



The Space Between: Stoicism, Resilience, and the Art of Emotional Control

A premium intellectual English lesson exploring what we can and can not control—and what that means for how we live, lead, and respond under pressure.

Level: C1–C2 (Advanced)

Duration: 90 minutes

Format: One-to-one coaching

Focus: Listening · Reading · Speaking · Vocabulary · Persuasive Writing · Critical Thinking



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intellectual discussion

1

Discuss these questions with your teacher before watching the video. There are no right answers — only honest ones.

1. **Personal experience:** Think of a time when something suddenly went wrong — a mistake, an accident, unexpected bad news. How did your mind and body react in the first few seconds?
2. **Observation:** Think of someone you know, or someone in public life, who is known for staying calm under pressure. What do they actually do differently from people who panic?
3. **Analysis:** What do you think “staying calm” really requires, psychologically? Is it the absence of fear, or something else entirely?
4. **Evaluation:** Is calm always the right response to a difficult situation? Can you think of moments when staying calm might actually be the wrong choice?
5. **Abstract thinking:** How much of our suffering, do you think, comes from what actually happens to us — and how much comes from how we interpret it?



Try to give **extended answers**. Avoid one-word replies — explain your reasoning and give real examples wherever you can.



2 video comprehension

Watch the video on the origins and philosophy of Stoicism, then complete Parts A and B below.

Watch here: youtube.com/watch?v=rxUm-2x-2dM

SCAN
ME



Part A – True or False?

Write T(True) or F(False). If a statement is false, correct it.

#	Statement	T/F
1	Zeno of Citium began studying philosophy after he lost his possessions in a shipwreck near Athens. The	
2	name “Stoicism” comes directly from the name of its founder, Zeno.	
3	According to the video, courage is a virtue needed only in extraordinary, dramatic circumstances.	
4	Marcus Aurelius led the Roman Empire through two major wars during his 19-year reign.	
5	Epictetus argued that our suffering comes mainly from external events themselves, not from how we judge them.	

Part B – Comprehension Questions

- In your own words, explain what the Stoics meant by *logos*.
- According to the video, what does the virtue of **temperance** involve?
- Who was Seneca, and what did he write or argue regarding the treatment of slaves in Roman society?
- Why, according to the video, does Stoicism *not* encourage passivity?
- How did Marcus Aurelius’s journals go on to influence Nelson Mandela, according to the video?





2 video comprehension (continued)

Now think more deeply about what the video says.

Part C – Critical Analysis

1. Seneca called for the humane treatment of slaves at a time when Roman law considered them property. Evaluate how significant this position was, given the norms of his era. What made his stance different from many of his Roman contemporaries?
2. The video says Marcus Aurelius's journals guided Nelson Mandela through 27 years of imprisonment. Why do you think private reflections written by a Roman emperor nearly two thousand years earlier could resonate so strongly with a 20th-century political prisoner?
3. The video distinguishes between the popular meaning of "stoic" (calm under pressure) and the deeper philosophy (pursuing virtue). Are staying calm and being virtuous the same thing? Can a person be calm without being virtuous – or virtuous without being calm?

Part D – Key Takeaways

1. In one or two sentences, summarise the central claim the video makes about what we can and cannot control.
2. What is the video's main message about the relationship between classical Stoicism and modern psychology?
3. If you had to explain to a friend, in plain English, why Stoicism is more than just "staying calm," what would you say?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION — KEEP THIS IN MIND AS WE CONTINUE

How much of our suffering comes from events themselves, and how much from our judgments about them?





3

audio comprehension

Listen to the audio on mastering anger through Stoic principles, then complete Parts A and B below.

Listening tip: This is a short motivational monologue built almost entirely around direct quotations from Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and Seneca. Listen once for the general message, then again to catch the exact words for Part A.

