

Stoic Week 2015 Report Part 4: Feedback on Stoic Week and Overall Conclusions - Tim LeBon

Introduction

This article is the fourth part of the report on Stoic Week 2015. The previously published parts of the report summarised the [demographics](#), the [impact of taking part in Stoic Week on well-being](#) and the relationship at the start of Stoic Week between [participants level of Stoicism and their well-being](#).

This report is divided into two sections:

- Participant feedback at the end of Stoic week on various parts of the materials¹ and their experience: specifically the
 - [Audio recordings](#),
 - [Daily Stoic exercises](#),
 - [How Stoic Week was helpful](#),
 - [How long participants spent on the materials each day](#),
 - [What formats participants used](#),
 - [What additional formats participants would like to be made available](#).
- [Overall conclusions and recommendations](#)

Participant Feedback

How Useful were the audio recordings?

As in previous years participants were invited to listen to a number of audio recordings. Table 1 (below) shows participants' ratings of the recommended audio recordings. The early and morning meditations were part of the recommended daily routine, the Stoic Attitudes meditation was an optional additional resource and the View from Above was part of the programme for Sunday (Nature).

	How useful was this recording (on a scale of 0-5?)						Average Rating	No of people who listened to it
	0	1	2	3	4	5		
Stoic Attitudes Meditation	3 <i>(1.05%)</i>	3 <i>(1.05%)</i>	16 <i>(5.61%)</i>	46 <i>(16.14%)</i>	104 <i>(36.49%)</i>	113 <i>(39.65%)</i>	4	286 (39.5%)
Early Morning Meditation	6 <i>(1.82%)</i>	2 <i>(0.61%)</i>	18 <i>(5.45%)</i>	57 <i>(17.27%)</i>	125 <i>(37.88%)</i>	122 <i>(36.97%)</i>	4	331 (45.7%)
Late Evening Meditation	4 <i>(1.29%)</i>	2 <i>(0.64%)</i>	11 <i>(3.54%)</i>	59 <i>(18.97%)</i>	119 <i>(38.26%)</i>	116 <i>(37.30%)</i>	4	312 (43.1%)
View from Above	3 <i>(1.21%)</i>	1 <i>(0.40%)</i>	8 <i>(3.23%)</i>	44 <i>(17.74%)</i>	84 <i>(33.87%)</i>	108 <i>(43.55%)</i>	4.1	249 (34.4%)

Table 1: Ratings of Audio recordings of Meditation Routine Audio Recordings, Stoic Week 2015

¹ To view the Stoic Week 2015 materials see

<http://modernstoicism.com/course/view.php?id=7§ion=2>

All the recordings received a rating of 4 or more (out of 5) from the 724 respondents to this question. The View from Above was marginally the favourite. In terms of how many people listened, the early Morning Meditation proved the most popular with just over 45% of responders listening to it, followed by the Late Evening Meditation (43%).

How useful were the recommended Daily Stoic Exercises?

Table 2 below shows how highly participants rated each of the daily Stoic exercises as well as the number of people who completed each activity and the average ratings.

The activities which had the highest rating and were also the most popular were **Tuesday - What is in our control** and **Wednesday - Stoic Mindfulness**. It should be noted that all the activities had a high approval rating (3.8 or more out of 5). A large percentage of participants completed each activity – it is noteworthy that this is true even for the later days when more participants might have been expected to drop out.

