

Stoic Week 2018 Report Part 4: Feedback on Stoic Week and Overall Conclusions **Tim LeBon**

Introduction

This article is the fourth and final report on Stoic Week 2018. The previously published reports summarised the [demographics](#), the relationships between well-being and degree of Stoicism at the [start of Stoic Week](#) and the [impact of taking part in Stoic Week](#)

This report is divided into the following 5 sections.

[1\) How Much Has Stoic Week Helped?](#)

[2\) Which parts of Stoic Week were most helpful.](#)

[3\) Other Significant Findings](#)

[4\) Overall Status of Modern Stoicism Research](#)

[5\) Recommended Next Steps](#)

1) How Much Has Stoic Week Helped?

We are interested in how much you think Stoic Week has helped you in various areas of life. Leave blank if a particular area is not relevant to you, otherwise say how much Stoic Week has helped.

950 Responses

| | How much has Stoic Week helped in this area? (leave blank if not relevant) | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Average Rating |
| Relationships | 15 <i>(1.98%)</i> | 23 <i>(3.03%)</i> | 58 <i>(7.64%)</i> | 232 <i>(30.57%)</i> | 277 <i>(36.50%)</i> | 154 <i>(20.29%)</i> | 3.6 |
| Becoming a better person | 8 <i>(1.00%)</i> | 8 <i>(1.00%)</i> | 45 <i>(5.63%)</i> | 168 <i>(21.03%)</i> | 324 <i>(40.55%)</i> | 246 <i>(30.79%)</i> | 3.9 |
| Becoming wiser | 7 <i>(0.88%)</i> | 21 <i>(2.65%)</i> | 48 <i>(6.05%)</i> | 175 <i>(22.07%)</i> | 310 <i>(39.09%)</i> | 232 <i>(29.26%)</i> | 3.8 |
| Managing emotions well | 8 <i>(1.00%)</i> | 14 <i>(1.74%)</i> | 47 <i>(5.85%)</i> | 178 <i>(22.14%)</i> | 319 <i>(39.68%)</i> | 238 <i>(29.60%)</i> | 3.9 |
| Knowledge of Stoicism | 8 <i>(0.98%)</i> | 15 <i>(1.84%)</i> | 55 <i>(6.76%)</i> | 158 <i>(19.41%)</i> | 292 <i>(35.87%)</i> | 286 <i>(35.14%)</i> | 3.9 |
| Dealing with adversity | 5 <i>(0.65%)</i> | 25 <i>(3.23%)</i> | 56 <i>(7.23%)</i> | 195 <i>(25.16%)</i> | 314 <i>(40.52%)</i> | 180 <i>(23.23%)</i> | 3.7 |
| Coming to terms with your mortality | 35 <i>(4.63%)</i> | 43 <i>(5.69%)</i> | 78 <i>(10.32%)</i> | 228 <i>(30.16%)</i> | 225 <i>(29.76%)</i> | 147 <i>(19.44%)</i> | 3.3 |
| Other (please specify) | 10 <i>(10.00%)</i> | 1 <i>(1.00%)</i> | 6 <i>(6.00%)</i> | 18 <i>(18.00%)</i> | 20 <i>(20.00%)</i> | 45 <i>(45.00%)</i> | 3.7 |
| Overall | 0 <i>(0.00%)</i> | 5 <i>(0.71%)</i> | 37 <i>(5.27%)</i> | 135 <i>(19.23%)</i> | 331 <i>(47.15%)</i> | 194 <i>(27.64%)</i> | 4 |

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

Part 3 of this suite of reports described the benefit of Stoic Week as measured by psychometric scales for life satisfaction, flourishing, positive emotions, negative emotions and degree of Stoicism. For the record, the improvements were 12%, 8%, 9.5%, 14% and 10%

respectively. Table 1 (above) adds to these findings the participants' sense of *how* Stoic Week helped them. The improvements reported in table 1 are almost uniformly high. Overall Stoic Week was rated as helping on average by 4 marks out of 5 (80%). The areas where Stoic Week was judged to be of most use benefit were "knowledge of Stoicism" and "managing emotions" closely followed by "becoming wiser."

These results reproduce the results of previous years. In 2018 we asked additional questions which resulted in some interesting findings. Specifically, we asked people about how much participants thought it would benefit *themselves* if they continued practising Stoicism and how much it would benefit *other people*.

