

# STOIC CARDS



stoic challenges for modern times

# HOW TO USE THIS DECK

The Stoics believed that life exists to test your character. Seneca said those who never face trials deserve pity, for they never learn their strength. Each day, choose one card and engage the task fully. These are practice drills: brief, pointed, designed to expand your ability to act well under pressure.

Are you ready to discover what you are capable of?

**THE  
RETHINKER  
IMPERATIVE**

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# CHALLENGE ROUTINES

## Weeklong:

Pick 7 cards at random and complete a different stoic challenge each day.

## 30 Days:

Complete one card every day for a month - an intensive practice. Shuffle and repeat.

## Custom:

Create your own cards, add them to the deck, and make the challenges yours.

*"When a challenge confronts you, remember you are being matched with a younger sparring partner. Why? Becoming an Olympian takes sweat!"*

Epictetus





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Devote the first 30 minutes after waking to study, journalling or deliberate reflection. Begin the day with something that shakes the laziness out of your system and prepares you for principled action.

*"Of all people only those are at leisure who make time for philosophy, only they truly live."*

Seneca



Fear is normal; courage is trained.  
Identify one thing that scares you —  
small or large — and take one direct step  
toward it. Action shrinks fear; practice  
increases tolerance, and by facing fear  
you reclaim authority over your life.

*"There are more things likely to frighten us than  
there are to crush us; we suffer more often in  
imagination than in reality."*

Seneca



If you stop learning you stall your life.  
Today, spend time learning something unfamiliar: read an article, watch a short lecture, or listen to a podcast outside your field. Be curious, ask questions and let new knowledge challenge your assumptions.

*"It is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows."*

Epictetus



Write 6 character traits that describe the person you intend to be. Put them somewhere visible and ask yourself each day whether your actions reflect them. Use this list to steer small choices toward who you wish to become.

*"No random actions; none not based on underlying principles."*

Marcus Aurelius



Make a one-sentence mission. If it's vague, you drift. A single clear sentence about who you want to be becomes.

When hard decisions come, read it first and ask yourself: “Does this move me toward that sentence?”

*"First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do."*



Flow is a simple, steady current — not feverish pursuit. Create a daily rhythm: one morning anchor, one midday reset, one evening wind-down. Let those points stitch the day into a flowing whole rather than a string of spikes.

*"Happiness is a good flow of life."*



Your task is to recognise what is within  
your control and what is not. Our  
attitudes, the stories we tell ourselves,  
being in a good or bad mood, being  
happy or unhappy-these are all a choice.  
So choose to be in a good mood today.

*"The things you think about determine the  
quality of your mind. Your soul takes on the  
colour of your thoughts."*

Marcus Aurelius



Name 5 people you admire and list the traits that attract your respect. Spend time considering how to cultivate those traits in yourself. Let these role models become practical guides for daily conduct rather than distant ideals.

*"We (say) that it was not in our power to choose the parents who were allotted to us... But we can choose whose children we would like to be."*



Move your alarm sixty minutes earlier and use the extra hour for purposeful action: reading, writing or planning. Rise with intent and treat mornings as a laboratory for self-mastery.

*"On those mornings you struggle with getting up, keep this thought in mind—I am awakening to the work of a human being."*

Marcus Aurelius



Define 3 concrete goals — write them in your journal, your phone or speak them aloud to a friend. Make each goal specific and timebound. When you name a target clearly, your mind and habits begin to align with it.

*"Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know what harbour he is making for, no wind is the right wind."*

Seneca



Recognise that achievement seldom happens in isolation. Identify people who have helped you grow and send them a sincere thank you. Acknowledging your debts sharpens humility and strengthens your network of mutual aid.

*"Go straight to the seat of intelligence."*

Marcus Aurelius



Track everything you do today: tasks, duration and how you felt performing them. In the evening, review the log without excuse. Ask: which actions move you toward your aims and which do not? Use this honesty to reorder your time.

*"It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste much of it."*



Talk today with someone whose view differs from yours. Listen first, ask sincere questions and resist immediate rebuttal. Practising understanding broadens your perspective and refines your own convictions.

*"If someone is able to show me that what I think or do is not right, I will change; for I seek the truth, by which no one ever was truly harmed."*

Marcus Aurelius



Leave your phone at home or lock it away for the day. Go untethered and observe how your attention changes when you remove constant pings and scrolling. Notice anxiety ease use the freed time to observe, think and connect in real life.

*"Nothing is better proof of a well-ordered mind than a person's ability to stop where they are and pass some time in their own company."*

Seneca



Read a work of fiction today —  
something immersive and well  
crafted. Fiction teaches empathy  
and the complexities of motive;  
it will illuminate human life in  
ways facts alone cannot.