Part A — Listen and Fill the Gaps

1. Marcus Aurelius wrote: "Choose not to be harmed, and you won't feel _____."
2. Epictetus taught: "It's not what happens to you but how you _____ to it that matters."
3. Marcus Aurelius said the people he deals with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous, and _____.
4. Seneca warned that anger, if not restrained, is frequently more _____ to us than the injury that provokes it.
5. According to Epictetus, any person capable of _____ you becomes your master.

Part B — Comprehension & Discussion

1. According to the speaker, what is the difference between "the path of mastery" and "the path of suppression or avoidance"?
2. In your own words, explain what the speaker means by "separate what you control from what you don't."
3. Why does the speaker suggest thinking about difficult people the way you might think about someone who is blind?
4. According to the audio, what does anger actually achieve — and why does the speaker consider this significant?
5. Which of the five ideas in the audio do you personally find hardest to practise in real life? Why?



LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND, NOT TO REPLY.

In Stoicism, listening is an act of **respect**, **patience**, and **self-control**.

- BE PRESENT**
Focus entirely on what is being said.
- SUSPEND JUDGMENT**
Set aside opinions to truly understand.
- SEEK TO LEARN**
Listen to gain wisdom, not to win an argument.
- CONTROL YOURSELF**
Respond with calm and thoughtful choice.
- PATIENCE**
Good listening takes time and restraint.
- DISCIPLINE**
Silence the urge to speak. Master your impulses.
- PERSPECTIVE**
Every person has a reason. Listen to see it.
- WISDOM**
From listening deeply, clarity and insight arise.

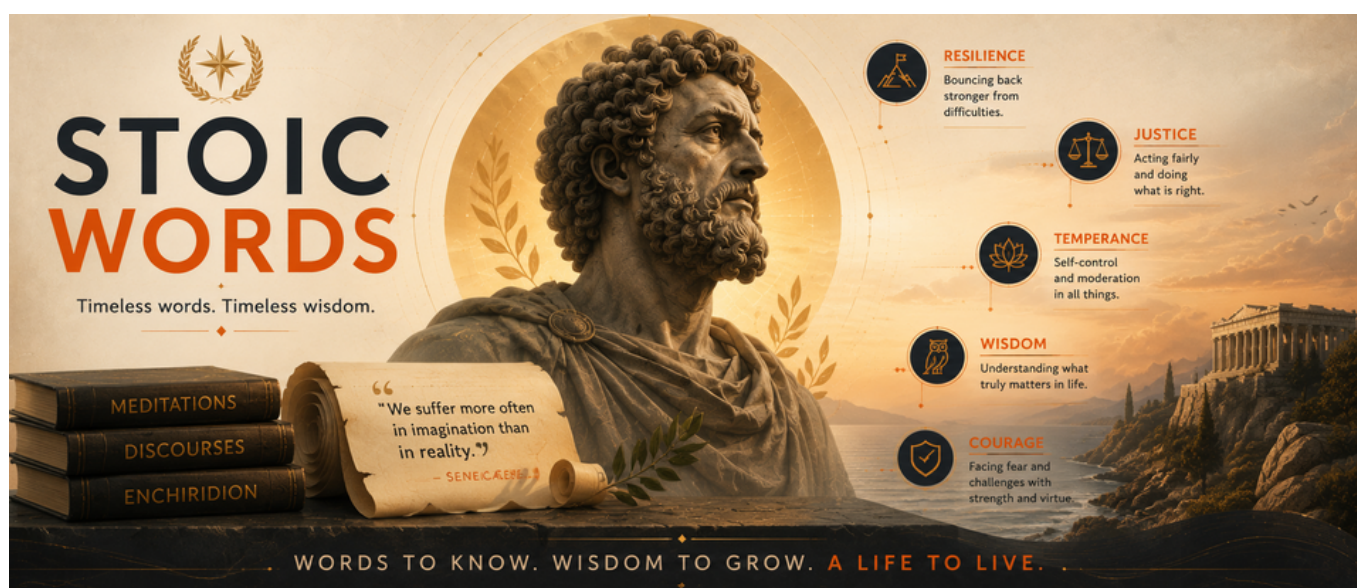


4 vocabulary development

Read, repeat, and master these words before reading the article.