Benefits of Stoicism (948 responses)

| How much (on a scale of 0 meaning "none" to 10 meaning "a lot") do you think practising my continuing to practice Stoicism would benefit | Benefit Me | Benefit other people |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Average | 8.9 | 8.4 |
| 0 (none) | .3 | .5 |
| 1-4 | 2 | 3 |
| 5-6 | 4 | 11 |
| 7 | 7 | 10 |
| 8 | 16 | 19.5 |
| 9 | 14 | 12 |
| 10 (a lot) | 57 | 44 |

Table 2: How much participants believed continuing to practice Stoicism would benefit themselves and others

Many modern (non-Stoic) commentators see a sharp divergence between prudence and morality– you need to choose either to maximise your own well-being or to be moral. The Stoics, in contrast, did not see such a sharp contrast between prudence and morality and indeed argued that pursuing virtue was the way to achieve both. The data presented in table 1 can be interpreted as providing some evidence for the Stoic view. As would be expected according to the Stoic view, participants believe that Stoicism benefits both themselves and others. Perhaps surprisingly, given the apparent sacrifices practising Stoicism implies (“don’t focus on pleasure”, “help other people” and “devote a lot of time working on being a good Stoic”), participants rated the benefits to themselves as even greater than the benefits to others.

| How much do you think it would benefit the world in general if more people practiced Stoicism? | % |
|---|-------------|
| Average | 9 |
| 0 (none) | .5 |
| 1-4 | 1 |
| 5-6 | 6.5 |
| 7 | 6 |
| 8 | 15.5 |
| 9 | 14.5 |
| 10 (a lot) | 56 |

Table 3: How much participants believed continuing to practice Stoicism would benefit themselves and others

When asked a question about how much *the world* would benefit if more people practiced Stoicism, the answer was an emphatic “a lot” (average score 9 out of 10). In other words , those who had experienced Stoicism gave a resounding vote of confidence to the outreach purpose of the Modern Stoicism project.

2) Which parts of Stoic Week were most helpful?

As in previous years we asked participants to tell which elements of Stoic Week they found most beneficial.

We are interested in your experience of the practical exercises supplied in the handbook and on the web site. If you did not do a particular exercise, please leave that item blank, otherwise say how highly you rated it. 948 Responses

| | How useful was this exercise (leave blank if you did not do it) | | | | | | Average Rating |
|---|---|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Monday Midday Exercise: What is Happiness? | 2 (0.28%) | 9 (1.27%) | 33 (4.65%) | 111 (15.63%) | 286 (40.28%) | 269 (37.89%) | 4.1 |
| Tuesday Midday Exercise: Virtues and 'Indifferents' | 1 (0.14%) | 4 (0.57%) | 25 (3.57%) | 103 (14.71%) | 268 (38.29%) | 299 (42.71%) | 4.2 |
| Wednesday Midday Exercise: Reflecting on Your Relationships | 2 (0.29%) | 6 (0.88%) | 33 (4.84%) | 114 (16.72%) | 254 (37.24%) | 273 (40.03%) | 4.1 |
| Thursday Midday Exercise: The Community of Mankind | 3 (0.47%) | 11 (1.71%) | 40 (6.23%) | 136 (21.18%) | 240 (37.38%) | 212 (33.02%) | 3.9 |
| Friday Midday Exercise: Good and Bad Emotions | 2 (0.32%) | 5 (0.80%) | 31 (4.94%) | 97 (15.45%) | 229 (36.46%) | 264 (42.04%) | 4.1 |
| Saturday Midday Exercise: Preparation for Adversity | 3 (0.51%) | 9 (1.52%) | 23 (3.89%) | 86 (14.55%) | 214 (36.21%) | 256 (43.32%) | 4.1 |
| Sunday Midday Exercise: The View from Above | 7 (1.25%) | 10 (1.79%) | 28 (5.01%) | 95 (16.99%) | 184 (32.92%) | 235 (42.04%) | 4 |

Table 4: How useful were the daily exercises?

As Table 4 shows, all the exercises for each day were rated highly, with a difference of only .3 (out of 5) between the lowest (3.9 for Thursday – the community of Mankind) and the highest (4.2 for Tuesday, Virtues and the different).

We are interested in your experience of the audio recordings supplied in the handbook and on the web site. If you did not use a recording, please leave that item blank, otherwise say how highly you rated it.

