Stoicism as a Model of Psychotherapy

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the philosophical origins of modern day psychotherapeutic practice, specifically the Hellenistic philosophy of Stoicism. Philosophical counselling engages the client in existential discussions and empowers the client to form their own opinions. The Stoic doctrines address many of the issues that frequently come up in therapy. This thesis examines the topics of death, responsibility, meaning and purpose, anger, and resilience. Each topic is explored through comparison of perspectives from Stoicism and contemporary models of therapy. This thesis examines Stoicism's contribution to major mainstream models of therapy including existential therapy, logotherapy, CBT, and REBT. This paper argues that Stoicism can be useful as a stand alone model of therapy, and future research is needed in order to develop its use in therapeutic practice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the instructors and staff at City University of Seattle, for their endless amount of patience and support in helping me complete this thesis. There were many times I felt discouraged and did not believe I would complete the project. The unconditional positive regard I received from my instructors made a huge difference in pushing me to the finish line. I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Chris Kinman, for being the first person to appreciate the content of my work and remind me that philosophy was important to psychotherapy. I would like to thank my FT-8 cohort, I have a genuine connection and love for each of you. Being a part of this group was one of the most therapeutic experiences of my life, and I left with memories I will cherish forever. Most importantly, I would like to thank my family. They provided me with endless inspiration when writing this paper, and in many ways, this paper is about them. My parents, brother, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and cousins, are the most incredibly strong people I have encountered. They are my example of Stoicism, never allowing obstacles to impede the pursuit of their goals. I know how to be strong because I have witnessed their strength, and it inspires me endlessly. I would like to thank them for never giving up on me, even when I wanted to give up on myself. This paper is written in service of my family, whom I love endlessly. Thank you for everything, I am proud to call you my family.

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Chapter 1: Situating the Author

There are many unique characteristics and experiences that feed into my personal identity. In a shorter description, I would characterize myself as an Indian woman, in her early 30s, who immigrated to Canada from the Middle East. As someone who has lived in both the eastern and western parts of this world, I am in a unique position and often feel torn between these two sides of myself. I have struggled with health issues for most of my life, and have spent more time then I would have liked in various hospitals. My family has had several conflicts and issues, multiple mental health diagnoses, and each member has their own stories of hardships and struggles. When examining different therapeutic models, I needed to find a model that would be useful for all aspects of my diverse identity and experiences. In that search, I found that Stoic psychotherapy had something beneficial to offer each part of my identity, without inconsistencies or internal conflicts.

This is an important part of philosophy and Stoicism, the original philosophers developed Stoicism as a means of capturing what is true about the human experience. They believed that truth could not have inconsistencies nor could it be hypocritical, for that would make it untrue. This drive towards truth attracted me to Stoicism, there were clear and concise messages in the Stoic texts that built upon each other. The Stoics welcomed criticism and challenges because their interest was not in defending their ideas, rather to change their ideas if any were proven to be wrong. This approach of Stoicism resembles the scientific method, where criticism plays an important role in molding a concept or theory. Stoicism attracted my interest because the Stoics were not dogmatic or forceful, they believed they did not need to push any ideas on people, as the truth spoke for itself. They believed that all people desire the knowledge of truth, and when

truth is revealed to them, they will recognize it as such. Likewise, I felt this way when I read the Stoic texts, that these innate truths resonated deep within me, and I felt a strong desire to bring Stoic ideas into my therapeutic practice.

Stoic psychotherapy is not a model of exploration, it builds its foundation on the idea that change is both possible and tangible. What drew me to this model was that it promised me the ability to pursue my goals, and guided me to be relentless in this pursuit. In many ways, the Stoic texts inspired me to develop my strength of character. I realized that being a good person was intrinsically valuable, and goodness was a reward in itself, I did not need to expect external rewards for being a good person. I learnt to find joy in helping others, and appreciate the connection between human beings, as this is a sacred and meaningful part of my humanness. The Stoics centered their guidance around logical based discourse, which was important to me. Their texts gave me practical and sensible reasons why I should develop a Stoic philosophy of life. As I developed my inner Stoic, I felt more confident, hopeful, and most importantly, my negative and critical internal voices became quieter. I felt more clarity around my sense of purpose, which was very important at a time where I was increasingly depressed and felt meaningless.

What makes Stoicism incredibly special to me is its ability to touch people who are in the absolute worst times of their lives. When people are suffering, imprisoned, ill, being oppressed, persecuted, losing loved ones, and other truly deplorable conditions, they may feel like giving up, or that life is not worth living. Stoic ideology infiltrates their mindset and inspires them to keep trying, Stoicism tells them they are worthy of love and a beautiful life, and they should never stop fighting for that. When a person feels completely broken, Stoicism can help them

guide their actions, and empower them. I believe this model is unrivaled in its ability to support an individual through hardship.

