

Stoic Week 2017 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 2017. The previously published parts of the report summarised the [demographics](#), the relationships between well-being and degree of Stoicism at the [start of Stoic Week](#), the [impact of taking part in Stoic Week](#) and the longer SMRT course on well-being and degree of Stoicism .ⁱ

This report is divided into two sections. The first part provides representative samples of the qualitative feedback provided by participants after Stoic Week. The second part draws together findings from all the reports for 2017 Stoic Week and makes some recommendations for future work. The appendices summarise quantitative feedback on other aspects of Stoic Week, such as the audio recordings and daily exercises.

Participants' Qualitative Feedback

Appendix 1 contains quantitative feedback on how much Stoic Week helped in specific areas of life such as relationships, becoming a better person and becoming wiser. Below is a sample of the qualitative feedback.

Relationships

“Helped me realise that other people are out of my control, yet they are humans facing the struggles of life just like I am. And this made me feel a greater connection to others”

“[I am] not dwelling on hurts as much”

“I pass less judgment on people and contain my anger. It really changed my relationship with my mother-in-law.”

“Knowing that people's thoughts about me are outside of my control and I shouldn't worry about them, only care about my actions, helps reduce my anxiety/shyness. Now there have been times when I just said what I wanted to say sincerely and was satisfied with it regardless of what my friends might think. I just think "I said what I had to say and I didn't say anything wrong; now what they think of me is outside of my control" and feel relieved. Also I've noticed I care more about what I really am than what I show off to others”

Becoming a Better Person

“Keeping a daily journal helped”

“Yes, because I become more virtuous.”

Wisdom

“Really felt that I was able to maintain an inner state of awareness of thoughts and emotions appearing through the day and able to step back and let them abate. This

state of mindfulness also helped me to make better decisions through each day”
“Now for everything I do I think of Stoic virtues to check if I'm doing things according to my values instead of unconsciously doing whatever I feel like doing”

Other Ways in which Stoic Week helped

Some participants described other ways in which Stoic Week helped them as follows :-

“Dealing with grief”

“Being more just”

“Become less anxious”

“Stoic week helped me to be more focused on my priorities and produce better quality work.”

“Controlling anger; Stoic Week has had a huge impact in my ability to step outside of myself, so to speak, and view my thoughts as only thoughts and not what they pretend to be. I've been able to short-circuit anger many, many times using Stoic techniques.”

“Calmer, more patient, very much helps to keep anxiety and depression away.”

“Being more patient & content”

“Increased reflections”

“Much better prepared to stop negative thoughts and to focus on doing the right thing and thinking straight”

“Better understanding of the Meaning of Life”

“I find it easier to accept my death ... it was indirectly because "On the Shortness of Life" wasn't in the list, but Stoic week mentions Seneca a lot so I ended up reading this book and it's really good. Now I'm always thinking of my time as a precious resource and I tend to not waste as much time as I used to.”

Further Comments

Participants were also given the opportunity to make other comments about their experience of Stoic Week. Below is a sample :-

“This is really invaluable to me.”

“It's been really helpful, much more than I had even hoped”

“I feel inspired to maintain the practice of Stoicism long term.”

“This is amazing that this is free! I think if everyone lived by applying stoicism to their everyday encounters with others then this world would be a much more peaceful place. I hope to interest others in this website! Thanks a million!!”

“Thank you. A wonderful introduction to the application of this philosophy to daily life.”

“I got a lot of value from the course and materials. I will be repeating the course for weeks to come to help cement the habits and practices and gain a greater understanding of myself.”

“This was a great course, really helped change my perspective on life. I would be very interested in mini lessons (maybe once a week or fortnight) on Stoic topics as a consistent way to get wisdom and virtue. Thank you for building this, I will certainly be back for Stoic Week 2018!”

“Thank you for organizing this event!”

“Simply and honestly: thank you.”

“Thank you to the team for a wonderful program. I have recommended it to a number of people whom I felt would benefit from it.”