950 Responses

| | How useful was it? | | | | | | Average Rating |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Stoic Premeditation Exercise | 5 (1.15%) | 10 (2.29%) | 29 (6.65%) | 108 (24.77%) | 143 (32.80%) | 141 (32.34%) | 3.8 |
| Morning Meditation | 3 (0.60%) | 12 (2.41%) | 35 (7.04%) | 100 (20.12%) | 161 (32.39%) | 186 (37.42%) | 3.9 |
| Evening Meditation | 4 (0.87%) | 13 (2.83%) | 28 (6.09%) | 83 (18.04%) | 165 (35.87%) | 167 (36.30%) | 3.9 |
| View from Above | 2 (0.46%) | 13 (2.97%) | 30 (6.86%) | 73 (16.70%) | 136 (31.12%) | 183 (41.88%) | 4 |
| Stoic Attitudes Meditation (with music) | 18 (4.85%) | 12 (3.23%) | 25 (6.74%) | 78 (21.02%) | 103 (27.76%) | 135 (36.39%) | 3.7 |
| Stoic Attitudes Meditation (without music) | 14 (4.56%) | 16 (5.21%) | 24 (7.82%) | 59 (19.22%) | 90 (29.32%) | 104 (33.88%) | 3.7 |

Table 5: Ratings of Audio recordings of Meditation Routine Audio Recordings, Stoic Week 2018

A similar story emerges when we look at table 5 above which shows ratings of the audio recordings. They were all rated highly, with again only a .3 difference between the lowest (3.7 for the Stoic Attitudes meditation) and the highest (4 for the View from Above)

When asked whether they planned to continue practising Stoicism, 51% of participants gave their answer as the maximum (10 out of 10). the average degree of aspiration to continue with Stoicism was 8.6 out of 10.

For the first time we asked participants about *how* they intended to maintain their practice and their answers make interesting reading

- Daily Stoic Meditation (specifically the morning and evening Meditations)
- Read the main original Stoic texts
- Do Stoic week again on my own initiative
- Speak to partner and friends about Stoicism
- Watch You tube videos or podcasts about Stoicism regularly
- Daily reflection and/or journaling of my progress in Stoicism
- Focus on specific aspects of Stoicism such as the virtues and the dichotomy of control
- Use the self-monitoring sheet from Stoic Week
- Download the audios from Stoic Week and listen to them
- Read modern books on Stoicism
- Practice “sage on my shoulder” technique regularly
- Do the View from Above meditation and reflect on our place in the universe
- Set reminders (e.g. on phone) to do my Stoic Practice and of key Stoic learnings (daily or weekly)
- Set aside time for regular practice, prioritise it.

Perhaps the above list will provide inspiration to some readers about how to maintain their practice of Stoicism.

3) Other Significant Findings

- Participants reported spending on average 24 minutes on Stoic Week each day. 13% of participants said they spent under 10 minutes each day whilst 5% told us they spent over an hour each day on Stoic activities. Most people (62%) spent between 10 minutes and half an hour each day on Stoic activities during Stoic Week.
- There was a 33% increase in participant’s professed knowledge of Stoicism. Similar numbers of people said they “know a bit” about Stoicism (46% before and 47% after Stoic Week) but there was a big reduction in participants saying they were “novices”

(26% went down to 9%) and 43% said they know quite a lot about Stoicism, compared to only 21% who put themselves in this category at the start of Stoic Week.

- Bucking the previous trend towards using the website away from using a pdf. there was surprisingly little change in the way that Stoic Week booklet was accessed in 2018 with over a quarter of people still using a pdf.
- Whilst at the start of week only 43% of participants said they were “More Stoic than not Stoic” (32%) or that they “consider myself a Stoic” (11%) , this increased to 81 % by the end of stoic week, comprising 62% who said they were now “More Stoic than not Stoic” and 19% who said they “consider themselves to be a Stoic”.
- When asked about on how many days they actively engaged with the materials (meaning spending more than 10 minutes on them) the answers ranged from the most engaged day (Day 1, Happiness 16%) to the least engaged (Day 7, Nature, 12%). This implies a gradual reduction in the number of people engaging with the material each day, even amongst those who complete the end of Stoic Week questionnaire.
- Relatively few people use the self-monitoring sheet at all (only 39%) whilst most people attempt the morning meditation at least once (93%), the evening meditation (90%) and listen to the audio recordings (60%)
- Most people did try to apply Stoic principles each day – 62% saying they tried to *every day* of Stoic Week
- When asked how they interacted with other people in Stoic Week, 27% of participants said they spoke to people at home about Stoicism, 18% said they took part in the Modern Stoicism forum, 12% said they attempted to teach Stoicism to other people and 12% said they spoke to people in their workplace about Stoicism. Only 3% of Stoic Week participants were at Stoicon or similar events
- Typical comments about how Stoicism benefitted participants included

Really enjoyed Stoic week...already missing it.