Match each word (1–15) with its correct definition (A–O). Write the matching letter in the **Answer** column — the definitions on the right are deliberately shuffled and do *not* correspond to the row they sit in.

#	WORD	ANSWER	DEF	DEFINITION
1	non-negotiable	☐	A	to become looser, weaker, or less intense
2	insulate	☐	B	calm and in control of one's emotions
3	escalate	☐	C	not open to discussion or change — something that must happen
4	composed	☐	D	arriving without being asked for or welcomed
5	uninvited	☐	E	to pass a task or responsibility to someone else
6	inventory	☐	F	to protect someone from something unpleasant or difficult
7	jolt	☐	G	to pass a problem up to someone with more authority or seniority
8	verdict	☐	H	the quality of needing immediate attention or action
9	dread	☐	I	not especially interesting or surprising — ordinary
10	unremarkable	☐	J	a lingering feeling of anger or bitterness about being treated unfairly
11	unaffected	☐	K	a systematic list or assessment of what is available or possible
12	slacken	☐	L	a sudden, unsettling shock, often emotional
13	delegate	☐	M	a strong feeling of fear about something that may happen
14	urgency	☐	N	not emotionally influenced or changed by something
15	resentment	☐	O	a formal judgment or conclusion about something





4

vocabulary development (continued)

Now put these words to work in new sentences and in conversation.

Gap-Fill — Complete each sentence with a word from the box**WORD BANK**

non-negotiable · uninvited · delegate · verdict · slacken

1. Marcus returned to the same reminder to make his Stoic practice feel _____ rather than optional.
2. Elena's first reaction arrives fast and _____, before she has time to think.
3. As emperor, Marcus had no one else to _____ the hardest decisions to.
4. Reading the rejection email, Elena resists turning the outcome into a _____ about her own worth.
5. The article warns that skills like perception and will _____ the moment practice stops.

Vocabulary in Context — Choose the correct word for each new sentence**WORD BANK**

insulate · escalate · composed · dread · unremarkable

1. Growing up in a wealthy family didn't _____ him from the ordinary disappointments of adolescence.
2. When the customer's complaint wasn't resolved quickly, she decided to _____ it to the store manager.
3. Even after the fire alarm went off, the flight attendant remained remarkably _____.
4. He felt a quiet _____ every time his phone buzzed with his boss's name.
5. The meeting itself was fairly _____ — no surprises, no conflict, nothing worth reporting.

Discussion — Use at least one vocabulary word in each answer

1. Can you think of a moment when you felt a sudden **jolt** of bad news? How did you react in the first few seconds?
2. Do you think it's possible to stay **composed** under real pressure, or is that only easy to claim in hindsight?
3. Have you ever let an outcome become a **verdict** about your own worth, the way Elena almost does? What happened?
4. Is there a task or decision in your life you find hard to **delegate** to others? Why?
5. What kinds of **resentment** do you think are hardest to let go of, and why?





5

reading article

Read the article below, then complete the comprehension activities on the next page.

Three Disciplines for a Difficult Life: What Marcus Aurelius Actually Teaches

An original Fluentora feature on perception, action, and will— the practical core of Stoic philosophy

In the winter of 168 CE, a plague that had already killed millions across the Roman Empire reached the army camps along the Danube, where the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius was leading a campaign against Germanic tribes. Soldiers who had survived combat were now dying of fever within days, and ancient historians describe carts leaving the camp each morning loaded with the dead. The smoke from the funeral pyres would have been visible from the command tent for weeks at a time. Marcus, by then approaching fifty, is not recorded as having panicked. He is recorded, instead, as having gone on writing to himself at night,

in the private notebook he had kept for years — reminders that were never meant to reach anyone else. That night, or one very much like it, by whatever lamp he had, he returned to an idea he had written to himself many times before, in slightly different words each time: that he could leave this life at any moment, and that the fact, properly understood, should not freeze him but focus him.

