Are Stoics less angry than other people? Stoic Week 2019 Report Part 2 (of 4) Tim LeBon

Introduction

A strong positive relationship between Stoicism and well-being has been well documented in [previous Stoic Week reports](#). This article analyses the findings from analysing questionnaires from the *start* of Stoic week 2019, and will report on whether this relationship has been maintained. In 2019 we obtained additional information about the relationship between Stoicism and anger, as measured by the Anger Disorder Scale (ADS-S). A second innovation this year was the introduction of another iteration of the Stoic Attitudes and Behaviours Scale (SABS v5.0). This report will indicate which of the 60 items of the new SABS scale are the *most* and *least* associated with life satisfaction, flourishing, positive and negative emotions and with anger – in other words, which items appear to be the most active ingredients of Stoicism in these respects. The other reports in this series will discuss the effect of *taking part* in Stoic Week (part 3) and summarise participant feedback and suggest future directions of research (part 4). Details about the scales used are given in the Appendices of this report.

What were my scores like compared to the average?

If you took part in Stoic Week, you will have been given average scores at the start of the week for other participants at the start of a previous Stoic Week for some of the measures. But we didn't have the scores for Stoic Week 2019 then (obviously!), and we didn't have comparative scores for the Anger Scale or for the new SABS scale. So, here you are. How do you compare with the average score?

Life Satisfaction (SWL)   23
Emotions (SPANE)   5
Flourish   43
Anger (ADS-S)   34

Stoicism (SABS 5.0)   300

The New SABS scale

Stoic Week 2019 saw the introduction of SABS 5.0, a 60-item questionnaire described in Appendix A. This scale builds on the work done with the invaluable work Ray DiGiuseppe and others to eliminate items with inferior psychometric properties. We are also working towards validating the SABS 5.0 and providing sub-scales (for example "Stoic Worldview" and "Values awareness and Stoic mindfulness". As the work on subscales is still provisional, it will be reported at a later date.

Stoicism and Anger

Theoretically, we would expect Stoic attitude to help with anger management. We would anticipate that Stoics would not just act in a less angry way, they would also get angry less often than non-Stoics because non-Stoics often get angry at things beyond their control.

Previous Stoic Week research results have indeed suggested a strong inverse relationship between Stoicism and anger. However, this has relied on the single anger item question in the SPANE questionnaire. Since anger management is potentially an important benefit of practising Stoicism, the relationship between Stoicism and anger warranted further investigation. Consequently, this year we asked participants to fill in a validated anger questionnaire, the 18-item ADS-S (see Appendix B) to understand the relationship between Stoicism and anger when anger is measured in a more robust manner and which also separates out the degree to which people feel anger, the degree to which they feel vengeful, and the extent to which they act angrily. Table 1 below gives the results.

Anger overall (ADS-S)	Anger-In (ADS-S subscale 1)	Anger Vengeance (ADS-S subscale 2)	Anger Reactivity (ADS-S subscale S)	Anger single item (SPANE)

-.44	-.45	-.31	-.35	-.32

Table 1: Correlation and Stoicism and Anger at the start of Stoic Week 2019 (1725 participants)

The more sophisticated measure of anger provided by the ADS-S than the single scale item in the SPANE gives a significantly stronger relationship between Stoicism and a lack of anger (.44 compared to .32). The ADS-S divides anger into 3 subscales. Subscale 1, the anger-in scale, represents the degree to which people are likely to feel anger and repress, or not express their anger. Stoics are particularly less likely to do this (.45 correlation), *putting a lie to the notion that Stoics repress feelings (the "stiff upper lip")*. Stoics are also likely to be less vengeful (subscale 2) and less reactive with their anger (subscale 3). It will be interesting to see how the scales and subscales change when people try to practice Stoicism in Stoic Week. We would predict a reduction in anger and in particular, a large reduction in subscale 1 (anger-in).

