

# Marcus Aurelius said - “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.”

February 26, 2017 | 895 upvotes | by [avacadotreelmao](#)

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*I've always liked this quote.*

But I have a difficult time understanding how to take control over your worries. The worries feel so beyond you, so out of your control.

As if the worry is 100% certainly going to happen/happening. Even though I'm aware these worries are irrational, I can't convince myself that they in fact are irrational. I'll keep tricking myself into believing the worries are going to happen.

**Stoicism basically says that all you can control is your reaction (thoughts) about a situation.** So yeah a lot of it is easier said than done, but in theory, its safe to say that if you stopped looking at things as life ending, they would be easier.

In his excellent “A Guide To The Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy”, William Irvine devotes an entire chapter to voluntary discomfort.

**Seneca contemplated bad things happening, in order to appreciate what he had.** The Stoic rival Epicurus practiced poverty to determine whether he really needed what he had. But it was Musonius, says Irvine, who took things to a higher level:

In particular, we should periodically cause ourselves to experience discomfort that we could easily have avoided. We might accomplish this by underdressing for cold weather or going shoeless.

**Or we might periodically allow ourselves to become thirsty or hungry, even though food and water are at hand, and we might sleep on a hard bed, even though a soft one is available.**

The Stoics didn't embrace discomforts such as cold, or sleeping on a hard floor out of masochism, rather the Stoics advocate for the deliberate use of discomfort to raise the appreciation for what they currently have.

In many ways taking a cold shower strengthens this argument, by voluntary accepting the discomfort of the cold, a decision that is not mandatory for us to make allows us to essentially immunize ourselves for any misfortunate and hardship, both physically and mentally in future moments.

**The power of the cold, or exercise for that matter is that it encompasses the will of both the physical sensations and mental.**

Epictetus advocates this intentional discomfort.

*“But neither a bull nor a noble-spirited man comes to be what he is all at once; he must undertake hard winter training, and prepare himself, and not propel himself rashly into what is not appropriate to him.” (TD, Book One, Ch. 2, p. 10)*

As with any practice that defies the norm, there is always criticism of such unusual practices, that to the average person may in fact just seem pointless, only being convincing through the rhetoric dialogue of ancient Stoic writing.

Simply, voluntary discomfort helps us practice being indifferent to situations that to the normal, untrained

and unwise would seem stressful and disheartening.

*Are you guys into stoicism? I've found that in some ways (not all) it aligns itself well with TRP--especially in regards to self improvement.*

**Watch Your support is appreciated.**

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## Comments

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monadyne • 232 points • 26 February, 2017 09:08 AM

I had an argument with a therapist once. I had said I didn't believe in this New Age nonsense of how we're all responsible for our own feelings. "That's bullshit!" I said. "If somebody's yelling in your face it's going to affect how you feel!"

Looking straight into my eyes, she said, "Somebody could be yelling in ~my~ face and it wouldn't affect how I feel."

In that instant, I knew she was telling me the absolute truth. I surmised that if that happened, she'd be thinking, "Wow, this man is really angry! And he's trying to take it out on me. He's lost all control of his emotions and is venting pure rage. This has nothing to do with me, of course--- it's all his own toxic, irrational ideation and emotion."

Fortunately for me, I ~got it.~ I saw she was right, and I then devoted all my energy into forcing my own evolution away from the position I had held all my life, and toward a place where I stopped giving other people the power to affect how I felt. It didn't take long to effect the transformation because I could see the truth of it, the rationality of it.

When I read the quotation by Marcus Aurelius above, I instantly recognized that it was the same lesson I had learned all those years ago: we have the "power to revoke at any moment" our habitual investment of emotion into a thing, feeling that it is simply a "natural reaction." What that results in is, of course, our losing command of ourselves.

A good example of this is the "your mother wears combat boots!" phenomenon. You're arguing with somebody and suddenly, he disparages your mother. "Your mother wears combat boots!" (Whatever that's supposed to mean.) "Your mother sucks cocks in hell!" "Yeah, I fucked your mom last night! I was balls deep in her ass!"