That single habit is not really about death at all. It is about urgency. What this idea — usually known today by its Latin name, *memento mori*, “remember you will die” — was actually *for* was to make everything else Marcus practised feel non-negotiable rather than optional. His notebook returns constantly to three connected disciplines that form the practical core of his Stoic philosophy: learning to see events accurately, learning to act well within whatever situation he was actually in, and learning to accept outcomes he could not change without resentment. Perception, action, and will. The reminder about death is not a fourth item on that list. It is the deadline that makes the other three worth the effort. Nobody disciplines themselves for a project with no deadline.

None of the three disciplines is especially exotic on its own. Seeing a situation clearly, acting sensibly within it, and accepting what you cannot change are the kind of advice that turns up, in watered-down form, on motivational posters. What makes Marcus’s version worth taking seriously is that he treats all three as trained skills rather than personality traits — things a person gets better at through repetition, the way a musician gets better at scales, not things you either happen to have or don’t. That framing changes the question from “am I naturally a calm, accepting person?” to a considerably more useful one: have you actually practised this, recently, on something that mattered?

A reasonable assumption would be that absolute power insulates a person from exactly this kind of daily difficulty. The opposite was closer to the truth for Marcus. He could not fire a difficult colleague, resign from a bad situation, or simply wait for someone else to make the hard call — there was no one above him to appeal to, no higher office to escalate a problem toward, no one else whose job it was to stay composed if he did not. Every obstacle he ever encountered, from plague to a broken supply line to his own exhaustion, stopped with him. Stoic philosophy, for Marcus, was not an abstract interest pursued in spare time. It was closer to a survival requirement for a man with no one else to hand the hardest decisions to.

Two of those three disciplines are worth watching in action, because both solve a problem that shows up constantly in ordinary working life, seventeen centuries after Marcus’s tent on the Danube.

One — See It Plainly, Then Let It Become the Work. Picture a very ordinary modern version of the same discipline. Elena, a project manager, is two minutes from opening a pitch to a client she has been chasing for eight months, when her laptop’s screen freezes and will not respond to anything — not the keyboard, not a forced restart, nothing. The client is already seated, checking his phone. Someone has poured coffee that is now going cold at the edge of the table. Elena can feel her pulse in her throat. In the space of about four seconds, her first reaction is exactly the one Marcus spent a lifetime training himself out of: **this is a disaster, this always happens to me, eight months of work, gone, right here, in front of the one client who mattered most.** None of that reaction is factually wrong, and none of it is remotely useful either.

The Stoic move — the one Marcus rehearsed on paper for years before anyone had to perform it live — is to notice the story being added on top of the fact, and set it aside deliberately, the way you’d set down something too heavy to carry and think clearly at the same time. The fact is: the laptop has failed. That is all the fact says. What it does not say is that the meeting is ruined, or that she is unlucky, or that eight months were wasted. Those are separate claims, arriving fast and uninvited, and this is not “everything happens for a reason” dressed up in older language — Marcus never claims the failed laptop is secretly good. The claim is narrower: the frustration, however justified, will not fix anything by itself.

Article continues on the next page →

**5** reading article (continued)

What happens next, in Elena's case, is the second half of the same discipline: calm converted immediately into inventory. She has a printed one-page summary in her bag, kept as backup out of habit rather than expectation. She has a phone with the same slides, small screen, but visible. She buys forty extra seconds simply by beginning to talk while a colleague quietly restarts the laptop under the table. None of this was the plan. All of it was available — and all of it was only available because the first four seconds were spent scanning the room for what remained possible, not narrating the disaster.

It would have been just as easy, and much more natural, for Elena to spend that first stretch of time on the story instead of the inventory. Most people do, and nobody would have blamed her. Marcus was not trying to eliminate the emotional jolt; his own notebook admits, again and again, that he felt it too, decades into practising this. The discipline was never about not reacting. It was about not letting the reaction go first and the thinking go second for longer than it took to notice the order was backwards.