“I’m a university professor with a large number of postgraduate students who I think would all benefit from the Stoic Week experience. I will introduce them to Stoicism at our meeting next week”

“Thank you for organizing this. This is my second year, and I have to tell you that my introduction to Stoicism from last year's course made a serious positive impact on my life. After that course I went on to read the M.A. Meditations, one each day. Then I read the Epictetus Enchiridion, about one section per day. I then ordered Seneca's letters and read about one per day. This propelled me for several months of starting my day with a Stoic reflection. So, a wholehearted thank you for putting these materials and events together. I am grateful to have encountered the group and site, and will look forward to next year's event!”

Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

Drawing together the above feedback with the findings report in the first 3 parts of these report, the most significant findings from Stoic Week 2017 are as follows:

- **Demographics.**
 - 79% of respondents were participating in Stoic Week for the first time.
 - The ratio of males to females was 65% to 34%
 - Over 43% of respondents were from USA

- **Analysis from initial set of questionnaires taken at the start of Stoic Week**
 - Findings replicated previous research about the strong positive relationship between Stoicism, life satisfaction, flourishing and the emotions.
 - This analysis can also suggest various “active ingredients” in Stoicism in terms of promoting well-being
 - For the first time we can also say that there is evidence to support the view that Stoicism is associated with virtues and positive character traits, as measured on a validated contemporary scale, the CIVIC.
 - A less expected result is that zest turns out to be the character trait most associated with being Stoic.

- **Analysis from second set of questionnaires taken at the end of Stoic Week**
 - Previous years findings regarding the significant increase in well-being on all measures on average for those who take part in Stoic week were replicated.

- For the first time, a 3 month follow up (for the month long SMRT Stoic Resilience course) has found that the benefits reaped by participants are maintained after 3 months.
- The 9% change in Stoic Attitudes and Behaviours overall is significant in that it supports the view that it is changes in level of Stoicism that is mediating the change in well-being rather than other variables, such as the placebo effect.
- Summary of Participant feedback
 - Most participants gave a high rating to experience overall and the materials used, including the audio recordings and daily exercise.
 - 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.
 - Many participants were very grateful for the opportunity to take part in Stoic Week and described the ways in which they had benefited

Pulling these ideas together, and drawing on some specific suggestions given in feedback, here are some ideas about how to progress with Stoic Week

- There was overwhelming support for repeating the experience
- Some participants mooted the idea of a level 2 Stoic Week for people who had already done a Stoic Week before – perhaps with more advanced materials
- Some participants were interested in doing these exercises for a longer time – perhaps a Stoic fortnight or month
- There was a strong interest in the materials being made available earlier and being translated into as many languages as possible
- The Stoic Week Handbook and the SMRT and other questionnaires could be made available all year.
- We now have an iOS app, via Teachable, which is available for people to use to do Stoic Week and SMRT. There is not an app available for Android, and that would be beneficial
- Some participants would like to see more of different Stoics than Marcus and Epictetus e.g. Seneca.
- It would be desirable for there to be more follow-up courses
- It would be useful to capture some more specific demographic information e.g. specific country and possibly employment status
- The SABS questionnaires should be further refined e.g. validating SABS as a scale, making the language simpler. It would also be good to split it into, for example, five Stoic themes, and give participants a rating for each theme.
- It should be possible to do further qualitative research. For example, groups doing Stoic Week together could form a focus group to feed back their experience in some detail, perhaps responding to semi-structured interviews

In conclusion, the research on Stoicism is progressing well. To move to the next level, your help would be most welcome. If you are familiar with quantitative or qualitative research methods, and would like to be involved of some of the above research – or if you have your own ideas about how we could further research the effectiveness of Stoicism – we would to hear from you. Please contact the current author by email.

Appendices

1) How Much Has Stoic Week Helped?

