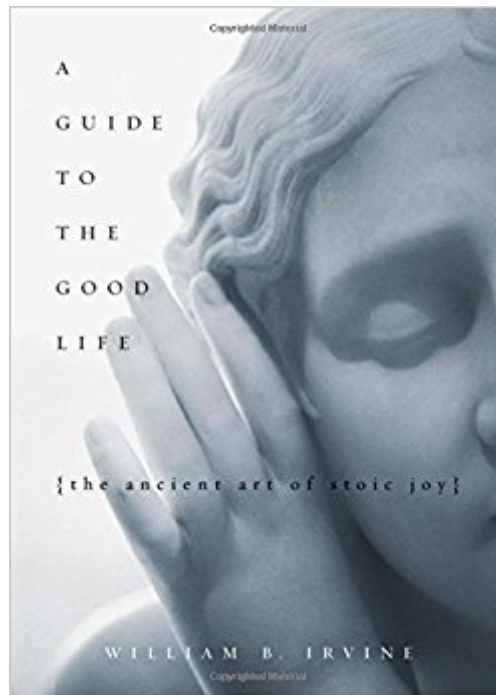




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# **A Guide To The Good Life: The Ancient Art Of Stoic Joy**



## Synopsis

One of the great fears many of us face is that despite all our effort and striving, we will discover at the end that we have wasted our life. In *A Guide to the Good Life*, William B. Irvine plumbs the wisdom of Stoic philosophy, one of the most popular and successful schools of thought in ancient Rome, and shows how its insight and advice are still remarkably applicable to modern lives. In *A Guide to the Good Life*, Irvine offers a refreshing presentation of Stoicism, showing how this ancient philosophy can still direct us toward a better life. Using the psychological insights and the practical techniques of the Stoics, Irvine offers a roadmap for anyone seeking to avoid the feelings of chronic dissatisfaction that plague so many of us. Irvine looks at various Stoic techniques for attaining tranquility and shows how to put these techniques to work in our own life. As he does so, he describes his own experiences practicing Stoicism and offers valuable first-hand advice for anyone wishing to live better by following in the footsteps of these ancient philosophers. Readers learn how to minimize worry, how to let go of the past and focus our efforts on the things we can control, and how to deal with insults, grief, old age, and the distracting temptations of fame and fortune. We learn from Marcus Aurelius the importance of prizing only things of true value, and from Epictetus we learn how to be more content with what we have. Finally, *A Guide to the Good Life* shows readers how to become thoughtful observers of their own lives. If we watch ourselves as we go about our daily business and later reflect on what we saw, we can better identify the sources of distress and eventually avoid that pain in our life. By doing this, the Stoics thought, we can hope to attain a truly joyful life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Irvine excels at giving a "walking tour" of the many schools of Stoic philosophy, from Greek to Roman traditions, identifying individual Stoic thinkers (many more than Seneca) and their principles and techniques, which Irvine argues are even more relevant in modern times than their own."

--Philosophical Practice"Another valuable ally in your personal morale campaign can be found in William B. Irvine's *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy*, which removes the grim grey mask of noble, resigned fatalism attached to the popular conception of Stoic philosophy and lets the humanity out and the air in.... It is a work of clarion clarity, and you won't have to read that far into it before the phrase 'stoic joy' ceases sounding like an oxymoron and becomes a workable proposition."--James Wolcott, *Vanity Fair*"Irvine's book excels as a guide for practicing Stoics or for individuals seeking to improve that practice." --The Common Review"Irvine's intended audience is nonphilosophers, but everyone can profit from his clear presentation on the on the benefits of using philosophical doctrines to live a meaningful life."--Library Journal"If, however, you are skeptical that even therapy will make you happy -- if you are looking for a life philosophy -- *A Guide to the Good Life* is for you.... Irvine's book is more thought-provoking."--Austin American-Statesman"He writes in clear, almost jargon-free prose that is well suited to his target audience, and maintains a cheerful tone throughout the book...that perfectly expresses the sort of rationally grounded upbeat attitude that is one of the payoffs of becoming a practicing Stoic.... I can firmly recommend Irvine's *A Guide to the Good Life* to anyone interested in exploring some of the ways philosophical work can be brought to bear on the ordinary problems of living.... there is a great deal of useful thinking and excellent advice to be found in it, presented in a clear, straightforward and often charming manner."--Lauren Tillinghast, *Metapsychology Online Reviews*"Bill Irvine has given us a great gift: the most accessible and inviting description of modern Stoicism available. Read this book and be prepared to change your life!"--Sharon Lebell, author of *Epictetus's The Art of Living: The Classical Manual on Virtue, Happiness, and Effectiveness*"Well-written and so compelling, this is a rare example of a book that actually will make a difference in the lives of its readers. Whether it's coping with grief or arriving at lasting happiness, Irvine shows, with care and verve, ancient Stoic wisdom to be ever relevant and very, very helpful." --Gary Klein, author of *Sources of Power: How People Make Decisions*"Never have I seen so delightful, empathetic, and supple a presentation of Stoicism as Irvine gives us here. Hardly Christian even in sensibilities, the Stoics were, none the less, wise in the ways of life, a benison Irvine exposes, and then delivers here, with panache and great acumen."--Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Divine Hours*"Irvine's calm yet impassioned presentation of a Western philosophy of life that one can actually abide by and practice will be good medicine for

many readers...I heartily recommend it." --The Christian Century"Dr Irvine has used very simple language in his book. He gives a notion of modern stoicism and urges modern readers to practice stoicism." -- The Nation, Pakistan

William B. Irvine is Professor of Philosophy at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. He is the author of *On Desire: Why We Want What We Want*.