Stoic therapy does not promise a life free from pain, but it does offer the individual advice on how to prepare, combat, and persevere in the face of struggles. At a time where I was struggling with health issues, physical pain, and having to spend months in a hospital or in bed, the Stoic doctrines encouraged me to develop a resilient mindset. The Stoics reminded me of the many ways people have gone through suffering and overcame it. Many people have channeled their painful experiences into building their personal character and goals for their lives. I was inspired to do the same upon overcoming my own hardships. I was reminded that even when I felt helpless, I always had power within, and could use this to exert some amount of control over any situation. The Stoics inspired me to seek joy, rather than passively expect it, I learned to appreciate the small things, when I felt like I had nothing.

What the Stoics provide is a philosophy of life, a means by which a person can approach their lives on a daily basis. The hope is that by having a strong sense of personal philosophy, an individual is equipped with the tools and techniques to conquer any challenges that they may encounter. They are able to do so in a manner that is meaningful and consistent with their personal belief system. The goal of Stoic philosophy is for the person to achieve "eudaimonia", a truly good and flourishing life.

Chapter 2: Why Philosophy?

The history and origin of psychotherapy is a commonly discussed topic within the discipline of psychology and its related academic institutions (Marks, 2017). While there are multiple viewpoints on how it originated, there are two commonly accepted narratives (Marks, 2017). From one angle, psychotherapy can be traced back to the last half of the 19th century (Norcross, VandenBos, & Freedheim, 2011). Prior to this time, there was widespread societal stigma against people with mental illness (Norcross et al., 2011). They were labeled as sinful, demonically possessed, and deserving of punishment (Norcross et al., 2011). The end of the enlightenment era brought about societal transformation and support for moral and intellectual approaches in the treatment of mental illness (Norcross et al., 2011). In the early 1900s, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories received widespread acclaim across North America (Norcross et al., 2011). This led to the establishment of professional societies and psychoanalytic journals, and a place within the scientific community (Norcross et al., 2011). Freud's contributions paved the way for other models of therapy to become established (Marks, 2017).

While this narrative describes the progression of modern psychotherapy, it entirely skips over the philosophical roots of the discipline. To understand this part of its origin, we must turn far back in time, all the way to ancient Greece (Marks, 2017). In 323 BC, the death of Alexander the Great marked the beginning of the Hellenistic period (Sharples, 1996). Several schools of philosophy flourished across Greece giving them the title of "Hellenistic" philosophies (Nussbaum, 1994). The Hellenistic schools were influenced by social and political crises of the time, their philosophies offered people a way to redefine their lives during turbulent times (Long, 2006).

The Hellenistic philosopher desired to address the underlying suffering that is innate to the human condition (Nussbaum, 1994). Philosophy was not a detached tool or technique that tried to impress people with its cleverness (Nussbaum, 1994). The philosopher immersed himself in the human experience, and wrestled with the deepest of human needs and suffering (Nussbaum, 1994). Philosophers were both practical and compassionate, they confronted difficult topics such as fears, love, death, sexuality, anger, and more (Nussbaum, 1994). They understood the complexity of both human nature, and the nature of the world around us (Nussbaum, 1994). They developed equally complex strategies that allowed people to engage with their struggles (Nussbaum, 1994).

True to the nature of philosophers, they conveyed their messages through carefully structured logical arguments, their teachings were clear, concise, and comprehensive (Nussbaum, 1994). They used language and rhetoric to capture what is true about the world, and share these ideas with others (Nussbaum, 1994). Truth is the highest pursuit because it gives people freedom to be their authentic self, free from the influence of tyranny, customs, or conventions (Nussbaum, 1994). People can shape their own thoughts, build their lives, and join together to create communities of autonomous people (Nussbaum, 1994).

The Hellenistic philosophers believed that people could be raised out of suffering and into a higher existence, one where they are thriving and flourishing (Nussbaum, 1994). The philosophers believed happiness was within reach to all people, regardless of their circumstances (Long, 2006). Instead, they believed one's capacity for happiness was influenced by a person's ability to understand the nature of the world, themselves, and excellence of human character (Long, 2006).

Why Stoicism?

In 300 BCE, Zeno of Citium conducted informal gatherings at the "Painted Stoa", a colonnade by the "Agora", a major marketplace and assembly space in Athens (Sellars, 2006). The term "Stoic" came from this meeting place, as a way to refer to the group of people who would come to the Stoa to learn from Zeno, and engage in discussion (Sellars, 2006).