	How much has Stoic Week helped in this area? (leave blank if not relevant)						Average Rating/5 (2016 rating in brackets)
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Relationships (friendships, getting on with people)	11 <i>(1.83%)</i>	21 <i>(3.50%)</i>	34 <i>(5.67%)</i>	168 <i>(28.00%)</i>	240 <i>(40.00%)</i>	126 <i>(21.00%)</i>	3.6 (3.6)
Becoming a better person	6 <i>(0.98%)</i>	9 <i>(1.47%)</i>	24 <i>(3.92%)</i>	127 <i>(20.72%)</i>	246 <i>(40.13%)</i>	201 <i>(32.79%)</i>	4 (4)
Becoming wiser	5 <i>(0.83%)</i>	15 <i>(2.48%)</i>	26 <i>(4.30%)</i>	137 <i>(22.64%)</i>	221 <i>(36.53%)</i>	201 <i>(33.22%)</i>	3.9 (3.9)
Knowledge of Stoicism	7 <i>(1.11%)</i>	20 <i>(3.18%)</i>	35 <i>(5.56%)</i>	108 <i>(17.17%)</i>	224 <i>(35.61%)</i>	235 <i>(37.36%)</i>	4 (4.1)
Other	1 <i>(1.16%)</i>	2 <i>(2.33%)</i>	2 <i>(2.33%)</i>	9 <i>(10.47%)</i>	32 <i>(37.21%)</i>	40 <i>(46.51%)</i>	4.2 (4.4)
Overall	2 <i>(0.35%)</i>	6 <i>(1.06%)</i>	20 <i>(3.53%)</i>	100 <i>(17.67%)</i>	250 <i>(44.17%)</i>	188 <i>(33.22%)</i>	4 (4)

Table 1: Ratings of how useful Stoic Week was in various areas of life

As shown in table 1 (above), Stoic Week was given overall rating of 80%. The areas where Stoic Week was judged to be of most use were “knowledge of Stoicism” and “becoming a better person” followed by “becoming wiser.” A separate question rating participants’ knowledge of stoicism implied an increase of 26%. These findings are broadly in line with the results from previous years.

2) How useful were the audio recordings?

As in previous years participants were invited to listen to a number of audio recordings. Table 2 below shows participants’ ratings of the recommended audio recordings. All the recordings received a rating of between 4 and 4.1 out of 5. The most listened to recording was the Stoic Morning Meditation.

Recording Name	How useful was this recording (0-5)						Average Rating
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Stoic Attitudes Meditation	3 <i>(0.77%)</i>	6 <i>(1.55%)</i>	13 <i>(3.35%)</i>	72 <i>(18.56%)</i>	148 <i>(38.14%)</i>	146 <i>(37.63%)</i>	4
Stoic Morning Meditation	3 <i>(0.78%)</i>	6 <i>(1.56%)</i>	16 <i>(4.16%)</i>	66 <i>(17.14%)</i>	155 <i>(40.26%)</i>	139 <i>(36.10%)</i>	4
Stoic Evening Meditation	3 <i>(0.84%)</i>	5 <i>(1.40%)</i>	10 <i>(2.80%)</i>	66 <i>(18.49%)</i>	144 <i>(40.34%)</i>	129 <i>(36.13%)</i>	4
View from Above	3 <i>(0.84%)</i>	6 <i>(1.67%)</i>	15 <i>(4.18%)</i>	51 <i>(14.21%)</i>	130 <i>(36.21%)</i>	154 <i>(42.90%)</i>	4.1
Stoic Mindfulness Premeditation Exercise	3 <i>(0.96%)</i>	5 <i>(1.61%)</i>	10 <i>(3.22%)</i>	48 <i>(15.43%)</i>	131 <i>(42.12%)</i>	114 <i>(36.66%)</i>	4.1

Table 2: Ratings of Audio recordings of Meditation Routine Audio Recordings, Stoic Week 2017

3) How useful were the recommended Daily Stoic Exercises?

Table 3 below shows how highly participants rated each of the daily Stoic exercises as well as the number of people who completed each activity and their ratings of the exercises.