Stoicism and Well-Being

We can tell how Stoic someone is by their score on the SABS 5.0. By measuring their well-being at the same time, we can determine the extent to which Stoicism is associated with well-being.

	Flourishing	Emotions (SPANE)	Life Satisfaction (SWL)
STOIC ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS	2019: 0.64 2018: 0.54 2017: 0.47	2019: 0.59 2018: 0.45 2017: 0.43	2019: 0.50 2018: 0.39 2017: 0.36

Table 2 Overall association of Stoic Attitudes and Behaviours with various scales (2019 Stoic Week compared to 2018 and 2017 Stoic Weeks)

As table 2 shows, Stoicism is associated to a very high degree of Flourishing and a balance of positive over emotions and (to a slightly lesser degree) satisfaction with life. Over the years as we have worked to improve the SABs, the correlation coefficients are somewhat higher using the new SABS 5.0.

Stoicism and Emotions

We can also see which emotions are most associated with Stoicism. The trends found in previous years continue to be supported. Stoicism is not just associated with not feeling bad, it is also strongly associated with feeling contented and positive.

Emotion	2019	2018	2017	2016
Negative	-.47	-0.35	-0.36	-0.29
Bad	-.42	-0.31	-0.32	-0.28
Unpleasant	-.39	-0.29	-0.27	-0.24
Sad	-.38	-0.26	-0.28	-0.26
Angry	-.32	-0.24	-0.27	-0.24
Afraid	-.34	-0.24	-0.23	-0.26
Contented	.49	0.36	0.33	0.35
Positive	.49	0.36	0.32	0.31
Happy	.43	0.35	0.29	0.28
Good	.47	0.34	0.32	0.32
Pleasant	.41	0.34	0.32	0.3
Joyful	.41	0.32	0.28	0.26

Once again, as we have continued to revise and improve the SAB the correlation coefficients with the various measures emotions have increased.

Table 3: Correlation of SABS 5.0 scores and emotions as measured in SPANE

Degree of Stoicism and Well-being

The above findings lend considerable support to the view that Stoicism is associated with higher degrees of well-being and less anger. But how much difference does it make? We attempted to tease this out by looking at the differences in well-being for those who are the most and least Stoic. This is shown in table 4 below.

Ranking on the SABS 5.0	Participant Scores				
	Life Satisfaction	Emotions	Anger	Flourishing	Stoicism
Top 10%	28	14	26	50	371
Top quarter	27	11	28	49	351
Top half	26	9	31	47	331
Average	23	5	34	43	300
Bottom half	21	2	37	39	269
Bottom quarter	19	0	39	37	257
Bottom 10%	17	-2	41	33	235

Those who are the most Stoic (top 10%) are much higher in well-being and lower in anger than the those in the top 10%. One possible way to read table 4 is to say that the biggest gains are to be made with those people who are *least* Stoic. If someone moved from the bottom half to just average levels of Stoicism, one would anticipate quite significant gains in well-being – assuming that causation goes in the direction of being Stoic to well-being, which may not be completely founded.

Stoicism's most active ingredients

Which Stoic attitudes and beliefs are most associated with life satisfaction, flourishing, positive emotions and the absence of anger? By finding the correlation between SABS 5.0 items and each measure, it is possible to answer these questions. Tables 5 -8 below provide the answers for each scale. Note that since these associations are correlations, we cannot be sure of the direction of causation, so these findings require a certain amount of qualification.

#	SABS Item	Life Satisfaction Correlation
19	I spend quite a lot of time dwelling on what has gone wrong in the past.*	0.46
33	I spend quite a lot of time worrying about the future.*	0.42
26	When I have a problem, I am good at taking constructive action in a timely manner.	0.41

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#		Flourishing correlation
41	If things don't go well for me, I can't lead a good life.*	0.35
38	When a negative thought enters my mind, I remind myself that it is just an interpretation of the situation.	0.35
48	Even when I can't do anything more about a problem, I still worry about it a lot.*	0.35