*"Reading is indispensable. It nourishes the  
mind and refreshes it when it is wearied."*



Choose a role model you truly admire and place a daily reminder of them where you will see it. Let the reminder sharpen your actions and orient you toward the character you aspire to be.

*"Choose a master whose life, conversation, and soul-expressing face have satisfied you; picture him always to yourself as your protector or your pattern."*

Seneca



Take a one-hour walk without distractions. Allow your mind to unwind, notice details in the environment, and let problems loosen their grip. Walking clarifies thought and replenishes focus.

*"We should take wandering outdoor walks, so that the mind might be nourished and refreshed by the open air and deep breathing."*



Choose your favourite stoic passage or quote and learn it by heart. Repeat it throughout the day. Over time, these lines will become internal prompts that shorten the gap between provocation and wise response.

*"You must linger among a limited number of master thinkers and digest their works if you would derive ideas that hold firm in your mind."*



Ask for help when you need it.  
Whether you need advice, a hand,  
therapy or rest, reach out. Stoics  
recognised comradeship; mission  
work is easier — and wiser —  
when you accept support.

*"Like a soldier storming a wall, you have a mission to accomplish. And if you've been wounded and you need a comrade to pull you up? So what?"*

Marcus Aurelius



List 5 things you feel grateful for  
and why. Carry the list with you  
and return to it during the day.  
Make gratitude a deliberate practice;  
it reorients attention from what  
you lack to what you have.

*"When you arise in the morning, think of what  
a privilege it is to be alive — to breathe, to  
think, to enjoy, to love."*

Marcus Aurelius



Treat every encounter today as an opportunity for kindness. Offer compliments, small help or unexpected courtesies. These small acts create disproportionate benefit for both giver and receiver.

*"We Stoics take pleasure in bestowing benefits, even though they cost us labour, provided they lighten the labours of others."*



List your misfortunes and failures;  
survey them openly and recognise  
that you survived them. Let that  
record strengthen you: you have  
endured before and you will  
endure again.

*"Remind yourself what you've been through  
and what you've had the strength to endure."*

Marcus Aurelius



Release a long-held grievance.  
Practise letting go instead of  
recirculating resentment. Remember:  
anger prolongs the hurt and enlarges  
the wound you carry. Forgiveness  
reclaims your freedom.

*"You don't have to turn this into something. It doesn't have to upset you."*

Marcus Aurelius



Write 3 gratitude letters to people who influenced you and send them. Be specific about what they did and how it helped. Expressing thanks strengthens bonds and clarifies what you value.

*"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others."*



Find a neglected spot — a pavement, park, street corner or room — and clean it up. Fill a garbage bag. A shopping bag. Whatever you have time for. Removing visible disorder improves the world and your sense of responsibility.

*"(A) commitment to justice in your own acts. Which means: thought and action resulting in the common good. What you were born to do."*

Marcus Aurelius



Turn off news alerts and remove news apps from your phone for the day. Observe how much calmer you feel when you refuse the constant demand for outrage. Preserve your attention for work that truly matters.

*"If you wish to improve, be content to appear clueless or stupid in extraneous matters."*



Start a conversation with a stranger:  
at a queue, on public transport or while  
waiting. Practice presence and curiosity  
rather than retreating into your phone.  
You will be reminded that community  
begins with small human exchanges.

*"Don't you realize that in isolation you would not  
be a human being? Because what is a human being?  
Part of a community."*

Epictetus



Great things grow by tiny, steady work.  
Don't despise small progress. Pick one  
habit you want to improve and do it  
for 5 minutes today. That tiny deposit  
compounds; repeated, it becomes a  
new capability and a new identity.

*"Well-being is attained little by little,  
and nevertheless is no little thing."*



Stoicism is defined by action, not words.

Go a full day without complaining.

When irritation arises, notice it, name it silently and choose a solution or acceptance instead. Replace commentary with action or calm acceptance.

*"If it's endurable, then endure it.  
Stop complaining."*

Marcus Aurelius



You must be able to face criticism to be confident in who you are. Today, deliberately invite critique or ask for honest feedback. Receive it without defending yourself; note what is useful, discard what isn't, and refuse to be shaken by tone or insult.

*"It is not enough to be insulted... You must believe that you have been harmed. If someone succeeds in provoking you, you are complicit in the provocation."*

Epictetus



When something goes wrong today,  
practise the art of acquiescence: say,  
“Yes, thank you,” accept what is  
and look for what is useful.  
Acceptance shortens suffering and  
reveals where you can act.

