

Stoic Gratitude Practice Guide

A daily practice for training attention toward what you have, drawn from Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Epictetus — structured as three short sessions.

Grounded in Stoic negative visualization (*premeditatio malorum*) and *amor fati* — the practice of meeting what happens, rather than what you wish had happened.

How To Use This Guide

Stoic gratitude is not about positive thinking — it is about accuracy. Marcus Aurelius opened the *Meditations* reminding himself, each morning, of specific people and specific traits he was grateful to have encountered. Seneca practiced periodically imagining the loss of what he had, not to induce fear, but to restore his sense of its actual value. This guide adapts both habits into a short morning and evening practice you can complete in under five minutes each.

Section 1 — Morning: Named Gratitude

1. Name one specific person you are grateful for today, and the specific trait or act you owe to them.
2. Name one skill or piece of knowledge you have that took someone else's effort to give you.
3. Name one ordinary comfort available today that would have been remarkable a century ago.
4. Name one difficulty currently in your life that is also, in some way, developing you.
5. What is one thing you have today that you once wanted badly and now take for granted?
6. Which of today's obligations is actually a privilege you'd miss if it were gone?

Section 2 — Negative Visualization

A brief, deliberate imagining of loss — used by Seneca to restore appreciation, not to induce anxiety.

1. Pick one person or comfort you have today. Briefly imagine a day without it — then return to the present.
2. What did that brief absence make clearer about what this actually gives you?
3. Is there a version of today you are treating as guaranteed that is, in fact, not guaranteed?
4. What would you do differently today if you treated this as the last ordinary day for a while?
5. Name one thing you complained about this week that someone else would be grateful to have.

Section 3 — Amor Fati: Meeting What Happened

1. What happened today that you did not choose, and are you resisting it or working with it?
2. What would it look like to treat this event as material to use, rather than a problem to resent?
3. Separate the event itself from your story about the event. What actually happened, in plain terms?

Section 4 — Evening: Closing the Day

1. What is one moment today you would not have noticed without this practice?
2. Who made today easier, in a way you did not thank them for?
3. What is one thing that went wrong today that you can still find something to appreciate within?
4. What are you keeping that you complained about a year ago?
5. What is one thing about your body, faculties, or mind that still works, that you rely on without thought?
6. Close with one sentence: today, despite everything, I am grateful for ____.

A Note on Consistency

None of this requires a journal or extended writing — Marcus Aurelius wrote the *Meditations* as private notes to himself, not for an audience. The value is in the repetition, not the eloquence. A few honest words most mornings and evenings will do more than one long, polished entry a month.