
Stoic Journal

7-Day Template

The Dichotomy of Control as daily practice –
three questions that will change your life

BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF
Epictetus · Marcus Aurelius · Seneca

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Why a Stoic Journal?

Epictetus – the slave who became the most influential philosopher of his time – taught a single, decisive insight: There are things that are within our power, and things that are not. This distinction is not merely a philosophical thesis. It is a practical tool that must be applied daily.

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Some things are in our power, others are not. In our power are: opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion – in short, whatever is our own action.

– Epictetus, Enchiridion

A journal is the simplest and most effective means of bringing this teaching into daily life. Not as an abstract exercise, but as a concrete mirror: What did I actually control today – and what did I mistakenly try to control?

This 7-day template guides you through a week of structured self-reflection. It is deliberately simple: three core questions each evening, enough space to write, and a short philosophical orientation for each day.

The Three Core Questions

Every page of this journal revolves around the same three questions. This is no coincidence – repetition is a Stoic principle. Marcus Aurelius, too, returned to the same thoughts again and again in his notes. Depth grows with practice.

01 What was within my control?

02 What was not within my control?

03 What did I learn today?

01 What was within my control?

This question sharpens your focus on what truly matters: your thoughts, your reactions, your decisions. Not the weather, not the traffic, not the moods of others. Write concretely – not abstractly. What did you consciously choose today?

02 What was not within my control?

This is about letting go. Later thinkers called it Amor Fati – the love of fate. What happened today that you could not change? Did you waste energy trying anyway? This honest answer is the beginning of equanimity.

03 What did I learn today?

Every day is a teacher. An old maxim says: no day without a line. The lesson need not be grand – a small insight, a reaction you would choose differently next time, is entirely sufficient.

How to Use This Journal

The biggest obstacle to journaling is not the writing – it is the beginning. Here are three simple rules that Epictetus himself would have endorsed:

1

In the Evening, Not the Morning

The three questions are evening reflections. They need the completed day as their material. Five to ten minutes before sleep is enough – phone away, pen in hand.

2

Write Honestly, Not Beautifully

This journal is not a diary for posterity. Write what really happened. The uncomfortable answers are the most valuable. Epictetus would have had no patience for sugar-coating.

3

Seven Days in a Row

The seven-day format is deliberate. After a few days you begin to recognise patterns: Which situations repeatedly throw you off balance? Where do you keep losing energy to things you can't control?

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How long will you wait before you demand the best of yourself?

— Epictetus, Enchiridion

Deepen Your Stoic Journey

This journal gives you one week of structured practice. But the dichotomy of control is only one of many Stoic tools. Those who want to see how a Roman emperor applied these ideas to his own life will find his private notes in the companion book to this blog: the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius in a modern translation.

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If you truly love philosophy, prepare yourself to be laughed at by many.

— Epictetus, *Enchiridion*

Begin Your Stoic Journey

Meditations: A Modern Translation of Stoicism – the private notes of Emperor Marcus Aurelius on control, fate and mortality, rendered in clear, contemporary language for people who want not merely to read philosophy, but to live it.

Read on Amazon [amazon.com/dp/B0CRPQJVIP](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CRPQJVIP)

The journal and the book complement each other: the journal for daily practice, the book for the philosophical foundation.

DAY 1

Awareness

Observe today without judging. What simply happens – and what do you truly decide?

Epictetus: What disturbs you is not the thing itself, but your opinion of it.

Date: _____ Time: _____

01 What was within my control today?

02 What was not within my control today?

03 What did I learn today?

DAY 2

Reaction vs. Response

Do you react automatically today, or do you consciously choose your response?

Marcus Aurelius: How much more harmful are the consequences of anger than its causes.

Date: _____ Time: _____

01 What was within my control today?

02 What was not within my control today?

03 What did I learn today?

DAY 3

Letting Go

What did you waste energy on today that was outside your control?

Seneca: Nothing makes us so miserable as clinging to what we cannot change.

Date: _____ Time: _____

01 What was within my control today?

02 What was not within my control today?

03 What did I learn today?

DAY 4

Virtue in Small Things

In which moment did you show wisdom, courage, justice or temperance today?

Seneca: Virtue is its own reward.

Date: _____ Time: _____

01 What was within my control today?

02 What was not within my control today?

03 What did I learn today?

DAY 5

Memento Mori

If this day were your last – would you have lived it differently?

Epictetus: Think of death daily. It makes everything else clearer.

Date: _____ Time: _____

01 What was within my control today?

02 What was not within my control today?

03 What did I learn today?

DAY 6

Amor Fati

What happened today that you did not want – and could accept nonetheless?

Marcus Aurelius: Love only what befalls you and is spun for you by fate.

Date: _____ Time: _____

01 What was within my control today?

02 What was not within my control today?

03 What did I learn today?

DAY 7

Review & Resolution

What has this week revealed about you? What do you take with you?

Seneca: Every evening is a small reckoning. Give it honestly.

Date: _____ Time: _____

01 What was within my control today?

02 What was not within my control today?

03 What did I learn today?

After the Seven Days

Seven days are a beginning, not a completion. Epictetus himself taught that philosophical practice is a lifelong project – not a course one finishes. What one week can give you, however, is a clearer picture of where your energy really goes.

Three Questions for the Weekly Review

1. *In which situations did I most often lose control this week – internally or externally?*
2. *Was there a moment when the dichotomy of control truly helped me stay calm?*
3. *What do I want to concretely do differently next week?*

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We suffer more in imagination than in reality.

— Seneca

Further articles, quotes and exercises on Stoic practice can be found at:

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