

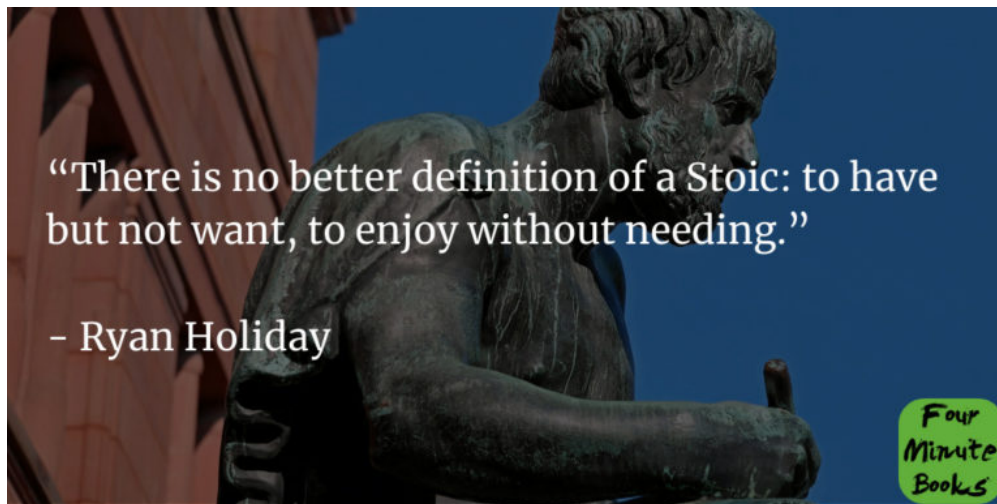
Lives Of The Stoics Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Lives Of The Stoics* is Ryan Holiday's latest book, in which he and co-author Stephen Hansel take a deep dive into the experiences and beliefs of some of the earliest philosophers and followers of stoic virtues like justice, courage, and temperance.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



The art of Stoicism started in Ancient Greece more than two thousand years ago. The whole idea behind it is that actions are more important than words. In other words, living in the right way is more than just saying the right thing.

Lives of the Stoics: The Art of Living from Zeno to Marcus Aurelius by Ryan Holiday explores the world of Stoicism as taught in ancient times. It's full of fascinating insights on classical history and brings a fresh new perspective to this philosophy that is still taught today.

Drawing on examples from Ancient Greece and Rome, we learn the lives and thoughts of some of the most prolific Stoic thinkers. We learn the core virtues of Stoicism, which can help us cope with the struggles we might have in our lives today.

These are the 3 most memorable lessons I got out of this book

1. Stoicism came about as a result of extreme hardship.
2. Not everyone who followed Stoicism lived up to its standards.
3. Marcus Aurelius was a Roman whose practice of Stoicism helped him lead with compassion and humility.

Let's jump right into *The Lives of The Stoics*!

Lesson 1: Stoicism began as a way to cope with life's hardships.

Though it's now a giant in the world of philosophy, stoicism came from humble beginnings. It all started in the fourth century BCE when a man named Zeno had a devastating shipwreck in the Mediterranean. He made his living selling a rare purple dye, and when the ship came down, Zeno and his family lost everything.

When confronted with this huge trial, he showed resilience and courage—the qualities Stoicism would one day represent. Zeno moved to Athens to become a philosopher instead. Because Athens had a large slave population at the time, the wealthy had a lot of spare time to discuss philosophy with each other.

Zeno's teacher, Crates of Thebes, taught him the basics of philosophy. His first lesson was to help Zeno let go of what other people thought of him. Before very long, Zeno was respected as a philosopher, and the philosophy that he founded was known as Stoicism. The guiding principles were courage, wisdom, temperance, and justice.

Zeno was passionate that philosophy shouldn't just be something discussed in a classroom. He believed it was something that should be put into action in everyday life. So rather than give lengthy lectures in front of a crowd, he simply talked about his ideas on a porch in Athens known as Stoa Poikile.

Stoicism took its name after this simple porch. Perhaps it shows just how humble he was that he named his philosophy after a porch rather than himself.

Lesson 2: Some leaders failed to practice what they preached when it came to Stoicism.

Though the Ancient Roman leader Cicero wrote a book about Stoicism, he didn't always live up to its ideals. He wasn't born to a prominent family, but he was able to climb the ladder to Roman leadership at an impressive pace. Eventually, he made his way up to consul of Roman and the commander of the Roman army.

People really liked him, especially after he prosecuted a corrupt magistrate who had stolen money from Sicilians. But even though he showed justice and courage easily, he didn't always have virtuous motives. **He was mostly wanted the fame and acclaim that came with leadership—which is in stark contrast to Stoic principles.**

This disregard only got him so far before he faced some pretty disastrous consequences. Soon, the Roman senator Catiline tried to stage a coup against him. When Cicero found out, he did something that was immoral and against Stoic philosophy. He had all of Catiline's supporters be executed without any trial.

By the time he was done, thousands of people were killed, and it was a dark spot on his legacy. He had let anger get the best of him. Someone who truly lived as a student of Stoicism would have known that justice is more important than passion.

Lesson 3: The Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius led with Stoic compassion and humility.

Far too often, those with absolute power quickly become corrupt. But if there is one person who is an exception to this rule, it is Marcus Aurelius, the world's first philosopher-king. Stoicism owes a lot to this great leader.

He was born in Rome in 121 CE, and he was only 17 years old when Emperor Hadrian chose him as his successor. Marcus didn't let this power get to his head, even though he at such a young and impressionable age. He was as kind and humble as always, and even though he lived in a palace, he was known to visit his tutor's houses instead of having them come to him.

His first act as emperor was actually to share the power with his adoptive brother Lucius, making him co-emperor. When Marcus learned that one of his allies, Cassius, was planning a coup against him, he forgave the conspirators and even cried when someone killed Cassius in an act of revenge.

He made sure that as a leader, he was doing things in the interest of ordinary Romans rather than the people in power. When Rome had a dwindling treasury, Marcus took all of the ornaments from palaces and sold them rather than raising people's taxes.

We know from his writing that he worked hard to live up to Stoicism. His biggest goal was to master the emotions of jealousy, lust, and anger. He found Stoicism helped him create a moral framework for him to lead.

In the end, Marcus's writings and way of leadership are arguably one of the most powerful examples of what Stoicism is really about. Through this philosophy, we can improve even though we are imperfect humans and handle whatever life may throw at us.

Lives Of The Stoics Review

I don't love history, but I do like philosophy and stoicism, so *Lives Of The Stoics* was pretty good. I mostly liked the parts where it focuses on the philosophy itself instead of just the facts, but at least it wasn't just a historical dialogue. Ryan Holiday is a great author, though and always has a way of making things interesting!

Who would I recommend the Lives Of The Stoics summary to?

The 67-year-old who is inspired by stoic values, the 21-year-old who wants to be a better person and would love some motivation, and anybody who loves to learn about history.