Two — Hold the Outcome Loosely. The same discipline, aimed in the opposite direction, applies to what happened next. Elena's pitch, laptop trouble and all, went about as well as she could reasonably have hoped. Weeks pass. Then, on a Tuesday morning, at her desk, with a coffee that is for once still hot, the email arrives: the client has gone with a competitor, for reasons that had nothing to do with the pitch itself — a budget decision made two levels above anyone Elena ever spoke to.

It would be easy, reading the message, to fold this into a verdict: eight months, gone, therefore the eight months were a failure, therefore something about her work, or her, was not good enough. She could picture, quite easily, the version of the afternoon that follows from that verdict — replaying the pitch for mistakes that weren't actually there, drafting an apologetic message to her manager before anyone has even asked for one, carrying a low, specific dread into the next client meeting on the calendar, as though it has already been decided that this one will fail too. Marcus's third discipline argues against exactly this move, and it cuts in both directions at once. He was just as suspicious of the opposite outcome. Had the client said yes, the same discipline would have applied in reverse — receive it, use it, and do not let it quietly become proof of anything about your own worth, because the next rejection would then have just as much claim to being "proof" of the opposite.

What makes this difficult to practise, rather than merely agree with, is that it asks Elena to do something genuinely unnatural: care enormously about the work while refusing to let the result of that work cast a verdict on her. Not indifference — she is allowed to be disappointed, and Marcus's own notebook is full of frustration, grief, and irritation, honestly recorded rather than edited out. The discipline is narrower than not caring. It is refusing to let a decision made two levels above her, for budget reasons she never heard, decide what she is worth. The email is real. The rejection is real. The verdict is invented, afterward, by her — and Marcus's whole argument is that the inventing part was the only part that was ever optional.

What Elena actually does, in the end, is unremarkable, which is rather the point. She reads the email a second time, closes the laptop, and writes two short lines to her manager stating what happened and what she would try differently with the next client, then moves on to the afternoon's other work. No grand gesture. No forced positivity, either — she is quiet for the rest of the morning, and nobody would mistake her for unaffected. What she does not do is carry the rejection into the next pitch as a prediction. The discipline shows up less in what she felt than in what she allowed the feeling to decide.

Every part of this — the plain look at the failed laptop, the refusal to let a rejection email become a verdict — is easier to admire than to sustain, and Marcus's own notebook is proof that even he needed to write the same reminder to himself more times than he probably wanted to admit. Perception and will are not muscles a person builds once and keeps forever; they slacken the moment practice stops, which is presumably why an emperor with every possible excuse to delegate the effort kept doing it himself, in his own hand, for years. What made the effort feel worthwhile, rather than optional, was the plague outside his tent, or whatever equivalent reminder he happened to have that particular week: the plain fact that none of us knows how much practice time we actually have left. That is the whole function of *memento mori* in his Stoic training. Not dread. A deadline — the only genuinely honest one any of us are working against, and the reason a notebook nobody else was ever meant to read is still worth reading now, by people facing considerably smaller obstacles than plague and war, but the same two disciplines all the same.



5

reading comprehension

Now test your understanding of the article.

Part A – Comprehension

1. According to the article, what happened in the Roman army camps along the Danube in the winter of 168 CE?
2. What does the article say Marcus was “recorded” as doing, rather than panicking, during the plague?
3. What are the three disciplines the article says Marcus’s notebook constantly returns to?
4. What specific problem does Elena face two minutes before her pitch?
5. Why does the client ultimately choose a competitor, according to the article?

Part B – Analytical Questions

1. The article says a “reasonable assumption” about absolute power turns out to be wrong for Marcus. What is that assumption, and what does the article argue instead?
2. Explain, in your own words, the difference between the “fact” of the laptop failing and the “story” Elena’s mind adds on top of it.
3. The article says Marcus’s third discipline “cuts in both directions at once” when it comes to success and failure. What does this mean?

Part C – Application

1. Think of your own version of Elena’s laptop moment — a time an obstacle appeared right before something important. What did you do in the first few seconds, and what might Marcus’s discipline have suggested instead?
2. The article ends by calling memento mori “a deadline” rather than a source of dread. Do you find that idea motivating, unsettling, or both? Explain your answer.