Table 5: Most active Stoic ingredients of Life Satisfaction

If you wanted to look at one element of Stoicism indicative of satisfaction with life, it would be someone *not* dwelling on the past

#	SABS Item	Flourishing correlation
26	When I have a problem, I am good at taking constructive action in a timely manner.	0.54
12	I usually do the right thing.	0.46
19	I spend quite a lot of time dwelling on what has gone wrong in the past.*	0.45
22	When making an important decision I ask myself "What really matters here?"	0.44
33	I spend quite a lot of time worrying about the future.*	0.43
14	I am committed to helping humanity in general.	0.43
38	When a negative thought enters my mind, I remind myself that it is just an interpretation of the situation.	0.43

Table 6: Most active SABS ingredients in terms of Flourishing

The single element of Stoicism indicative of flourishing is taking constructive action in a timely manner,

The absence of worrying is most associated with having a positive balance of emotions.

33	I spend quite a lot of time worrying about the future.*	0.56
19	I spend quite a lot of time dwelling on what has gone wrong in the past.*	0.56
48	Even when I can't do anything more about a problem I still worry about it a lot.*	0.52
38	When a negative thought enters my mind, I remind myself that it is just an interpretation of the situation.	0.43
41	If things don't go well for me, I can't lead a good life.*	0.42

Table 7: Most active SABS ingredients in terms of emotions

#	SABS Item	Anger
19	I spend quite a lot of time dwelling on what has gone wrong in the past.*	-0.46
33	I spend quite a lot of time worrying about the future.*	-0.42

48	Even when I can't do anything more about a problem, I still worry about it a lot.*	-0.41
41	If things don't go well for me, I can't lead a good life.*	-0.34
38	When a negative thought enters my mind, I remind myself that it is just an interpretation of the situation.	-0.34
26	When I have a problem, I am good at taking constructive action in a timely manner.	-0.33
15	I treat everyone fairly.	-0.32

Table 8: Most active SABS ingredients in terms of emotions

Dwelling on the past is most associated with anger.

Conclusions

These findings are particularly significant as they indicate the association of degrees of Stoicism with other qualities such as life satisfaction and anger. A key finding is that Stoicism is *not* associated with repressing anger and so it puts a lie to the "stiff upper lip" notion. It also gives participants comparative scores for SABS 5.0 and the anger scale, which were not available at the time they took part in Stoic Week

 They are taken from a large sample (1765 participants) of varying demographics and allegiance to Stoicism. They are however, a self-selecting sample and more likely to be allied to Stoicism than the general public. Moreover, since they are correlational they do not indicate the direction

of causation. The next report in the series will provide information about how these measures change after participants have taken part in Stoic Week.

Appendices

Appendix A: Stoic Attitudes and Behaviour Scale 5.0 (SABS 5.0)

#	Item	Reversed?	Average Score start of Stoic Week
1	I think about my life as an ongoing project to become a better person.	No	6.3
2	It can sometimes be a good thing to become angry at people.	Yes	4.3
3	If bad things happen to you, you are bound to feel distressed.	Yes	3.6
4	Having good understanding and good character is all that is required in order to be happy.	No	4.8
5	Viewing other people as fellow-members of the brother/sisterhood of humankind helps me to avoid feeling angry and resentful.	No	5.5
6	The universe is benevolent in its overall plan.	No	4.2
7	I regularly spend time reflecting on what is most important to enable me to live a good and happy life.	No	5.5
8	Bad luck could stop me being happy.	Yes	4.4
9	I do the right thing even when I feel afraid.	No	5.2