I've been helped immensely just by reading the first chapter. I embrace the focus on living the Stoic philosophy, learning techniques to banish negative emotions and the distractions surrounding us in a consumer society which take me off the path to deciding what my "grand goal in living" is and staying focused on that goal every day. I had been dipping into Buddhism for years, loving aspects of it while feeling it just wasn't fitting my personality and circumstances; I happened upon a FB site devoted to the similarities between Eastern and Western philosophy, in particular Buddhism and Stoicism, and a light began to shine. I began to read about Stoic philosophy: Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, *The Art of Living*, and now this book, which is just so clear and so engaging. I am a reader of Albert Ellis' books, in particular the subject of how to stop allowing people to push my buttons; I am engaged in cognitive therapy to help me learn how to banish negative emotions and develop tranquility while living my values and developing positive qualities such as reasonableness, self-discipline, and courage; listening to Tom Petty, really for the first time...I know, this is a whole packet of different sources of inspiration which all seem, to me, to be pointing in the same direction - developing integrity while experiencing joy...Learning about Stoic philosophy is like finding a perfectly ripe orchard peach after living with the memory of what they taste like while making due with those tasteless grocery store articles. There's an art to living well as I see it, and this book is really helping to guide me towards a more meaningful life. William Irvine's book is a treasure of information on this philosophy, on the importance of setting a goal you won't deviate from, on what Stoic philosophy is and how to live it. Well-written, inspiring, informative. I no longer have an opportunity to study in a Stoic school, philosophy courses are focused on learning theories while the ancient schools taught pupils how to practice. This book is as close as I may ever come to one of those immersive experiences with a teacher. I'm enjoying this book, thrilled to be finding some texts here on to learn more about Stoicism written by knowledgeable authors, and feeling very optimistic about life in general again.

Very insightful book. If you are into the stoics and Tao or Zen. This book is helpful to learn how to

implement a stoic lifestyle. You still need to get Epictetus Discourse and Handbook and some Seneca, Marcus, and maybe Mustonius. Do your homework and this book will help. It is not really needed to follow the path, but I still enjoyed the author perspective. It will definitely help beginners on the Way. I recommended this book to my students.

This is a great book if you have been reading about Stoicism, and want to have a good idea of how to adapt the ideas to the modern age. It also gives you some background and ideas for understanding the stoics before just diving in and reading them. The book is clear and gives a good account of the author's reasoning and reasoning that you may also want to take a Stoic philosophy into account.

A very good history and guide to Roman stoicism, with many quotes from the Roman stoics such as Seneca and Marcus Aurelius. Oh, and definitely a good guide to the stoic's view of the good life. I would recommend this to anyone wishing to clarify one's life goals and world views.

Irvine's *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* has a slightly misleading title, as Irvine is just as much pouring Stoicism into a modern mold as he is presenting an ancient art. There is nothing wrong with this, and he repeatedly stresses that his Stoicism is a product of ancient Stoicism, but is even more so a new creation. In fact, some of the techniques he provides to become a Stoic are not found in ancient sources (again, he points this out). This does not detract from the book, in fact, it brings Stoicism to our age. Irvine eliminates the ancient religious elements from Stoicism. Any and all metaphysics is removed. You won't find reference to God, gods, Zeus or the World-Fire. For that, use Irvine's helpful list of books from Stoics at the end of this guide. Controlling our emotions is probably one of the most difficult challenges in life. Irvine provides a fine avenue to approach this fraught task.

As I read through this book I was surprised again and again at the similarities between Stoicism and Buddhism. Here are Stoicism's Four Noble Truths as extracted from Irving's presentation: 1. Everything is impermanent and subject to change. 2. There is little in the world over which we have even the most marginal control. 3. Seeking pleasure brings pain; avoiding pain brings pain. 4. Tranquility is achieved by living free of desire for fame or fortune, and free from aversion from pain, suffering, and the requirements of living in society. There is nothing here with which Buddhists would disagree. This is perhaps the best philosophy book I have read since *On Desire*, William Irving's

pre-Stoic inquiry into desire formation. It is readable, accessible to the non-specialist, written with the intention to help others, contains information on how to apply Stoicism to one's own life, and features numerous examples from the life of the author as he began his own practice of Stoicism. I once read about the Stoics in university philosophy class. I even remember buying a copy of Marcus Auerlius' Meditations. But that's about all I remember about the Stoics or Stoicism. Now I'm interested in reading more. Too bad I got rid of that copy of the Meditations. Thank you, Mr Irving, for writing this book. May you find even deeper levels of tranquility (and the fortitude to practice meditation).#

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