LIVE STOIC. LEAVE A LEGACY.

How you live today becomes the example others follow tomorrow.

Be the reason someone chooses virtue over impulse.

LIVE BY PRINCIPLES
Let wisdom guide every decision.

SERVE OTHERS
Your character impacts more than you know.

KEEP LEARNING
A Stoic never stops seeking truth.

BUILD CHARACTER
Little by little. Day by day. It becomes unshakable.

LEAVE A LEGACY
Not of possessions, but of purpose.

THE BEST WAY TO PREDICT YOUR FUTURE IS TO CREATE IT WITH VIRTUE TODAY.

MARCUS AURELIUS



6

advanced writing skills: argumentation

Task: write a persuasive paragraph answering—"Is it truly possible to control our own judgments, or do our emotions control us?"

Part A — The Skill: Structuring a Persuasive Argument

A strong persuasive paragraph makes a clear **claim**, supports it with **evidence or reasoning**, acknowledges a **counterargument**, and then **rebutts** that counterargument before returning to the claim. At C1–C2 level, skilled writers rarely state opinions as absolute facts. Instead, they use **hedging language** to sound confident while still acknowledging nuance:

HEDGING LANGUAGE

Arguably, ... · It could be argued that ... · While X has merit, ... · This is not to say that..., but rather...

Part B — Analyse a Model Paragraph

"It could be argued that the Stoic claim — that we always retain control over our own judgments — understates how differently trauma and grief actually operate on the mind. Arguably, a sudden, overwhelming loss does not wait for permission from our judgment before flooding the body with panic or grief; the reaction arrives first, and any reframing comes only afterward, if at all. This is not to say the Stoic position is worthless, but rather that its usefulness may depend on the size and suddenness of what has happened. While deliberate reframing has real value for everyday frustrations, it could be argued that treating it as a universal solution risks blaming people for reactions that were never fully theirs to control in the first place."

1. Underline the sentence that states the paragraph's main claim.
2. Circle every hedging phrase the writer uses. How many can you find?
3. This paragraph argues the *skeptical* side of the debate. What might a paragraph arguing the opposite — the Stoic side — claim instead?





6 advanced writing skills (continued)

Part C—Guided Editing

This paragraph has several persuasive-writing problems. Identify at least three (for example: absolute language, no evidence, no counter argument, dismissive tone), then rewrite it using the structure and hedging language from Part A.

“Emotions completely control everyone, always. Nobody can ever really choose their reaction to anything, so Stoicism is basically useless advice. Trauma survivors have no choice at all in how they feel, and anyone who says otherwise has obviously never been through anything hard in their life.”

Part D — Independent Writing

Now write your own paragraph (120–150 words) answering: **“Is it truly possible to control our own judgments, or do our emotions control us?”** Use at least one hedging phrase from Part A and include one acknowledged counter argument.



PRACTICE STOICISM EVERY DAY.

Small choices.
Strong character.
Lasting peace.

PAUSE.
Breathe.
Create space.

CHOOSE.
What aligns with virtue and reason.

ACT.
Do what you can.
Accept the rest.

WHAT'S IN MY CONTROL?
 ✓ My choices
 ✓ My efforts
 ✓ My attitude
 ✓ My response

WE ARE NOT GIVEN A SHORT LIFE,
BUT WE **MAKE IT SHORT.**
— SENECA —



6

critical thinking challenge: the empathy dilemma

This is the most demanding activity in the lesson. Take your time.

Background: A close friend has just lost their job and is deeply upset. Another friend, having studied Stoicism, tells them: *“Remember — it’s not the event that’s hurting you, it’s your judgment about it. Reframe it and the pain goes away.”*

The Stoic view: Reframing genuinely reduces unnecessary suffering. The advice is sound and could help the friend recover faster.

The critical view: This response can feel dismissive — minimising real pain and invalidating the friend’s emotions in the moment.