Hearing our mother described so crudely, we "see red" and attack. We feel perfectly justified in doing so because, hey! It's your mom they're talking about! The sane response, of course, is to think, "My mother obviously doesn't wear combat boots. She's not in hell, a place that doesn't exist. And this guy clearly did not have sex with my mother last night. These are all irrational statements intended to cause me to lose my moorings---and that's not going to happen. I don't allow anybody to direct my feelings like that! That really would be crazy. So... let me figure out how I'm going to sort this guy out. Do I really give a shit what he thinks of me? Fuck, no. Is there any objective in this situation so valuable that it would be worth me fighting the guy for it? No? Well, then... this is just stupid."

The very opposite extreme of not letting other people affect your feelings is the ridiculous crap happening on college campuses these days. All somebody has to do is say "Trump 2016!" and that's enough to cause adults to feel so wounded that they are (they believe) actually traumatized, requiring trauma counselors and "safe spaces" with (no joke) balloons and coloring books, pillows, soothing music and videos of puppies. People have allowed themselves to become so weak that they require "trigger warnings" about words which --if merely heard spoken-- would "trigger" a full-blown trauma attack.

*yeesh!*

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BlackJ1 • 36 points • 26 February, 2017 07:48 PM

Awesome post.

One of the very things I've read from the stoic book mentioned above is dealing with insults. It is a lot simpler if we just stop and think about why we do what we do.

If somebody insults you and it's false, why get angry? It's not true.

If somebody insults you and it's true, why get angry? It's true.

One of the greatest things I've come to understand is that I may never be able to FULLY control my emotions, however I CAN control how I act.

Ozymanberg • 10 points • 27 February, 2017 02:24 AM

Gold, buddy. It might sound simple but it really hit home for me.

I'm feel like framing "I may never be able to fully control my emotions but I can always control how I act."

EricDaGreat • 9 points • 27 February, 2017 07:56 PM

Epictetus had the perfect response in Enchiridion:

"If a man has reported to you, that a certain person speaks ill of you, do not make any defense (answer) to what has been told you, but reply, the man did not know the rest of my faults, for he would not have mentioned these only."

Agree and Amplify.

razz-rev • 1 point • 24 May, 2017 02:21 PM

moorings But emotions affect your judgment and therefore ones deeds.

JamzeNeu • 39 points • 26 February, 2017 03:04 PM

I felt more enlightened by your reply,than the post itself. Thank you.

[deleted] 26 February, 2017 05:16 PM

[permanently deleted]

[deleted] • 3 points • 26 February, 2017 11:11 PM

No, some of them literally just don't want their feelings to be hurt. Most of them aren't intelligent enough to perform a shit test as intricate as you just described. A few conniving ones maybe, but for the most part no.

TrimAbnormal • 3 points • 26 February, 2017 05:21 PM

Could you recommend any reading on stoicism? There must be some good material out there

creekcanary • 4 points • 26 February, 2017 10:16 PM

A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy. That's the book you're looking for. Excellently written, concise. Changed my life.

MAWL\_SC • 4 points • 27 February, 2017 02:00 AM

Marcus Aurelius' Meditations, the Penguin Classics version is one of the more approachable translations.

blasted\_biscuits • 2 points • 27 February, 2017 05:30 PM

The Enchiridion by Epictetus is life changing.

<http://hams.cc/epictetus/>

[deleted] • 31 points • 26 February, 2017 09:21 AM

Stoicism has been of great utility in my person life and I think should be at minimum tangent to core RP philosophy.

The best and most easily relatable example I've seen on this was the yt video of the "stoic skateboarder". It just a video of a skateboarder just total eating shit. No screaming or cursing. He eats shit then immediately looks right at the camera and says with a smile "I'm in a huge amount of pain right now."

