

Stoicon-X Events – Guidelines

These guidelines are based on the one ‘Stoicon-x’ type event held so far, in London October 2016, which attracted about 60 participants. But a ‘Stoicon-x’ could be a meeting of any size and number of people, for instance, an evening or afternoon talk with one speaker and some refreshments for 15/20 people. This can still be an effective way of inviting people to explore the possibilities of using Stoic ideas as a basis for self-guidance. So just go for a format that suits you.

Choose a date: ideally during Stoic Week (currently planned for Oct 16-22 2017). Choose a target number of participants, whatever fits your objectives and resources.

Find a suitable venue: an ideal combination would be a main room and break-out rooms plus somewhere for refreshments. This might be too expensive but at least one main room and if possible a separate lobby or social space for refreshments. Even with one main room you can get people to break down into groups for smaller sessions provided the room is not too small or crowded. Decide on the length: an afternoon lasting into the early evening is good; it could start mid-morning, but then you need to provide lunch or have a lunch-break if there are suitable places to eat nearby. And, as noted already, a more informal afternoon or evening meeting can still be worthwhile.

Event Structure: Longer events should have a combination of presentations (talks or round-table discussions or interviews) and break-out sessions for discussions. The latter can be led by speakers or left to participants to conduct. In London (Oct 2016) we had one discussion session at the start; questionnaire responses suggested that a second one near the end would also have been welcome. On the whole, questionnaires show that the kind of people we attract to these events value especially the chance for discussion, Q&A after talks, and social time for conversation; they do not want just to be talked at for several hours (who does!).

Theme: Decide whether you want to have an overall theme for the event or just ‘Stoicism in practice’ in one form or another.

Speakers and Facilitators: Find an appropriate number of speakers and/or leaders of groups. You need people who are already involved in presenting Stoic ideas for practice or are willing/keen to do so; they may be scholars of ancient philosophy (if they are ready to do this kind of thing), or writers on applied philosophy, or writers on practical ethics, or psychotherapy – or practitioners of various sorts who have experience and ideas they want to share.

They need to be people used to speaking in public and to presenting with electronic slides (if they use these aids – direct oral delivery can also be effective). If there are slides make sure they are readable throughout the room and the print is not too small. You can ask people to send the slides to you ahead of time if this is easier (but also to bring a back-up usb drive too).

Invite the speakers as early as possible and make sure they know what is needed and have practical information. It is useful to have at least some speakers who are reasonably well-known in order to attract interest and attendance. A mix of different types of speakers and

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some gender balance are also desirable (applied Stoicism has a reputation for being male-dominated and it is good if one can show this is not the case).

Funding for Speakers: Most speakers at this kind of event will not expect a fee and will just come along (if the event is held in their home city); if coming from elsewhere they need to be offered travel expenses (at economy rates) plus hotel accommodation if needed for a night or so (sometimes speakers are able and willing to stay with friends or relatives but you cannot count on this). In London we have held a dinner afterwards in a nearby restaurant for speakers and organisers (maybe a few other guests – e.g., those who have travelled some distance to be there); this is good for bonding and makes a nice end to the day if people are free to stay.

Refreshments and Catering: Decide what refreshments if any you are offering to all participants. Coffee/tea breaks and drinks during the event give a good chance for social mingling: providing meals is probably not necessary, but this depends on the location of the venue and length of the event. Make sure the catering is arranged well in advance and is provided as ordered.

Technology: Make sure you have the IT-equipment and or microphones you need for the event. You may have to pay for a technician to cover the event; also for a caretaker or security or someone to let you in and out of the building. Check and double-check the venue booking, catering and security, and the time when you can come in and must leave by. If something goes wrong with any of this it is very disruptive. Organiser and helpers need to be there in good time to deal with any last minute problems and to make sure things that need to be taken have been taken away at the end.

Setting Prices: Work out your expenses and set the figure for registration to make sure you can cover the costs, assuming a target number. For London the charge was £15 for the whole event.

Event Schedule: Make a provisional programme as early as possible (you can say it is still provisional), at least a couple of months ahead and send it to Donald Robertson for the Modern Stoicism web-site and Greg Sadler for the *Stoicism Today* blog. We can provide a generic ‘banner’ heading, thus marking it as a ‘Stoicon’ event.