1. Is there a difference between reframing your *own* suffering and telling someone else to reframe theirs?
2. Does timing matter? Would this advice land differently five minutes after the news versus five days later?
3. Can Stoic advice be true and still be the wrong thing to say in the moment?
4. What role does the closeness of the friendship play in whether this advice feels helpful or dismissive?
5. Is there a way to offer Stoic-style reframing that doesn’t feel dismissive? What might that sound like?

Final Position

Deliver a 2–3 minute response defending your own view, using evidence and vocabulary from this lesson.

Perspective Shift: A few days later, the friend says something unexpected: the reframing advice, when they finally heard it again a week after the news — not in the first raw moment — was actually what helped them move forward. Does this change your position? Why or why not?



**BUILD
INNER
STRENGTH.
LIVE STOIC.**

Peace comes from within.
Strength lasts a lifetime.

MASTER YOUR MIND
Your thoughts shape your reality.

EMBRACE CHALLENGES
Difficulties build unshakable strength.

ACT WITH VIRTUE
Live with integrity, kindness, and wisdom.

FIND INNER PEACE
No one can disturb a peaceful mind.

**YOU CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING.
BUT YOU CAN MASTER YOURSELF.**

—♦ LIVE WISE. LIVE STOIC. ♦—



7

final reflection

One closing question. There is no correct answer — only an honest one.

Think of a recent moment that upset you — was it the event itself, or your judgment of it, that caused the distress?

“Between what happens and how you respond, there is a space — and that space is where your freedom lives.”

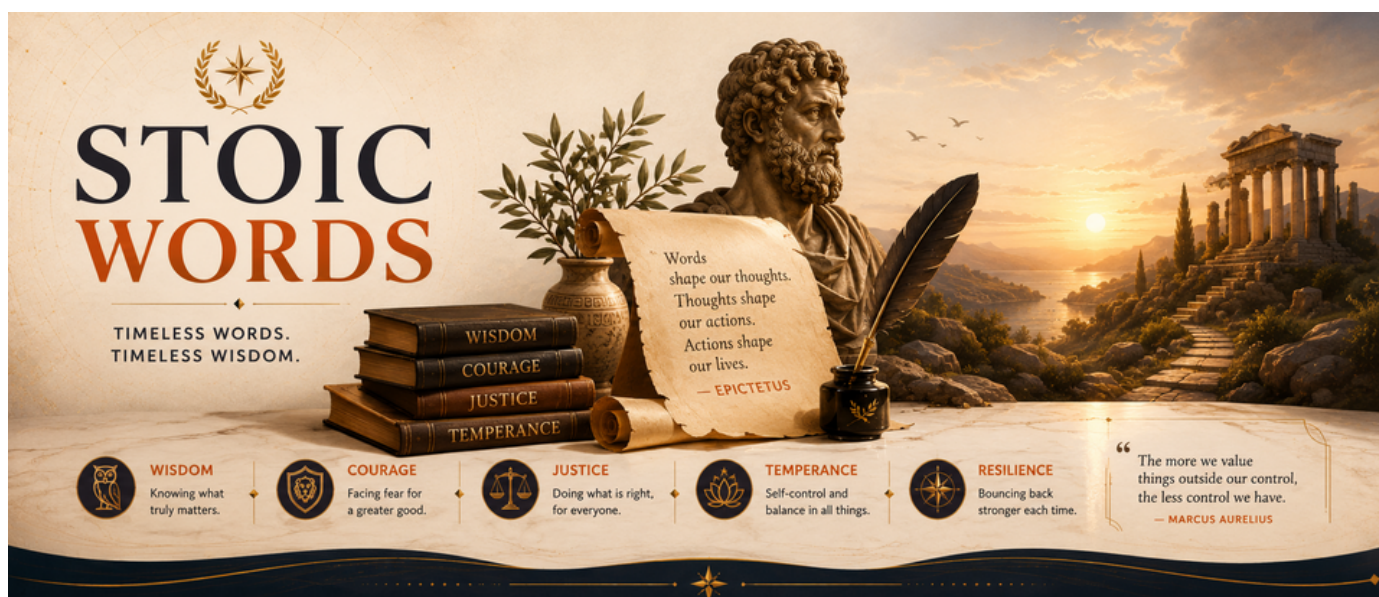
**homework: mini project**

Presentation Task: Prepare a 2-minute talk titled “What Stoicism Can Teach a Modern Leader.”