Pain is a given in life. Observing pain rather than feeling pain is what will make all the difference in the world. In all areas of life.

calloberjig • 6 points • 26 February, 2017 11:17 PM

stoic skateboarder

Please link this I can't find it

[deleted] • 10 points • 26 February, 2017 11:33 PM

<https://youtu.be/hK0et2xzHD8>

IncelNoMore • 17 points • 26 February, 2017 05:56 PM

I'll tell you something that is happening to me right now. I have a deviated septum and chronic sinusitis. That means that I always had breathing problems, and if you've never had it, the inability to breathe properly is one of the most mentally challenging thing you can experience.

Luckily, it's usually alright to bear. But I currently have a cold, I'm on accutane and I got elbowed in the nose playing basket ball 3 days ago. Now the cold means that I have a shit ton of mucus production, accutane (I've stopped it yesterday but the effects linger for about a month) dries the fuck out of my nose and makes the mucus thick, hard and crusty to the point my nose bleeds and my nose is swollen because I got hit hard, which makes it impossible to breathe, at all. It's been three days that I have had ZERO air flow through my nose. I need to get surgery but I have to wait and endure for a month otherwise accutane can mess with the scarring and lead to infection and bad healing.

Now trust me, I've hit lows in my life, but this is the worst torture I've ever been submitted to. It's not even the physical discomfort which is already unbearable, but not being able to breathe properly is mentally maddening. It creates a feeling of anxiety I've never felt before. When I get to bed I can't fall asleep because my body reacts as if I was going to die. Two nights ago I snapped and heabuted my bathroom mirror to pieces. That's how much it's getting into my head.

Yesterday I went out and bought a book by Eckhardt Tolle, in french it's called something like "The art of inner calm". I've read half of it already, and kept it at arms lenght. Whenever I started to feel anxious because of the breathing, I'd just grab it, not even open it, and remind myself that I had no other choice but to endure, and the more angry I'd become the worst all of this was going to be. Well I fell asleep pretty fast last night, and I've fully accepted my current condition for the next few weeks. I just empty my mind and create some kind of inner space mentally and it's like the frustration comes outta my pores and I'm instantly calm.

Ozymanberg • 3 points • 27 February, 2017 02:34 AM

Good to hear you're handling it better. Get better.

monadyne • 2 points • 27 February, 2017 08:21 AM

Hey there. Not a TRP response but a quick "Helpful Handy Hint." I, too, have a deviated septum and used to have chronic sinusitis every winter. Heating would dry out the air, drying out the sinuses. I got sick of taking

antibiotics and having them screw up my gut, so I bought a vaporizer (not the "cool mist" type, but the "warm steam" type.) I put it next to my bed, and put hydrogen peroxide in the medicine cup thing. When it started to produce steam, I'd lean into the thing and breathe in the steam into my nose. A couple of sessions of that and the infection would clear up.

There's also a super small version of those things that are used (I think) to open up the pores of the face. (Some chick/makeup thing?) Anyway, you can do the same thing with the hydrogen peroxide and use it to inhale the medicated steam. Lately, instead of hydrogen peroxide I've been using colloidal silver. Both of those things kill not only bacteria but viruses as well, and they kill them mechanically so the pathogens can't evolve resistance to them.

You might want to give this stuff a try before getting surgery. Just a thought, my brother.

IncelNoMore • 1 point • 27 February, 2017 10:09 AM

Thanks bro, I've actually ordered one from amazon yesterday already and also a nostril dilator, because since I've got elbowed, even when my left nostril clears up a bit, it somehow collapses on itself when I breathe, and it doesn't allow air in.

I need to get surgery anyway because of the hit, but I have to wait.

DoesNotMatterAnymore • 1 point • 27 February, 2017 11:11 AM\*

[Off topic TRP] / [On topic for OP]

I'm in the same boots, deviated septum and such, i already had the surgery, and didn't helped too much. One thing i would recommend to you is to start using **netipot**. To me the mornings are the most hardest times. My head is full with mucus, but i'm unable to blow it out. Washing out my nostrils help a LOT.

