life. They promised a steady one. Thirty days is a beginning. Keep the practice, and the steadiness keeps growing.

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