

Stoic Evening Review

A Five-Part Protocol for Daily Reflection

Marcus Aurelius wrote the *Meditations* at night — not as a journal of events, but as a structured self-examination. Modern research on implementation intentions confirms what the Stoics practiced intuitively: reviewing the day with structured questions produces measurably different outcomes than unguided rumination. This checklist adapts the Stoic evening review into a five-question protocol designed to close the day with clarity.

I. The Dichotomy Review

What events today were within my control — did I respond to them with virtue?

What was outside my control — did I waste energy resisting what I could not change?

Where did I mistake externals (outcomes, others' opinions) for what truly matters?

Epicetetus, *Enchiridion* §1: "Some things are in our control, others are not." Identify one thing you accepted and one you still need to release.

II. Virtue Audit

Wisdom: Did I act from clear judgment, or from habit, fear, or impulse today?

Justice: Did I treat others — including myself — fairly and with care?

Courage: Did I avoid anything I should have faced? Did I speak when silence was cowardice?

Temperance: Where did I act in excess — in consumption, reaction, or speech?

The four Stoic virtues serve as evaluation criteria. Not as guilt, but as calibration for tomorrow.

III. Three Questions from Seneca

What did I do well today that I want to repeat?

What did I fail at — and what specifically would I do differently?

What did I learn today about the world, about others, or about myself?

Seneca, *De Ira* III.36: "I make use of this opportunity... daily pleading my cause before myself." Keep answers specific.

IV. Memento Mori Reflection

Did I live today as if it mattered — or as if tomorrow is guaranteed?

If this were my last day, what would I wish I had done differently?

Name one person or experience I am genuinely grateful for today.

Negative visualization combined with gratitude creates the emotional contrast Stoics used to build both resilience and appreciation.

V. Tomorrow's Intention

Write one word that will define how you want to show up tomorrow.

Identify one obstacle likely to arise and pre-decide your response to it.

Set one single most-important task for the morning — the one that justifies the day.

Implementation intentions ("when X, I will do Y") improve follow-through by 200-300% (Gollwitzer, 1999, American Psychologist).

Research basis: Gollwitzer & Sheeran (2006), Psychological Bulletin — implementation intentions meta-analysis. Kross et al. (2014), JPSP — self-distancing and rumination. Seneca, De Ira III.36. Marcus Aurelius, Meditations.

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