10	It is my duty to help others.	No	5.8
11	Sometimes a controlled experience of anger can be helpful in resolving conflicts with others	Yes	3.6
12	I usually do the right thing.	No	5.6
13	I do not act on urges when it would be unwise to act on them	No	4.9
14	I am committed to helping humanity in general.	No	5.6
15	I treat everyone fairly.	No	5.6
16	To flourish as a human being all you need is good character and understanding of what really matters in life	No	5.4
17	If things don't go well for my friends, I can't lead a good life.	Yes	5.1
18	I take active steps to reduce the suffering of others.	No	5.2
19	I spend quite a lot of time dwelling on what has gone wrong in the past.	Yes	4.1
20	It is possible to lead a happy life even after the death of someone we love.	No	6.0
21	The universe embodies wisdom.	No	4.7
22	When making an important decision I ask myself "What really matters here?"	No	5.7
23	I cannot really be harmed by what other people say.	No	4.9
24	The universe is a living thing.	No	4.9

25	I need quite a lot of money in order to be happy.	Yes	5.2
26	When I have a problem, I am good at taking constructive action in a timely manner.	No	5.1
27	We can't really control other people.	No	6.2
28	There is a rational and orderly plan in the universe and in the causes of events.	No	3.9
29	When making a significant decision I reflect on what a good role model would do.	No	4.8
30	Nothing except our judgements and voluntary actions are truly under our control in life.	No	6.1
31	I pay attention to my judgements about good or bad things or people as I am making them.	No	5.3
32	I need to be well thought of by others in order to be happy.	Yes	4.5
33	I spend quite a lot of time worrying about the future.	Yes	3.8
34	It is good to think about life as an ongoing journey towards becoming a better person.	No	6.3
35	I am committed to helping my friends.	No	5.8
36	I pay attention to my thoughts about what I intend to do before I act on them.	No	5.4
37	I want to become a better person ethically.	No	6.4
38	When a negative thought enters my mind, I remind myself that it is just an interpretation of the situation.	No	4.9
39	It is right to feel intense and overwhelming grief after a significant loss	No	2.7

40	I view other people as fellow-members of the brother/sisterhood of humankind.	No	5.6
41	If things don't go well for me, I can't lead a good life.	Yes	5.0
42	I can't control how I feel.	Yes	4.9
43	I need to be in good health in order to be happy.	Yes	4.1
44	I am committed to helping my family.	No	6.1
45	Every day I spend some time thinking about how I can best face challenges in the day ahead.	No	4.9
46	Our voluntary actions are among the only things truly under our control in life.	No	6.0
47	As long as you have the right attitude, you can lead a good life even in the most difficult circumstances.	No	5.9
48	Even when I can't do anything more about a problem, I still worry about it a lot.	Yes	3.5
49	I care about the suffering of others	No	5.9
50	I often do what I feel like doing rather than doing what I believe to be the right thing.	Yes	4.6
51	Our judgements are amongst the only things truly under our control in life.	No	5.8
52	I see my happiness as fully compatible with caring for other people.	No	5.6
53	The best idea is to give up trying to control people and instead focus on our own actions and our judgements and character.	No	6.4
54	There is no overall plan to the universe.	Yes	3.6

55	I think about what the ideal wise and good person would do when faced with misfortunes in life.	No	4.9
56	If things don't go well for my family, I can't lead a good life.	Yes	4.7
57	I am committed to helping in my local community.	No	4.9
58	It does not help me to get angry	No	6.0
59	It is possible to lead a happy life even when we have lost success or wealth.	No	5.8
60	We can sometimes influence how others behave, but we can't completely control other people.	No	6.4

Instructions to Stoic Week participants

For each of the above items, please mark on a 7-point Likert scale whether you agree with it from Strongly Agree (7) to Strongly disagree (1) as follows:

Strongly Agree 7

Agree 6

Slightly Agree 5

Neither agree or disagree 4

Slightly disagree 3

Disagree 2

Strongly Disagree 1

Please respond according to what you yourself think, not what you think the answer ought to be or what you ought to think.

<u>SCORING</u>

To obtain the scores for reverse-coded items, subtract the score from 8 (e.g., a score of 7 becomes 1).

The higher the score, the more Stoic your attitudes and beliefs are. The possible scores range from 60 (minimum Stoic) to 480 (maximum Stoic).