Rating (0-5) Activity	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average Rating	No of people who did the activity
Stoic Self-Monitoring Record	7 <i>(2.13%)</i>	13 <i>(3.96%)</i>	20 <i>(6.10%)</i>	59 <i>(17.99%)</i>	127 <i>(38.72%)</i>	102 <i>(31.10%)</i>	3.8	329 (45.4%)
Monday: Life – Writing your own meditations	3 <i>(0.65%)</i>	8 <i>(1.73%)</i>	27 <i>(5.84%)</i>	92 <i>(19.91%)</i>	179 <i>(38.74%)</i>	153 <i>(33.12%)</i>	3.9	464 (64.1%)
Tuesday :Control – What is in our control and wishing with reservation	3 <i>(0.56%)</i>	1 <i>(0.19%)</i>	18 <i>(3.38%)</i>	68 <i>(12.76%)</i>	229 <i>(42.96%)</i>	214 <i>(40.15%)</i>	4.2	535 (73.9%)
Wednesday: Mindfulness – Stoic Mindfulness and examining your impressions	2 <i>(0.38%)</i>	2 <i>(0.38%)</i>	17 <i>(3.21%)</i>	63 <i>(11.89%)</i>	243 <i>(45.85%)</i>	203 <i>(38.30%)</i>	4.2	532 (73.5%)
Thursday: Virtues: Virtue and values clarification	4 <i>(0.79%)</i>	5 <i>(0.99%)</i>	20 <i>(3.94%)</i>	81 <i>(15.98%)</i>	202 <i>(39.84%)</i>	195 <i>(38.46%)</i>	4.1	509 (70.3%)
Friday: Relationships: Relationships with other people and Society and the Circle of Hierocles	7 <i>(1.41%)</i>	7 <i>(1.41%)</i>	31 <i>(6.25%)</i>	99 <i>(19.96%)</i>	192 <i>(38.71%)</i>	160 <i>(32.26%)</i>	3.9	498 (68.8%)
Saturday: Adversity: Preparing for Adversity	3 <i>(0.62%)</i>	7 <i>(1.44%)</i>	17 <i>(3.51%)</i>	81 <i>(16.70%)</i>	201 <i>(41.44%)</i>	176 <i>(36.29%)</i>	4.1	487 (67.3%)
Sunday: Nature and the View from Above	3 <i>(0.64%)</i>	6 <i>(1.28%)</i>	31 <i>(6.64%)</i>	68 <i>(14.56%)</i>	179 <i>(38.33%)</i>	180 <i>(38.54%)</i>	4	469 (64.8%)

Table 2: Ratings of Audio recordings of Daily Stoic Exercises in Stoic Week 2015 (724 respondents)

In which areas of life was Stoic Week most helpful?

Area of Life	How useful was Stoic Week in each area of life? (0-5)						Average Rating
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Relationships (friendships, getting on with people)	11 (1.83%)	20 (3.32%)	30 (4.98%)	176 (29.24%)	253 (42.03%)	112 (18.60%)	3.6
Becoming a better person	7 (1.12%)	11 (1.76%)	17 (2.72%)	138 (22.08%)	275 (44.00%)	177 (28.32%)	3.9
Becoming wiser	6 (0.97%)	15 (2.42%)	24 (3.87%)	148 (23.87%)	254 (40.97%)	173 (27.90%)	3.9
Knowledge of Stoicism	4 (0.63%)	17 (2.68%)	21 (3.31%)	122 (19.21%)	226 (35.59%)	245 (38.58%)	4
Other	2 (2.50%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (2.50%)	6 (7.50%)	25 (31.25%)	45 (56.25%)	4.3
Overall	2 (0.36%)	9 (1.63%)	10 (1.81%)	93 (16.82%)	276 (49.91%)	163 (29.48%)	4

Table 3: Ratings of how useful Stoic Week was in various areas of life (724 respondents)

As shown in table 3 (above), Stoic Week achieved an 80% usefulness rating overall (4/5). Knowledge of Stoicism got the highest individual rating, followed closely by becoming wiser, becoming a better person with relationships being helped somewhat less (though still receiving a 72% rating. The “other” ways in which Stoic Week helped people included staying calmer, being more cheerful and positive, wishing and planning to do good and a having path to further self-knowledge through Stoicism.

Some of the comments made by people which further explained how they had been helped include:

Relationships

- I've been sending random text messages to let friends know when I'm thinking about them
- I loved the emphasis on social involvement and the challenge to bring people in closer: this was a new and important idea for me that I want to work on actively
- I am a boss of some very difficult people, and it helped me to not feel as bothered by their attitudes

Becoming a Better Person

- I'm not sure i'm a 'better person' but i've certainly started to be more aware of myself and that's a start I guess. I am definitely slower to anger which is good.
- Improved motivation and feeling more purposeful
- Ethics without the need for religion

Wisdom

- I think the week definitely helped me ditch some of the irrational things I worry about which is a step to being 'wiser'
- More attuned to my emotions.
- Provided some structure which I felt has been lacking in my life

Knowledge of Stoicism

- I'm at the beginning of this journey. Thanks to introducing me to Marcus Aurelius, whose Meditations I am now reading. I look forward to reading others too, like Seneca's letters etc.
- Reinforced rather than expanded
- I did not know Heirocles so I learned that

How long did participants spend on Stoic Week each day?

The average time spent by participants came out as an impressive 36 minutes. As shown in Figure 1 (below), most participants reported spending over half an hour on Stoic Week each day. Whilst the highest percentage (30%) reported spending only 15-30 minutes, a sizeable number of people spent 30-45 minutes (18%), 45 minutes to an hour (15%) and as many as 17% spent over an hour on the materials each day.