Your talk should:

- Connect directly to the lesson’s leadership thread (composure, judgment, the dichotomy of control)
- Use at least **5 items** of today’s lesson vocabulary
- Reference a real or hypothetical leadership example of your own choosing
- Take approximately 2 minutes to deliver aloud

Be prepared to deliver your talk and discuss it at the start of your next lesson. There is no answer key — this task rewards original thinking.



 **Video Transcript**

You've been stranded thousands of miles from home with no money or possessions. Such a predicament would make many people despair and curse their awful fate, but for Zeno of Citium it became the foundation of his life's work and legacy. The once-wealthy merchant lost everything when he was shipwrecked near Athens around 300 BCE. With not much else to do, he wandered into a book shop, became intrigued by reading about Socrates, and proceeded to seek out and study with the city's noted philosophers. As Zeno began educating his own students, he originated the philosophy known as Stoicism, whose teachings of virtue, tolerance, and self-control have inspired generations of thinkers and leaders. The name Stoicism comes from the Stoa Poikile, the decorated public colonnade where Zeno and his disciples gathered for discussion.

Today we colloquially use the word "stoic" to mean someone who remains calm under pressure and avoids emotional extremes, but while this captures important aspects of Stoicism, the original philosophy was more than just an attitude. The Stoics believed that everything around us operates according to a web of cause and effect, resulting in a rational structure of the universe which they called logos. And while we may not always have control over the events affecting us, we can have control over how we approach things. Rather than imagining an ideal society, the Stoic tries to deal with the world as it is while pursuing self-improvement through four cardinal virtues: practical wisdom — the ability to navigate complex situations in a logical, informed, and calm manner; temperance — the exercise of self-restraint and moderation

in all aspects of life; justice — treating others with fairness even when they have done wrong; and courage — not just in extraordinary circumstances but facing daily challenges with clarity and integrity. As Seneca, one of the most famous Roman Stoics, wrote, sometimes even to live is an act of courage.

But while Stoicism focuses on personal improvement, it's not a self-centered philosophy. At a time when Roman law considered slaves as property, Seneca called for their humane treatment and stressed that we all share the same fundamental humanity. Nor does Stoicism encourage passivity — the idea is that only people who have cultivated virtue and self-control in themselves can bring positive change in others.

One of the most famous Stoic writers was also one of Rome's greatest emperors. Over the course of his 19-year reign, Stoicism gave Marcus Aurelius the resolve to lead the Empire through two major wars while dealing with the loss of many of his children. Centuries later, Marcus's journals would guide and comfort Nelson Mandela through his 27-year imprisonment during his struggle for racial equality in South Africa. After his release and eventual victory, Mandela stressed peace and reconciliation, believing that while the injustices of the past couldn't be changed, his people could confront them in the present and seek to build a better, more just future.

Stoicism was an active school of philosophy for several centuries in Greece and Rome. As a formal institution it faded away, but its influence has continued to this day. Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas have admired and adopted its focus on the virtues, and there are parallels between Stoic ataraxia, or tranquility of mind, and the Buddhist concept of Nirvana.

One particularly influential Stoic was the philosopher Epictetus, who wrote that suffering stems not from the events in our lives but from our judgments about them. This has resonated strongly with modern psychology and the self-help movement. For example, rational emotive behavioral therapy focuses on changing the self-defeating attitudes people form about their life circumstances. There is also Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, informed by Frankl's own time as a concentration camp prisoner. Logotherapy is based on the Stoic principle that we can harness our willpower to fill our lives with meaning even in the bleakest situations.



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