CopperFox3c • 16 points • 26 February, 2017 03:02 PM

**The key thing about stoicism is that once you accept that there some things you can't control, you are then free to respond to them in any way you choose.**

I'll give you a concrete TRP-related example: say a woman is shit testing me, and she is expecting some sort of typical angry male response. My anger though is not going to "win" the shit test, nor will it stop her from testing me in the future. So instead I laugh and then start to tease her. Before long she's giggling too.

I am free to respond that way, because I have let go of trying to control things beyond my control. The side effect of that is assuming a sort of formlessness, an air of indifference, that is ironically magnetic to people ... as well as a core aspect of masculine behavior.

Usemi5325 • 6 points • 26 February, 2017 05:14 PM

The key thing about stoicism is that once you accept that there some things you can't control, you are then free to respond to them in any way you choose.

Looks like paraphrasing of the Serenity Prayer:

**"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference."**

redpillbanana • 27 points • 26 February, 2017 01:47 PM

Stoicism basically says that all you can control is your reaction (thoughts) about a situation.

Viktor Frankl hypothesized that the difference between humans and animals is that humans can choose their reaction to a stimulus. The sad part is to see how many people out there are living life like an animal; they move towards comfort and away from difficulty, much like an amoeba swimming towards food or away from danger. Praise them and they'll smile; yell at them and they'll rage and seethe.

Seneca contemplated bad things happening, in order to appreciate what he had.

The Stoics call this *negative visualization*. It's a powerful way to have thankfulness and appreciation for what you have now. You think life is bad now because of money issues? Imagine a billionaire who feels pain with every breath; I guarantee you that he would trade all of his money for a cure. It helps you realize that if you are not six feet under and you're relatively healthy, you're doing pretty well.

Or we might periodically allow ourselves to become thirsty or hungry, even though food and water are at hand, and we might sleep on a hard bed, even though a soft one is available.

Good article here: [How Exercise Shapes You, Far Beyond the Gym](#). The basic thesis is that exercise gets you "comfortable with being uncomfortable" and this has an effect on your life much wider than your physical fitness. Pushing ourselves outside our comfort zone, whether in the gym or in other areas in life, is the only way we make forward progress.

This goes along with the first point about controlling your reaction to a stimulus. Hungry? Most people, like animals, would start looking for something to eat. The more disciplined might refrain because they're trying to lose weight or they are on a 24-hour fast for health reasons. They're able to control their response to reach a greater goal. The same goes for eating; most people would stop when they're full, but a guy who is trying to bulk will keep eating even though it is uncomfortable to do so.

caP1taL1sm • 5 points • 26 February, 2017 06:24 PM

Man's Search for Meaning -- definitely would be a good read for TRP although it's a bit religious

RedPillFusion • 2 points • 26 February, 2017 07:28 PM

Great response. The Frankl allusion is one particularly relevant here, and can be replicated towards almost anything in life - fears, desires, hypersensitivity, resilience, and bearing.

newls • 10 points • 26 February, 2017 11:32 AM

Practice calmness and self-awareness. But don't stuff down and ignore your feelings. Your subconscious is more intelligent and attuned than you ever will be - that's why you need to follow your gut at all times.

jaysire • 8 points • 26 February, 2017 07:16 PM

I learned a valuable lesson one night. It was 10-15 years ago and the IT-company I worked for had a pretty jumpy boss who would always loudly complain about all the bills and how he wasn't sure the company would be able to pay them and perhaps the wisest thing would be to shut it all down.

Loop this tape for 5 years and I was in a pretty bad place. I used to go to bed and feel my heart beat in my chest, unable to sleep. Then one morning I noticed something interesting:

I went to bed all worked up, lay there thinking about my uncertain future and how I'd be out of a job soon. Then, in the morning, the feeling was gone and I was feeling really good again. My mind had repaired my mood during the night. I realised that nothing could've changed during my sleep that I had any knowledge about. This proved that it was all in my head and that I had the option of just not having those feelings if I became master of my own mind.

