

Great Expectations Lesson (30 minutes)

Introduction

This lesson will focus on the idea of expectations in Stoicism and negative visualization, the idea of contemplating a range of potential outcomes that includes the bad and worst case scenarios in order to promote resilience when an unfavorable situation occurs. We will explore the methods used in order to practice this as well as why people do.

Activity

The start of the activity is a series of questions:

1. What is something you are looking forward to?
2. Have you ever been disappointed?
3. What does it mean to be disappointed?

This line of questioning introduces the idea of expectations. What are expectations? (Ask class and write down the answers)

Notes:

Expectations:

A strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future

When you are looking forward to an event or place, it is often due to you having placed high expectations on what will happen.

What can happen when you have high expectations is one of two things, satisfaction or dissatisfaction (or in other words, disappointment).

Ask the following questions and record:

1. Have there ever been times when something didn't go the way you expected?
2. How did you feel?
3. What did you do?

Now explain that in stoicism, when an event doesn't go as planned, the goal is to remain rational and not allow yourself to be consumed in negative emotions. In reality, many things don't go as planned and when that happens, it's best to be prepared. For this the stoics invented the idea of negative visualization.

Notes:

What stoicism (particularly premeditation of adversity/negative visualization) aims to do is take the power to influence your emotions away from your circumstances and back to you (one cannot control their circumstances but can control themselves).

The main point of negative visualization is to steel you against what undesirable outcomes may make you feel so you can have an indifferent and rational outlook in any situation.

By having a rational outlook, you can act in accordance with your values and principles without behaving with spontaneous and emotionally charged actions that may not be the best response.

Now think back to the answers of the previous questions:

How could you have better prepared yourself for those situations according to stoicism and what are some examples of this?

What would a stoic have done when in your position while things were going wrong?

What would you have done differently, physically and mentally?

Now look at the questions from the beginning of the lesson

ex.

1. What is something you are looking forward to?
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and practice negative visualization on the examples the class gave.

Reflection

Was negative visualization helpful for you personally?

Would you incorporate the idea of negative visualization in your life?

What are some possible flaws of negative visualization?