

The Tip #14

“Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.”

– **Epictetus**

“Don't explain your philosophy. Embody it.”

– **Epictetus**

“Man is not worried by real problems so much as by his imagined anxieties about real problems”

– **Epictetus**

The Tale #14



Photo from The Collector: 5 Ways to Be Happy According to Epictetus

You seriously have to admire this guy! Epictetus – the Greek Stoic philosopher whose philosophy has been revived on the back of keen interest in Stoicism (and I'd say a strong influence on Acceptance and Commitment Theory).

The rise in interest in the school of Stoicism is an antidote to the victim mentality that pervades so many in society and who find it necessary to absolve responsibility – or even devolve to others responsibility they should take themselves. Born 2000 years ago, this guy was born as a slave and that's the key to understanding Stoicism – it can assist us in timeless foundational beliefs and principles that help us in good times and bad no matter what level of the stratified society we come from.

Once he gained his freedom, he taught philosophy for 25 years. It is said that James Stockdale – who was captured and tortured by the Vietcong endured as he drew on Stoic philosophy. (Read the Stockdale Paradox). Confined in leg irons, Stockdale probably recalled *“Sickness is a hindrance to the body, but not to your ability to choose, unless that is your choice. Lameness is a hindrance to the leg, but not to your ability to choose. Say this to yourself with regard to everything that happens, then you will see such obstacles as hindrances to something else, but not to yourself.”*

One important lesson from Epictetus would be to Remember What's in Your Control - one of the most important maxims in Stoic philosophy – that is, the importance of distinguishing things that are under your control and things that are not. How you react is not the same as how you respond. We often react to situations as leaders which are almost spontaneous in nature and best described as instinctive. However, quite often, we have to sequester that emotion and choose to respond in ways that make us more dignified and better people. After all, the 4 cardinal virtues of Stoicism are Practical Wisdom (the ability to successfully navigate tricky situations); Courage (to do and say the right thing); Justice (behaving in the right way towards others); and Temperance (showing self-control and restraint).

Theodore Roosevelt's maxim "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are", often comes to mind when we lead. We are not in control of everything as we well recognise, and we have to remind ourselves that we have our Circle of Concern and our Circle of Control. If you invest time and energy worrying about things that are in your circle of concern you will continue to feel out of control and incompetent. However, if you put time and energy into your circle of influence and circle of control that will give you a sense of agency and you'll feel more in control.

How Stoic are you? Are you feeling moments when you can't distinguish between your Circle of Concern and Circle of Influence and Control? Why is leading like a Stoic so important? Coaching & Mentoring (Moaching) can help. Call +61 410 586 700 **Be and Become**.