

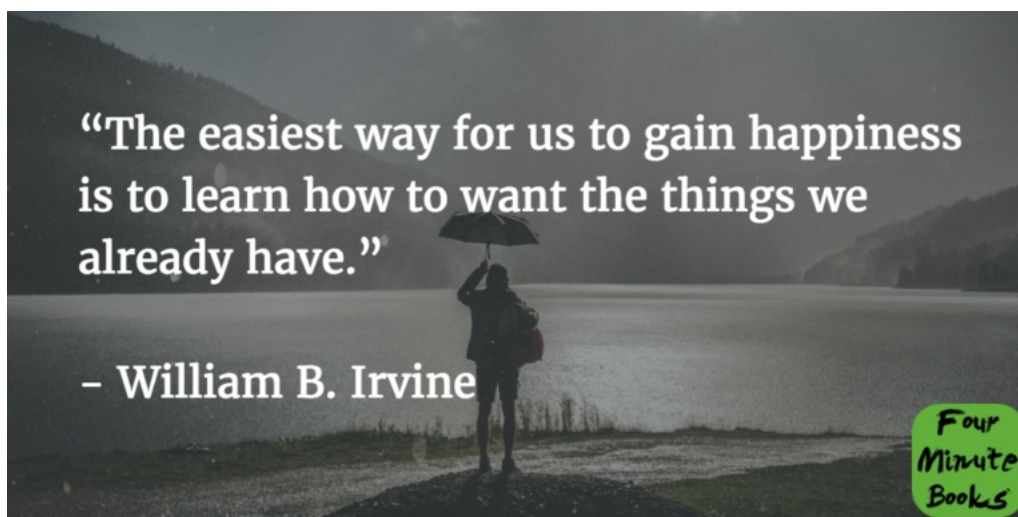
A Guide To The Good Life Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *A Guide To The Good Life is a roadmap for Stoicism, showing you how you can cultivate this ancient philosophy in your own life, why it's useful and what Stoics are really about.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



This is how I've been trying to live my life for the past two years, and I've never been happier. To the contrary, I just seem to get happier over time, because the more I learn, implement and embrace Stoic qualities in my life, the less adversity affects me.

Since adopting a more Stoic mindset, I feel much less distracted, I can always make room for the truly important things in life, I almost never get angry, especially not at things outside of my control, and I'm incredibly grateful for every single day I get to spend here on this beautiful earth.

Ironically, though it's not aimed towards getting rich at all, I do think a Stoic mindset is a cause of worldly success in many cases, such as Ryan Holiday, Gary Vaynerchuk or Tim Ferriss, all of whom have admittedly adopted this mentality.

Here are 3 lessons from William B. Irvine's *A Guide To The Good Life* to help you embrace a Stoic mindset yourself and become more content with your life:

1. The two primary values of Stoicism are virtue and tranquility.
2. Learn to want what you already have.
3. Immediately accept things that are outside of your control and focus on what you can do.

Ready to step up and start practicing Stoicism? Let's go, I'm super excited to share this with you!

Lesson 1: Virtue and tranquility are the highest values of a Stoic.

There are two central themes in Stoicism, values which all Stoics strive to integrate into their lives as much as possible. Those two goals are:

1. **Virtue.**
2. **Tranquility.**

Chances are you don't really know what these mean, or if you do, you think of the wrong thing.

For example, virtue might be defined as "having high moral standards" and therefore make you think only monks, priests and Mother Theresa are good examples of virtuous people. But virtue in a Stoic sense is more about **living a life that's aligned with your own set of values**.

Synonyms of the word are goodness, honesty, righteousness, dignity, integrity, trustworthiness, decency and merit, for example, which all rely on you doing what you say and saying what you do.

In the same vein tranquility is not about napping a lot or being lazy. **Tranquility is the art of ridding yourself of negative emotions.** A tranquil person shows great self-control and won't let her emotions dominate her intellect, for example by staying calm in a traffic jam, because she knows getting angry at traffic is useless.

Lesson 2: Learn to want what you already have to be more grateful by using negative visualization.

One of the worst, yet most common vicious cycle we get stuck in, especially in the Western world, is the hedonic treadmill. Scientifically known as hedonic adaptation, this is a system in which we chase material possessions, only to attain them, quickly get used to and bored by them, to reset and chase the next item.

A tranquil and virtuous person knows she must break out of this cycle and Stoics have one major way of doing so: **learning to want the things we already have and appreciating the things in our life.** The more you want what you have, as compared to having what you want, the happier you'll be.

A very simple exercise you can use to achieve this is negative visualization: **Imagine the things and people you take for granted and interact with the most would suddenly vanish and be gone forever.** This'll make you feel bad for a second, because the thought of loss is painful, but at the same time it'll give you an instant surge of appreciation and show you how lucky you are to still have them in your life.

I found a quote a few years ago that perfectly sums this up:

Imagine you only woke up this morning with only the things you said ‘thank you’ for yesterday – would you have everything you need?

Lesson 3: Be okay with the things that are outside of your control and internalize your goals for the things that aren’t.

The biggest step towards becoming more tranquil you can take is changing your attitude towards the things you can’t control. This takes two steps:

1. **Realizing when something *is* outside of your control right when it happens.**
2. **Not distracting yourself with worrying about it for even a second.**

This takes a lot of practice, but once you have it down, it changes everything. It not only makes you happier, it also stops you from wasting time with waiting. For example, when I send an email pitch to someone, I forget it the second I send it, because from that moment on, it’s out of my control. Likewise I never worry about the weather or politics.

And for those things that are somewhat in your control, but not entirely, you can internalize the goal. For example, of course you want to get good grades or win when you enter a competition, but other people have a say in this too. So instead of focusing on getting an A or winning, **focus on delivering *your* best performance.**

This will not only actually make you perform better, but you also won’t feel crushed if you don’t achieve your goal – because it wasn’t entirely up to you to reach it.

A Guide To The Good Life Review

I can’t say enough good things about Stoicism. It’s definitely part of the 20% of the changes I’ve made in my life that account for 80% of my increase in happiness. *A Guide To The Good Life* is a great introductory book to the topic and covers everything you need to know in layman’s terms. 100% recommended! Good follow-up reads are *Meditations* and *Breakfast With Socrates*.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Where Stoicism comes from historically and why it’s not an extreme practice, as some people think
- Why you should seek voluntary discomfort and how you can practice poverty without living on the street
- What to remember when you have to deal with stupid people

- The reason impostors deserve money they didn't earn
- How to deal with death, both of others and your own
- The one thing to keep in mind when starting to become a Stoic

Who would I recommend the A Guide To The Good Life summary to?

The 21 year old, who's in a rush to finish his business degree so he can earn as much money as possible and start living "the good life", the 43 year old who's still bitter about having to give up her tennis career, and anyone who curses when they're stuck in a traffic jam.