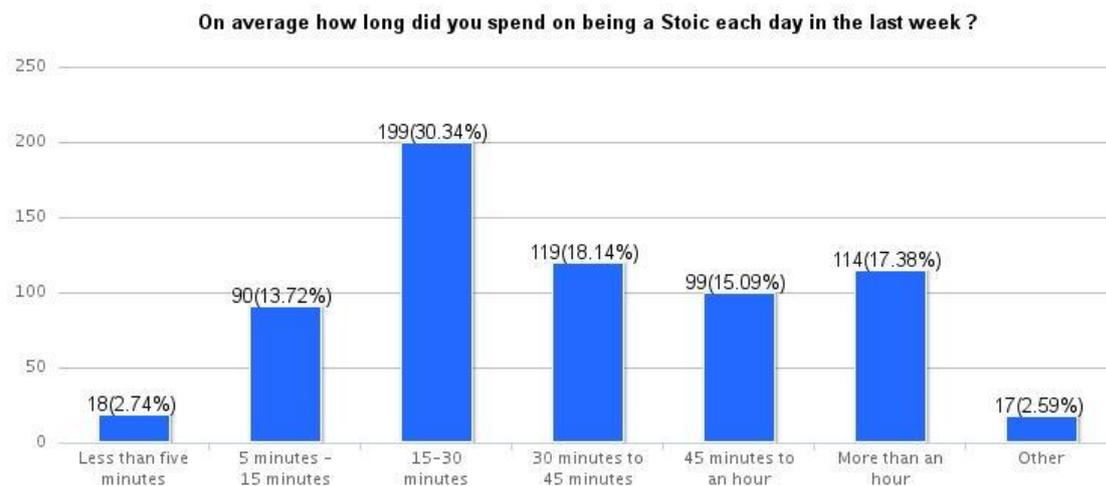


Figure 1: The length of time participants spent doing Stoic Week each day

Which formats for the Stoic Week Handbook proved to be most popular?

As shown in figure 2 (below), nearly 50% of participants used the pdf booklet. 32% of participants reported using the website whilst 10% used Kindle and 8% epub.²

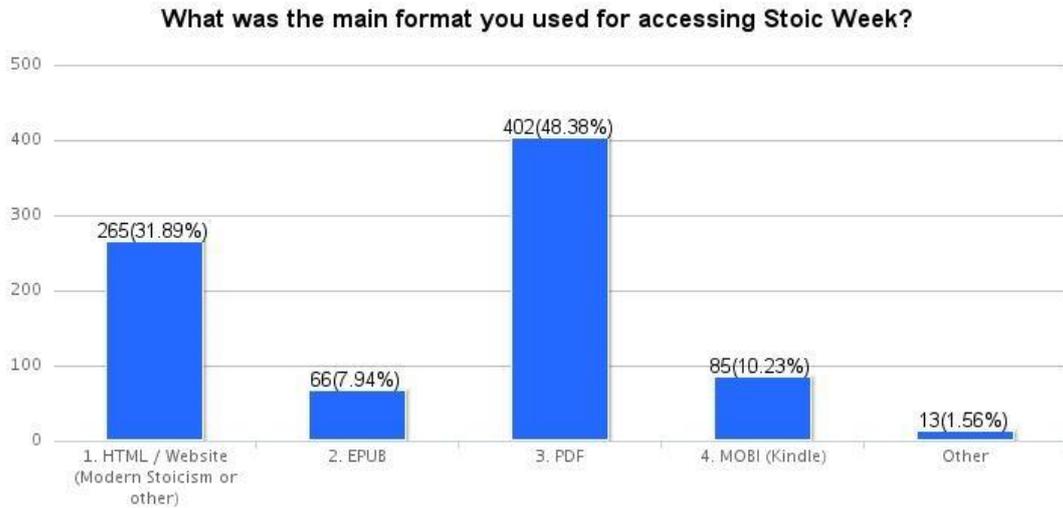


Figure 2: The formats used to access Stoic Week

² Epub is an open standard used for example on iBooks on Apple devices and Google Books on Android.

Which formats would be useful for accessing Stoic Week?

When participants were asked which formats would be useful, a sizeable number of people requested an App, with Android and IOS in roughly equal demand. About a third as many people would like to see a booklet made available in mobi or epub format.