I loved this event and hope to participate more actively next year.

Something that everyone should take part in.

Thank you all for this wonderful project.

Thank you for organizing this event. It really helped me deal with my emotions in a healthy way, which is something I struggle with greatly.

It was a joy to participate in. Thank you for making this course available for free!

It was wonderful and I plan to do this again!

I never would've thought that seven days could do so much, and yet here I am, slightly awed about just how much has changed for me. I am incredibly thankful.

Interesting, enjoyable and calming - setting aside some time each day to read & reflect is very useful.

Enjoyable & interesting, thank you for the time in putting together the various means of access and in choosing texts for each day as well as writing the connecting pieces.

Please keep it up as an annual event. This and the annual month long Stoic training event help keep me on the Stoic path. I found this to be so helpful and mind opening. I look forward to exploring Stoicism more. Thank you for all your work putting this together.

Keep it up! You're making the world a better place

Keep up the great work!

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

4) Overall Status of Modern Stoicism Research

- Through running Stoic Weeks since 2012 and measuring well-being before and after Stoic Week each time, we have consistently reproduced the finding that a week of Stoicism results in increased satisfaction with life, positive emotions, flourishing and reduced negative emotions.
- A month of Stoicism (SMRT) has a bigger impact.
- When practising Stoicism for a month as in SMRT, the benefit lasts at least 3 months with almost no decrease in impact (for those who responded to the follow-up)
- These findings should be treated with some caution as the samples are self-selecting, there may be some placebo effect and a significant number of participants drop out.
- An important development has been the production of the SABS (Stoic Attitudes and Behaviour Scale) to measure a person's degree of Stoicism.
- *Even without doing Stoic training, people who are more Stoic (as measured by the SABS scale) have greater well-being, positive emotions, flourishing and less negative emotions. If they then do Stoic training (as in Stoic Week) these all generally improve as does their degree of Stoicism.
- The combination of the above findings means we can be confident the improvements in well-being is not accounted for completely by a placebo effect.
- In 2017 we also administered a character strength survey, the CIVIC scale in Stoic Week. We found Stoicism was significantly and positively correlated with all the virtues and with most character strengths
- Zest turned out to be the character strength most associated with Stoicism and also the strength that increased the most during Stoic Week

- This year we learnt that most people who have done Stoic week believe that Stoicism significantly benefits both themselves and other people. Most believe that the benefit is larger for themselves than others.

5) Recommended Next Steps

Stoic Week 2018 supports previous findings about the benefits of Stoicism and the additional questions asked this year supplement our knowledge of how and why Stoicism benefits people. There are a number of steps that could be taken if sufficient funding and/or willing and qualified volunteers were available. Some of these are in the pipeline whilst some are aspirational. In no particular order, recommended next steps include:-

a) Develop the Stoic Attitudes and Behaviour Scale (SABS) further so it is validated to the standard of other psychometric scales, has subscales that would help people understand in what ways they were and were not Stoic and would be fit for use with a general population (i.e. avoid technical or complicated language). Ideally the SABS should also be available as a briefer questionnaire as well as a more comprehensive scale (It is quite common for questionnaires to have a longer and shorter versions)

b) Develop versions of Stoicism tailored for particular populations and problems. SMRT already exists, being tailored to help with resilience. In addition Stoicism could be customised so it is helpful in:

- children (schools)
- prisons
- to help people suffering from pain
- to help people with anger issues
- older people
- parents

People are already working in these areas – from a research perspective it would be beneficial if their work could be represented in a “package” and its benefits be measured. SMRT provides a very good example of how this could be done.

c) Carry out a randomised control trial for Stoicism in general population or with specific groups

d) Research to help answer the following questions

- Who benefits most from Stoicism?

- What is the relationship between Stoicism and the big 5 personality traits?
- What is the relationship between Stoicism(big S) versus stoicism (small s)?

e) Use other, qualitative, research methods

If you have other ideas about how to advance Stoic research or would be willing to be involved in the research and are suitably qualified, we would love to hear from you.