Ticketing: Set up a ticketing system (e.g., Eventbrite) and PayPal account for the event. Find some local helpers to plan the event and to help on the day.

Event Facilitation: Have an information desk, and make sure the venue is clearly marked outside and inside with notices; you may want to give helpers badges; you can give everyone badges or name slips (include this in your costs). Provide a sheet showing the programme for the day (see example below) for all participants. Give out a questionnaire towards the end, allow people time to fill it out, and collect it as they leave the main session.

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Insurance: Technically, you should have public limited liability insurance for the event, in case of an accident for which you might be held responsible.

Here are names and email addresses of people who are closely involved in Modern Stoicism activities and who have had some experience of organizing this kind of event. Feel free to contact any of them if you would like more advice or just to try out your ideas. We wish you all success!

Chris Gill: C.J.Gill@exeter.ac.uk

Donald Robertson: don.robertson@live.co.uk

Greg Lopez: glopez77@gmail.com

Massimo Pigliucci: Massimo.pigliucci@icloud.com

Greg Sadler: gbisadler@gmail.com

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Here is the programme for the London event of 2016 (the only Stoicon-x held so far, though we had not come up with the name Stoicon-x yet!) and the questionnaire used on that occasion. We had about 60 people, about half of whom had come to previous Stoic events in London (held since 2013).

Stoic Guidance for Troubled Times

A one-day event at Queen Mary University of London: Arts One (1.28), first floor.
Saturday Oct 22 2016, 2.00-7-15 pm.

Can the ancient Greek philosophy of Stoicism help us in responding to acute personal and political problems? How does Stoicism reconcile the search for inner peace of mind with positive affection or love and social concern?

A series of talks with time allowed for audience questions and discussion, with breaks for tea/coffee and drinks.

Programme

- 2.00 pm Introduction: Jules Evans
- 2.15 pm small group session: what is your experience of Stoic guidance and has it helped you through difficult times?
- 2.45 pm Christopher Gill interviews Elena Isayev on her experiences with refugees in the West Bank and the Calais ‘jungle’. Can Stoicism help us to make sense of how refugees cope and how we should respond to the refugee crisis?
- 3.15 pm Tim LeBon: How should we react in a Stoic way to events such as the Brexit referendum result or a possible Trump victory in the US election?
- 3.45-4.15 pm: Tea/coffee/soft drinks in Arts One foyer.
- 4.15 pm: Donald Robertson talks about Stoic approaches to resilience and love and how the two are connected.
- 4.45 pm: Gabriele Galluzzo discusses Stoic emotions – those we want to get rid of and those we want to develop.
- 5.15 pm: Antonia Macaro: Contemplating death and decay in Buddhism and Stoicism – with a response from Tim LeBon.
- 5.45-7.15 pm: drinks and nibbles in Arts One foyer.

Christopher Gill is an Emeritus Professor and author of several books on Stoicism; he has edited the Oxford World’s Classics Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Elena Isayev is an Associate Professor who works on migration, refugees and asylum in the ancient and modern worlds. Tim LeBon is a psychotherapist and author of *Achieve your Potential with Positive Psychology*. Jules Evans is a philosophical writer and author of *Philosophy for Life and Other Dangerous Situations*. Donald Robertson is a psychotherapist and author of *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness*; he has designed a four-week course on promoting Stoic resilience. Gabriele Galluzzo is a university lecturer and author of several books on ancient philosophy. Antonia Macaro is a psychotherapist and author (with Julian Baggini) of *The Shrink and the Sage*.

This event forms part of ‘Live like a Stoic for a week’, the fifth such event since 2012. To find out more about Stoicism in daily life see ‘Stoicism Today’ blog: <http://blogs.exeter.ac.uk/stoicismtoday/>

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To register for a four-week on-line Stoic course on mindfulness and resilience
see <http://donaldrobertson.name/>

Questionnaire: Stoicon-x (e.g. London/Amsterdam/Chicago- date)

1. What is your name?
2. Email address:
3. Postal address:

4. How did you hear about today?

5. How would you rate it (please circle one)
excellent very good good satisfactory poor

6. What did you like best about the event?

7. What would have improved it?

8. Any suggestions for a follow-up?

9. Any other comments?