At the time when Hellenistic schools like Stoicism began to develop, Greece had already seen major advancements in science and medicine in the past few centuries (Sallam, 2010). These were spearheaded by figures such as Hippocrates and Aristotle (Sallam, 2010). Hippocrates relied on clinical observation of symptoms and empirical methods in both teaching and practicing medicine (Sallam, 2010). Contemporary theorists often refer to Hippocrates as the father of Western medicine (Sallam, 2010). Aristotle was both a physician and philosopher, he developed the ideas of practical logic, the scientific method, and evidence based medicine (Sallam, 2010). Scholar of Classical antiquity, John Burnet (1930, as cited in Longrigg, 1989), once stated that "it is impossible to understand the history of philosophy...without keeping the history of medicine constantly in view" (p. 1). In ancient Greece, during the 5th and 6th centuries, philosophy and medicine were intertwined, they shared general assumptions, methods of reasoning, and core concepts (Longrigg, 1989). In his treatise, *De respiratione*, Aristotle (as cited in Longrigg, 1989) writes, "Concerning health and disease it is the business not only of the physician but also of the natural philosopher to discuss their causes up to a point." (p. 1).

The Hellenistic philosophical schools were greatly influenced by the development of medicine, and this laid the foundation for the art of psychotherapy. The Stoics referred to medical analogies in their practice of philosophy far more than their peer schools (Nussbaum,

1994). They believed that just as disease and illness can occur in the human body, so too can disease and illness occur in the soul (Nussbaum, 1994). What concerned them was that while the art of medicine continued to advance and develop, society seemed to be paying less attention to the development of the soul, which they believed to be far more important (Sellars, 2006). They sawf philosophy as an art of healing souls, creating happiness and peacefulness, and living the best possible life (Nussbaum, 1994).

Chrysippus was one of the founding teachers of the school of Stoicism (Hershbell, 1993). Chrysippius (as cited in Nussbaum, 1994) spoke about the art of treating mental health, and compared it to the art of medicine:

It is not true that there exists an art that we call medicine, concerned with the diseased body, but no corresponding art concerned with the diseased soul. Nor is it true that the latter is inferior to the former, in its theoretical grasp and therapeutic treatment of individual cases...For the correlative affinity of the two will reveal to us, I think, the similarity of therapeutic treatments and the analogical relationship of the two modes of doctoring." (p. 316)

Roman Stoic philosopher and poet, Seneca (as cited in Nussbaum, 1994), spoke about using philosophy as a form of treatment, he stated "I am writing down some healthful practical arguments, prescriptions for useful drugs; I have found them effective in healing my own ulcerous sores, which, even if not thoroughly cured, have at least ceased to spread" (p. 316). Alternatively, we are warned by Cicero (as cited in Nussbaum, 1994), a Roman statesman and scholar of Stoicism, that "unless the soul is cured, which cannot be done without philosophy, there will be no end to our afflictions" (p. 317).

In modern day psychology, it is common to use the terms mental health and mental illness (Nussbaum, 1994). The use of medical analogies in Stoicism and other Hellenistic philosophers indicate their influence on contemporary psychotherapy (Nussbaum, 1994). The Stoics believed that philosophy is truly the only thing we need to achieve "eudaimonia", a term representing deep tranquility, a flourishing life, and true happiness (Nussbaum, 1994). Philosophy enables us people to become mentally and emotionally strong and develop their soul's muscles (Nussbaum, 1994). They are able to rise to any challenge, while still maintaining a sense of inner peace (Nussbaum, 1994).

Philosophical Counselling as a Distinct Model

Philosophical counselling, also known as philosophical practice, can be characterized as a way of reviving the practices of the Hellenistic philosophers. They aimed to define what it meant to have a good life, and how one could acquire this (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013. Philosophical counselling deals with the core life issues that all human beings face, such as what defines a meaningful life, the nature of good and evil, love, and more (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013. Philosophy is not just for philosophers, but for any human capable of self reflection (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013. The aim of practicing philosophy is for the individual to connect with their soul, and understand their human nature. This connection provides them with a sense of peace, and ability to live in harmony with the world around us (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013).

There are both similarities and differences between psychological and philosophical counselling (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). There is some controversy as to whether philosophical practice can be helpful to clients diagnosed with psychological disorders (Cohen & Zinaich,

2013). Many philosophical counsellors view traditional psychology as being unequipped to deal with a person's existential concerns (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013).

There are several underlying assumptions in philosophical counselling, also known as philosophical practice (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). The client is valued as an autonomous, independent thinker, to the extent that it enhances their well being (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). The therapist assists the client to examine and evaluate themselves, as well as develop and clarify their worldview (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). The therapist places importance on developing the client's logical and critical thinking (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). A dogmatic or authoritative counsellor, who expects the client to automatically comply with their perspective, is likely to be incompatible with philosophical practice (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). The client develops awareness of their personal freedom and works to take full responsibility for their own behaviour (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). This view also liberates therapists from taking on a heavy burden of responsibility for the client's well being (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013).