	How useful was this exercise (leave blank if you did not do to it)						Average Rating
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Stoic Self-Monitoring Record	4 <i>(1.24%)</i>	13 <i>(4.04%)</i>	23 <i>(7.14%)</i>	61 <i>(18.94%)</i>	123 <i>(38.20%)</i>	98 <i>(30.43%)</i>	3.8
Monday - Taking Stock of your life as a whole - writing down reflections on your life as a whole, what your core values are, and how consistently you live up to them.	1 <i>(0.18%)</i>	6 <i>(1.06%)</i>	20 <i>(3.55%)</i>	81 <i>(14.36%)</i>	230 <i>(40.78%)</i>	226 <i>(40.07%)</i>	4.1

	How useful was this exercise (leave blank if you did not do to it)						Average Rating
	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Tuesday : Change. Reflect on your life as a whole and what aspects you could potentially change. How would you make those changes?	0 <i>(0.00%)</i>	5 <i>(0.87%)</i>	22 <i>(3.83%)</i>	86 <i>(14.98%)</i>	256 <i>(44.60%)</i>	205 <i>(35.71%)</i>	4.1
Wednesday: Virtue. Take 5-10 minutes to sit quietly and reflect further on your core values by contemplating the "values clarifications" questions	2 <i>(0.36%)</i>	8 <i>(1.42%)</i>	21 <i>(3.74%)</i>	87 <i>(15.48%)</i>	234 <i>(41.64%)</i>	210 <i>(37.37%)</i>	4.1
Thursday: Love. Take 5-10 minutes to sit quietly and reflect on your relationships and how you could potentially view things differently.	2 <i>(0.36%)</i>	14 <i>(2.52%)</i>	29 <i>(5.22%)</i>	89 <i>(16.01%)</i>	234 <i>(42.09%)</i>	188 <i>(33.81%)</i>	4
Friday: Community: Take 5-10 minutes and practice the Circle of Hierocles exercise.	7 <i>(1.36%)</i>	14 <i>(2.71%)</i>	34 <i>(6.59%)</i>	107 <i>(20.74%)</i>	198 <i>(38.37%)</i>	156 <i>(30.23%)</i>	3.8
Saturday: Nature. Listen to the View from above recording	3 <i>(0.66%)</i>	6 <i>(1.31%)</i>	25 <i>(5.46%)</i>	73 <i>(15.94%)</i>	172 <i>(37.55%)</i>	179 <i>(39.08%)</i>	4.1
Sunday: Resilience - preparation for adversity - rehearsing facing challenging events.	2 <i>(0.40%)</i>	4 <i>(0.80%)</i>	27 <i>(5.37%)</i>	66 <i>(13.12%)</i>	206 <i>(40.95%)</i>	198 <i>(39.36%)</i>	4.1

Table 3: Ratings of Daily Stoic Exercises in Stoic Week 2017

The most popular activity, marginally, was **Tuesday Change**.

4)How long did participants spend on Stoic Week each day?

The average time spent by participants came out as 34 minutes, very similar to last year’s figure of 37 minutes

Answer	Count	Percent (2016 in brackets)
Less than 5 minutes	10	2% (12%)
5 -15	87	14% (12%)
15 -30	239	37% (28%)
30-45	127	20% (27%)
35-60	74	12% (13%)
More than an hour	97	15% (19%)

Table 4: How long did you spend on Stoic Week each day?

5) Which format did you use to access Stoic Week materials

Format	2017 (%)	2016 (%)	2015 (%)
1. HTML / Website (Modern Stoicism or other)	53	39	32
2. EPUB	9	13	8
3. PDF	27	36	49
4. MOBI (Kindle)	9	10	10
Other	3	2	2

Table 5: What was the main format you used for accessing Stoic Week?

As shown in table 5 (above) the trend towards using the website as opposed to the PDF booklet continued.

6)Which of these formats would be useful for you in accessing Stoic Week?

Format	2017 (%)	2016(%)	2015(%)
Android App	38	34	37
IOS App	38	37	36
Mobi format booklet	10	12	12
Epub format booklet	12	15	12
Other	2	2	2

Table 6: 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.

ⁱ For a comparison with last year see the final part of the [Stoic Week 2016 report](#).