It wasn't the last time I felt anxious, but it was the last time I thought my feelings were related to facts and that



slowly healed me. Along with jumping ship and going to work for a much bigger company. I haven't experienced a lot of stress since, but knowing what stress feels like was an invaluable experience to me and something I highly recommend, as long as you have the tools to get out of it. Stress kills.

I already had some friends who had experienced burn-outs and the ones who became well again pretty much all said the same thing: That the solution is to stop giving a fuck about your job. Not in the quality of your work, but to adopt a frame of mind where your life doesn't start and end with your job. It took me a while to realise what they (probably) meant by that and I am now able to consciously decide not to worry about an issue. I just pick the better of two outcomes and believe in that. It often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and isn't lying to yourself if you don't know the outcome for sure.

[deleted] • 6 points • 26 February, 2017 03:43 PM\*

Solid post that neatly underpins the concept of *frame*

*Be your own mental point of origin* is something Rollo has discussed. I recently met a man who remarried and was reminiscent of his early days with the 2nd wife and he mentioned how her dog took to him quickly and that was him passing her final test.

So much revealed in that statement. He was qualifying to her. He had the hoops to jump through. Its a very clear illustration of who has the power in that relationship

PaperStreetVilla • 3 points • 27 February, 2017 12:33 AM

That and the dog was #2 in the house. he was #3

WhySoRuff • 3 points • 27 February, 2017 02:31 AM

Imagine his position if she was a single mother. 4? 5? Hawt neighbors/co-workers?? 6? 7?

jitsbay • 7 points • 26 February, 2017 04:46 PM

In the past I've been such a worrier. (I had panic attacks to the point of vomiting almost every day in high school, and severe depression for most of my childhood.) Lately, I've discovered the power of giving any negative thought NO power. Experiencing a negative thought? Here's what to do: 1) Acknowledge it 2) Appreciate that you may have realized a potential risk and give yourself an absolute limit between 1-5 minutes to evaluate it 3) Move to a positive action. Any positive action you can start doing right away will do the trick. I recommend having a default exercise like pull-ups or push-ups or meditations so you always have some kind of mental or physical exercise at the ready when your mind starts spewing up negative garbage. Thinking positive thoughts doesn't always work out, so always move towards an action that helps improve your situation. If you CHOOSE to worry, remember that in doing so you will always end up slitting your own throat financially and romantically. Worry is a choice. It is an ancient defense mechanism that has no purpose in the world we live in. Recognize worry for what it is and move on quickly!

CHIPPENDALESIXNINE6 points 26 February, 2017 06:31 PM\* [recovered]

Hey guys, wanted to try and find a thread that related to this, as I didn't think a link would be enough to make starting a new one worth while. By the end of this video this man has a bunch of men release their inner, trapped alpha energy. They're all relating to one another, and the whole room went from cautious and awkward (how society has taught us as men to be nowadays) to once again feeling what it is to be a man. Relating to the pain, struggle, triumph, and growth that comes from it. With no words and just a scream, all these men were feeling and relating to each other in the exact same way.

I'd watch from 24:00 until the end, if you find it intrigues you, watch more.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pafdo1Pln5I>

EatmyShorts59 • 3 points • 27 February, 2017 02:06 PM

I have cliff notes on this book if anyone is interested.

<http://lilblackboy.com/book-cliff-notes/>

jackandjill22 • 2 points • 26 February, 2017 06:44 PM

Marcus Aurelius was seriously on point with thee matters. Closest thing to a philosopher king Plato could've ever conceived.

[deleted] • 2 points • 26 February, 2017 08:44 PM

Tom Brady shared similar sentiments recently: "I don't want to give my power away to other people by letting my emotions be subjected to what their opinions are. So if someone calls me something, that's their problem. I'm not going to give away my power."