The Average SABS score for participants at the start of Stoic Week 2019 was 300.

In Stoic Week 2019 (at the start) a score of:

383 or above would place you in the top 10%

367 or above would place you in the top 20%

320 or above would place you in the top 30%

309 or above would place you in the top 40%

299 or above would place you in the top 50%

289 or below would place you in the bottom 40%

279 or below would place you in the bottom 30%

268 or below would place you in the bottom 20%

252 or below would place you in the bottom 10% in terms of your degree of Stoicism

Appendix B: The Satisfaction with Life scale

The SWLS is a short 5-item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life. This scale is widely used as part of the measure of Subjective Well-being (also known as happiness).

Question	Theme
Q1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal	Life is ideal
Q2. The conditions of my life are excellent	Externals met
Q3. So far, I have got the important things I want in life.	Needs met
Q4. I am satisfied with my life	Satisfaction
Q5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	Acceptance

Using a 1-7Likert scale, users score between 35 (extremely satisfied) and 5 (extremely dissatisfied)

The Average score for the SWL at the start of Stoic Week 2019 was 23

The SWL scale was developed by Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Randy J. Larsen, and Sharon Griffin as noted in the 1985 article in the *Journal of Personality Assessment*. See http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/SWLS.html

Appendix C: The Flourishing Scale

The Flourishing Scale is a brief 8-item summary measure of the respondent's self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. The scale provides a single psychological well-being score. This scale was developed by Ed Diener and associates to measure a broader conception of well-being than purely subjective life satisfaction and the presence of positive and absence of negative emotions.

Flourishing Scale Item	Theme
1. I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.	Purpose and meaning
2. My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.	Relationships
3. I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.	Flow & interested
4. I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.	Benevolent
5. I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.	Competent
6. I am a good person and live a good life.	Ethically Good
7. I am optimistic about my future.	Optimism
8. People respect me.	Respected

The Average score for the Flourishing at the start of Stoic Week 2019 was 43

Reference: Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi, D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). New measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research, 39,* 247-266. http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/FS.html

Appendix D: The Scale of Positive and Negative Emotions (SPANE)

The SPANE is a 12-item questionnaire that includes six items to assess positive feelings and six questions to assess negative emotions. For both the positive and negative items, three of the items are general (e.g., positive, negative) and three per subscale are more specific (e.g., joyful, sad). Along with the Life Satisfaction Scale, the presence of positive and absence of negative emotions forms the other part of Subjective Well-

being. Users are asked to select a number between 1 (very rarely or never) and 5 (very often or always) to indicate how often they have experienced the emotion in the last 4 weeks.

Positive Emotions

Contented
Joyful
Positive
Good
Pleasant
Happy

Negative Emotions

Unpleasant
Bad
Negative
Angry
Afraid
Sad

The Average score for the SPANE at the start of Stoic Week 2019 was 5

Reference: Diener, E., Wirtz, D., Tov, W., Kim-Prieto, C., Choi. D., Oishi, S., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2009). New measures of well-being: Flourishing and positive and negative feelings. *Social Indicators Research, 39,* 247-266.
http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/SPANE.html

Appendix E: The Anger Disorder Scale - Short Version (ADS-SF)

The Anger Disorders Scale-Short Version is an 18-item, self-report inventory that identifies clinically dysfunctional anger in adults.

The score is obtained by adding up all the items. The score can range from 18 (lowest score possible, least anger) to 90 (highest anger).

If your score is between 22 and 40 your anger is the normal range.

If your score is between 41 and 50 your anger is elevated compared to others;

you are angrier than 84 percent of people.

If your score is 51 or higher your anger is elevated compared to others; you

are angrier than 97.5 percent of people.

Source: DiGiuseppe, R. & Tafrate, R. 2004. The Anger Disorder Scale: Manual. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: MultiHealth Systems.

The Average score for the ADS-S at the start of Stoic Week 2019 was 34 (in the normal range, slightly towards the higher end of it) (1725 participants)

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