



# A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy

By William B. Irvine

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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 prizes 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.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"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*

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"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*

## About the Author

**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*.

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