[deleted] • 3 points • 26 February, 2017 11:19 AM

I agree with your post, but don't think the title is true. You can't control which neurotransmitters are released in your brain. It's human to feel pain if you experience a negative external situation. You can only control how to react to that situation.

Sir\_Ganjas\_VIII • 11 points • 26 February, 2017 11:44 AM

Don't think marcus aurelius knew much of neurotransmitters

[deleted] • 4 points • 26 February, 2017 11:04 PM

You're partially correct. Of course there will be inevitable and inherent responses to stress. However, what Marcus and Stoicism is advocating is being: 1) prepared for any situation and 2) having the choice to continue down a certain path of thinking or not.

There are plenty of studies on depression and neural pathways. If you allow yourself to be stuck in a certain state of mind, certain neural pathways are more used and become more and more "established". This makes it hard to snap out of depression and hence why we can use things like SSRIS to give you a jump start into creating and using other (more positive) neuropathways. Stoicism removes the need (in most cases and if done properly) for anti-depressants.

This is obviously a very superficial understanding of neuro pathways and transmitters.

[deleted] • 3 points • 26 February, 2017 04:18 PM

You'd be surprised. In the study of neuroplasticity this concept is called "the mind and the brain". It's a fascinating topic.

[deleted] • 2 points • 26 February, 2017 01:25 PM

Marcus Aurelius focuses on the good of the whole to the (arguably) detriment of himself. He releases the seeking of fine things and pleasures and he states that makes him better off, he mentions doing away with the affinity for boys as well, so at least for his time, you can see he moved away from excess and pleasure.

Some parts of stoicism are great, but meditations would never cover a chapter on frame control and keeping multiple women.

Yes I am aware TRP isn't about one issue, just saying I don't think they line up all so well for a few reasons

[deleted] • 1 point • 26 February, 2017 03:43 PM

solid post that neatly underpins the concept of *frame*

Be your own mental point of origin

Dio\_Brando\_Joestar • 1 point • 26 February, 2017 07:31 PM

Anyone else find this book challenging to read? I have the drover thrift edition.

[deleted] • 1 point • 27 February, 2017 02:18 AM

Read a passage a t a time. I prefer hays translation. Check out Ryan holidays new book where it's basically a passage a day from stoics, they analyze it a little bit. And that's your passage for the day. Literally has a date to it.

It's called the daily stoic.

Dio\_Brando\_Joestar • 1 point • 27 February, 2017 07:23 AM

thanks man. i will check it.

africans0w • 1 point • 26 February, 2017 08:46 PM

Could you credit the original poster next time you copy and paste a whole post

SetConsumes • 1 point • 26 February, 2017 10:10 PM

How do you deal with the wretched nature of women?

I can't help but pity them currently. But I'd rather not, I hate pitying things involuntarily but currently most women's minds just can't help but make me sad. They're so almost helpless so often and most have no way out really. They're so controlled by their past and hardly have control over their life and themselves. So many sad women, settling for mediocre men, confused about what will make them happy, nearly helpless in figuring out how to improve themselves.

bsutansalt • 1 point • 27 February, 2017 07:11 AM

## **The pain of regret stings worse than the pain of rejection.**

It sucks finding out a woman may not be interested, but always wondering and never knowing will gnaw at your soul.

Even worse is clinging to delusions that they might really been interested and you somehow took a high road. Thats straight up blue pill ego protection and nothing more.

You've got to take risks and swallow your pride if step out of your comfort zone if you want the big rewards in life. This is as true in the job and financial markets as it is in dating.

Louis-Crapsteur • -2 points • 26 February, 2017 03:31 PM

Marcus Aurelius would have thought you were a loser.

[deleted] • 1 point • 27 February, 2017 02:19 AM

Would he have felt the same of his own son?

He wouldn't care to have any power to control op, but could he have prevented his son from becoming the man he became?