*"Fate guides the person who accepts it and  
hinder the person who resists them."*



Freedom starts with ruling your impulses. The voice that demands instant pleasure is not your master — unless you let it be. Identify one small temptation you will refuse today (impulse-buy, snack, doom-scroll). Delay it for 30 minutes; if you still want it, decide then.

*"No man is free who is not master of himself."*

Epictetus



Write down a grievance that still stings. Read it, name your emotions, then ceremonially burn the paper or otherwise destroy it. Let the symbolic act externalise the hurt and free you to move forward without carrying it.

*"How much more harmful are the consequences of anger and grief than the circumstances that aroused them in us!"*

Marcus Aurelius



Sleep on the floor tonight or otherwise choose a deliberately uncomfortable option. The goal is not suffering for its own sake but to toughen your will, practise endurance and start the day with a small victory.

*"It is precisely in times of immunity from care that the soul should toughen itself beforehand for occasions of greater stress..."*



Spend 15 minutes tonight gazing at the night sky. Let your smallness in a vast universe temper anxiety and widen perspective. Fathom the unfathomable, unthinkable odds of your life.

*"Meditate often on the interconnectedness and mutual interdependence of all things in the universe."*

Marcus Aurelius



Remove one non-essential  
commitment from your life today.  
Say no clearly and without apology.  
Reducing extraneous obligations  
reclaims time for the things that  
align with your values.

*"Most of what we do is not essential...  
Ask yourself at every moment,  
'Is this necessary?'"*

Marcus Aurelius



Set a personal challenge that contradicts a voice that says ‘this is impossible’. Take a measurable step that proves you can exceed your personal limits; let that success expand your future ambitions.

*"The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way."*

Marcus Aurelius



Make 3 phone calls to people you care about. If your day isn't improved immensely, try 3 other friends. Prioritise voices over messages; hearing another human brightens your mood and reinforces connection.

*"(Why) do I make a man my friend? To have someone for whom I may die, whom I may follow into exile, against whose death I may stake my own life."*



Live one day as if you had little: eat modestly, wear simple clothes and simplify comforts. Practise voluntary poverty to strengthen gratitude, reduce attachment and appreciate what you usually take for granted.

*"Make yourself at home with the scantiest fare; establish business relations with poverty."*

Seneca



Turn your shower to cold and step in. Use the shock to practise acceptance and to remind yourself you can endure discomfort with composure. Small bodily disciplines build mental resilience.

*"The body should be treated rigorously so that it does not disobey the mind."*



Today, speak little and listen more. Make silence your default and speak only when your words add clear value. Practise the Stoic preference for thoughtful brevity.

*"Let silence be your goal for the most part; say only what is necessary, and be brief about it."*

Epictetus



Spend 20 minutes imagining one realistic loss and rehearse how you would respond rationally. Name the steps you'd take and the small comforts you'd miss — then rehearse gratitude for what remains.

*"Let us prepare our minds as if we had come to the very end."*



Pick one small area where you often soften the truth (feedback, excuses, praise) and be candid and constructive in it today. Observe the quality of response you get. Truth is a muscle; exercise it.

*"No great thing is created suddenly."*



Multitasking steals depth. Presence creates value. For one work block today (30–90 minutes), remove all tabs, silence notifications and do only one thing. Notice how clarity and quality expand when you are nowhere else but here.

*"To be everywhere is to be nowhere."*



Wear an eyebrow-raising outfit in public today. Move through the world and note who watches and who does not. Let the experience dissolve needless self-consciousness; when you stop prioritising others' opinions you gain freedom to be yourself.

*"It never ceases to amaze me: we all love ourselves more than other people, but care more about their opinion than our own."*

Marcus Aurelius



Forgive 1 person you are holding a grudge against. Forgiveness is practice — choose it intentionally, and notice how it lightens your mind and resets your focus on what you can control.

*"The best revenge is not to be like your enemy."*

Marcus Aurelius



Small burdens build resistance.  
Practice voluntary friction: carry  
a weight, like a loaded bag, for  
a couple of hours. Use it as a  
reminder of endurance and to  
steady posture and presence.

*"Man conquers the world  
by conquering himself."*



Audit your circle: which relationships build you up and which drag you down? Gently reduce time with people who erode your character; invest in those who push you to be better. It's an observable truth: we become like the people we spend the most time with.

*"Above all, keep a close watch that you are never so tied to former acquaintances that you are pulled down to their level."*

Epictetus



Give yourself one  
unproductive hour today  
without guilt: no work, no  
productivity pressure. Practice  
tiny generosity to yourself  
because self-care is strategic.

*"The mind must be given relaxation —  
it will rise improved and sharper  
after a good break."*

Seneca





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