

## Stoic Exercises

Exercise	Method	Purpose
Virtue Lens	Whenever a challenging situation arises, think about how you can utilize the four cardinal virtues in your response.	Practice viewing setbacks as an opportunity for virtue. Develop skill in responding to challenges. Maintain tranquility.
Mindfulness Meditation	Sit in silence for 10 minutes (or longer) and pay attention to your experience. (The <i>Waking Up</i> app is fantastic and includes lessons on Stoicism.)	Learn to stop identifying with whatever thoughts and impressions happen to arise. Learn how to “get off the ride” when negative emotions arise.
“Negative” Visualisation	Spend a few moments imagining something “bad” happening to you (e.g., losing your job, falling ill).	Overcome hedonic adaptation. Foster gratitude. Be better prepared for unplanned circumstances. Reduce negative emotion. Build resilience.
Voluntary Discomfort	Choose to do something that makes you uncomfortable (e.g., cold shower, intense physical exercise, sleeping on the ground).	Build resilience. Cultivate courage. Reduce negative emotion. Overcome hedonic adaptation. Foster gratitude.
Stoic Test Strategy	View setbacks as tests from the Stoic gods. The purpose of the test is to give you an opportunity to practice virtue. When a setback arises, immediately say to yourself “Game on!”	Maintain tranquility. Treat others with kindness and patience. Reduce negative emotion. Experience more positive emotion (joy, gratitude, confidence, cheerfulness).
Be Useful	Volunteer. Donate to an effective charity. Check in on friends, family, and neighbors. Pay attention to people with whom you interact. Be a good role model.	Cultivate the virtue of justice, including appropriate concern for others. Build healthy relationships. Contribute to your community, your country, and the world.
Appetite Control	Abstain from your favorite food and drink. Fast. Eat like a Cynic (e.g., cold can of beans for dinner). Practice abstinence or moderation with drugs (including caffeine) and alcohol.	Cultivate self-control. Decrease attachment to the body.
Gratitude	Write down things you are grateful for. Express gratitude to others (including strangers) in writing or with speech. Give thanks to Zeus/God/Nature prior to meals and upon waking.	Foster gratitude. Experience less negative affect. Connect meaningfully with those who have benefited you.
Reserve Clause	When making plans or discussing the future, add a caveat such as ‘fate permitting’ or ‘if it pleases the gods’.	Learn not to take anything for granted. Prepare mentally for unforeseen circumstances.
Dichotomy of Control	When challenging circumstances arise, focus your attention on the aspects of the situation that are under your control.	Maintain tranquility. Think more clearly and so that you can take appropriate action.
Fast Forward	Reflect on the fact that at some point in the future you will no longer care about the thing that is now bothering you. Mentally “fast forward” to the point when you no longer care.	Minimize negative emotion. Build resilience.
Daily Review	Before bed, think about what you did well that day, what you did poorly, and the things you most need to work on. Don’t beat yourself up, just resolve to keep improving.	Monitor your progress. Create a deterrent for bad conduct and poor habits.

Contemplate the Sage	Think about how your favorite role model would act in your situation. Consider people who inspire you reflect on the traits that make them admirable.	Cultivate virtue in yourself by having an ideal before your mind. Adopt a more objective perspective to your circumstance by imagining it happening to someone else.
Last Time Meditation	Whatever you are doing, consider that this might be the final time you ever do it. Remember that we rarely realize when we're doing something for the last time.	Increase awareness of the transient nature of life and relationships. Become better at staying present and grateful. Prepare for inevitable loss.
Story Frame	When setbacks arise, think about the interesting story that you will one day be able to tell. Imagine that you're the main character of an absurd sitcom like <i>Curb Your Enthusiasm</i> .	Cultivate resilience and learn to cope with challenges skillfully and optimistically. Remain calm and composed so that you can make good decisions.
Objective Language	Practice describing events and circumstances objectively rather than using emotional or value-laden terms. Instead of saying "I failed the exam. My life is over!" Simply say, "I failed the exam" and focus on how to respond.	Learn to avoid catastrophizing. Become better at maintaining tranquility and responding strategically.
Decompose Externals	When tempted by something pleasurable, contemplate it from the perspective of its constituent parts and processes (e.g. think about cookies in the state of being chewed and digested).	Mitigate the influence of unhealthy appetites. Deepen your understanding of the lack of value in physical pleasure.
Principle of Charity	When another person seems to have done wrong, consider explanations for their behavior that would put them in a more favorable light.	Cultivate clemency and kindness. Reduce your susceptibility to anger and resentment. Foster better relationships and more positive interactions.
Dual Intention	Whatever activity you are engaged in, remind yourself that you have not one but two intentions: (1) to successfully complete the task; (2) to conduct yourself virtuously.	Learn to avoid agitation and frustration when things don't go according to plan. Reinforce your prioritization of virtuous character over external results.
Humour Defense	When someone insults or gossips about you, respond by making a joke or self-deprecating remark: "Yes, and he doesn't know the half of it, because he could have said more."	Build immunity to the unhelpful words and opinions of others. Cultivate virtues like humility and resilience.
The Wand of Hermes	Whenever a setback arises, remind yourself that you possess the Wand of Hermes. By staying calm and responding with virtue you turn any situation into a benefit.	Build resilience and optimism. Inspire others to do the same.
Outside-Inside Rule	When you catch yourself ruminating or worrying, say to yourself "If it's not happening outside, then it's not happening inside."	Learn to stay present and minimize the time spent in pointless rumination.
The View from Above	Consider your life from the perspective of eternity and the entire cosmos. Contemplate the shortness of life and that you are part of a greater whole.	Cultivate tranquility and gratitude.
Low-Hanging Fruit	We allow ourselves to be disturbed by many things. Some are more challenging than others. Use the low-hanging-fruit (e.g., traffic jams, the weather) to practice letting go and surrendering to what is.	Become more accepting and peaceful. Develop the capacity to maintain a healthy state of mind when more challenging circumstances arise.