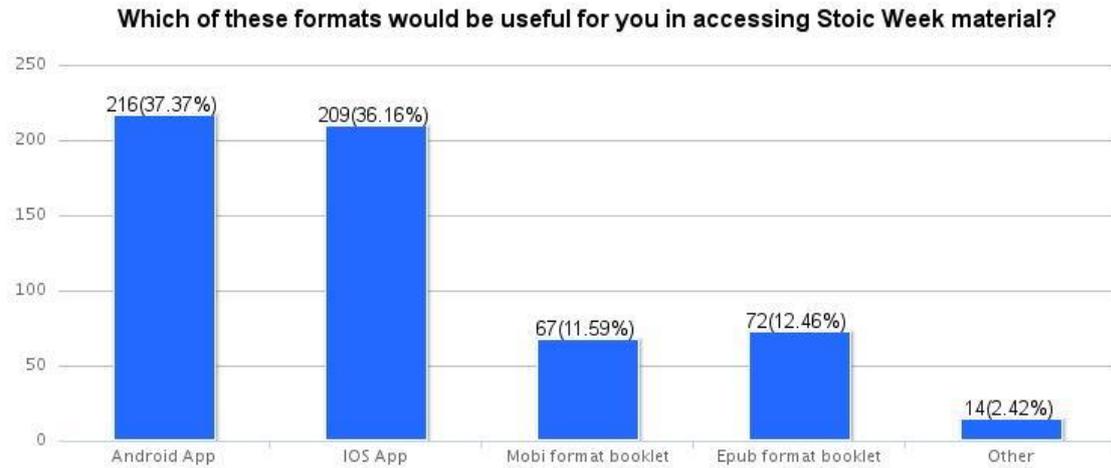


Figure 3: The additional formats that participants would find useful in future Stoic Week

Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

As with previous Stoic Weeks, 2015 saw high public engagement, a significant increase in well-being amongst participants and a significant correlation between Stoic attitudes and behaviours and all measures of well-being. In fact there were significantly more participants than in 2014, with comparable completion rates and increases in well-being. Most of the participants had not participated in Stoic Week before and just under half rated themselves as a “Novice” Stoic or knowing no Stoicism at all at the start of Stoic Week. Basing the materials on Marcus’s Aurelius’s *Meditations* rather than Epictetus’s *Enchiridion* did not appear to make a very significant difference to the results - although for people who participated in previous Stoic Weeks it made for a more varied experience - so perhaps next year the materials could be based on Seneca?

Participants gave a high rating to the materials used, including the audio recordings and daily exercises. The well-being scales indicated a significant improvement in flourishing, satisfaction with life and a balance of positive emotions. Participants additionally reported Stoic Week to be helpful in helping them to be better people, to become wiser, with relationships and to become more knowledgeable about Stoicism.

If we pull together the findings from part 2 of this report (on changes in well-being) and part 3 (on the correlation of SABS items and well-being), it is possible to draw some further conclusions about which elements of Stoicism could perhaps be emphasised more in future presentations of Stoic Week.

The following six Stoic attitudes and behaviours have a strong association with well-being and also increased significantly during Stoic Week.

- *22. I spend quite a lot of time dwelling on what’s gone wrong the past or worrying about the future
- 24. When an upsetting thought enters my mind the first thing I do is remind myself it’s just an impression in my mind and not the thing it claims to represent
- *18. I am good at controlling my urges and impulses when that’s better for me in the long run
- *25. Viewing other people as fellow-members of the brotherhood of humankind helps me to avoid feeling anger and resentment
- *15. I try to anticipate future misfortunes and rehearse rising above them
- *19. I try to contemplate what the ideal wise and good person would do when faced with various misfortunes in life

The fact that these SABS items increased as well as well-being reduces the argument for the improvement being purely a placebo effect.

Conversely, some Stoic attitudes and behaviours with a strong association with well-being did not increase very significantly during Stoic Week. In particular:-

- *31. *When making a significant decision I ask myself “What really matters here?” and then look for the option that satisfies the things that are most important.*
- *23. *I make an effort to pay continual attention to the nature of my judgments and actions.*
- *13. I consider myself to be a part of the human race, in the same way that a limb is a part of the human body. It is my duty to contribute to its welfare.
- *21. I treat everybody fairly even those I don’t like or don’t know very well

There is a case for future Stoic weeks putting more emphasis on helping participants to increase their scores for the above 4 items.

The positive results from Stoic Week 2015 point in the direction of conducting further Stoic Weeks and suggest it would be worthwhile to further develop and promulgate the materials (i.e. the workbook, recordings and SABS scale).

The [report from Stoic Week 2014](#) made a number of recommendations, including:

- 1) Psychometric validation of the SABS scale
- 2) Further empirical testing of Stoicism
- 3) Refining course material to take into account feedback and the SABS analysis
- 4) Extending the scope of SABS and testing to cover other philosophical systems

Most of these suggestions have still to be implemented. The SABS scale was revised for Stoic Week 2015, but still requires psychometric validation. More sophisticated empirical testing of Stoicism is still awaiting funding. The results from Stoic Week 2015 add more weight to the argument for implementing these proposals and continuing to develop Stoic materials and to research into its effectiveness.