Philosophical counselling rejects the assumptions that thoughts and feelings should be addressed separately, instead suggesting that a person's cognitive beliefs directly influence how they feel in any situation (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). This manifests in different ways, such as the Stoic view that an individual's capacity for reason regulates and restrains their emotions, or from the philosophical counselling model, where a deeper understanding of the self naturally enables change (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013).

Contemporary philosophical counsellors are inspired by Socrates' methodology, especially Socratic dialogue (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). While not as critical as Socrates, they admire the way he showed great respect for anyone he debated with. Socrates made the

interlocutor's statements and questions central to the dialogue, and allowed their responses to

guide the conversation (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). This method of facilitating self examination, is

universally held as necessary to philosophical counselling (Cohen & Zinaich, 2013). Socratic

dialogue does not tell the client what to do, rather asks questions to help the client to explore

their perspective, and uses this information as a way to address their issues (Cohen & Zinaich,

2013).

Chapter 3: Death

Death is one of the most discussed topics in Stoic literature, as well as a key topic in existential psychotherapy. In his therapeutic sessions, existential psychotherapist Dr. Yalom noted that people had a tendency to avoid discussing death (Yalom, 1980). The commonly held view is that clients are already suffering enough, why would a therapist remind them that the worst is yet to come (Yalom, 1980). It seems counterproductive that a therapist would direct their client's attention towards a painful and morbid topic of death (Yalom, 1980). However, Dr Yalom and the Stoics both contend that contemplating death is essential to the therapeutic endeavor, as life and death are interdependent and do not exist without each other (Yalom, 1980).

Death Anxiety

One of the most common recurring issues a therapist will face in session is their client's difficulties with anxiety (Yalom, 1980). In fact, a significant portion of psychopathology is variations of defense mechanisms that a person manifests in order to cope with underlying anxiety (Yalom, 1980). A large portion of therapy focuses on identifying causes of anxiety in order to uproot and dismantle them (Yalom, 1980). Dr. Yalom (1980) contends that the fear of death is the most abundant and primal source of anxiety. It permeates through one's entire being, to the extent that much of our life's energy is consumed in protecting us from this fear (Yalom, 1980). The most fundamental principle of human existence is to avoid death, it is seen in our most common behaviours (Yalom, 1980). People tend to live in communal settings, because they feel safer when they are together (Yalom, 1980). People look for symbolic ways of preventing their death, such as continuing lineage through their offspring, upholding theological beliefs that

promise immortality after death, and looking for ways to make a lasting impact in the world (Yalom, 1980). R.J. Lifton (as cited in Yalom, 1980) stated that even becoming a therapist is a manifestation of human desire for immortality. Helping others sets off a series of chain reactions that continue through their impact on people around them, and even into future generations (Lifton, as cited in Yalom, 1980).

When researchers examine the phenomenon of death anxiety, they find that it can be broken down into multiple components (Yalom, 1980). In one study, a large sample of people from the general population were asked to list common fears around death, and rank them according to severity (Yalom, 1980). The results showed that the most common fears included causing grief and pain to loved ones, not being able to complete plans and projects, experiencing pain while dying, not longer being able to have more life experiences, unable to continue caring for dependants, fear of life after death, and fear of what will happen to one's body after death (Yalom, 1980).

Among these fears, the specific themes that can be found are fears about pain, the afterlife, fears for loved ones, and fear of no longer existing which was one of the most common answers (Yalom, 1980). The fear that death brings about a state of non existence, and "nothingness" is a central to death anxiety (Yalom, 1980).

Philosopher Kierkegaard was the first to identify the difference between fear of something and fear of nothing, and how this difference impacts the human experience (Kierkegaard, as cited in Yalom, 1980). In the context of death anxiety, fear of no longer existing represents a fear of nothingness (Yalom, 1980). This type of fear is unique because it cannot be treated through traditional anxiety reduction techniques (Yalom, 1980). When one has a fear of

something tangible, they can confront it, and work to reduce the fear through a form of exposure therapy (Yalom, 1980). When the fear cannot be located or confronted, as is the case with nothingness, it continues to generate more anxiety, and the person develops feelings of helplessness (Yalom, 1980). In order to combat death anxiety, one must displace their fear from nothingness to a particular something, so that they can engage in specific defenses to protect themselves from this fear (Yalom, 1980).

It is rare for the psychotherapist to encounter clients who present death anxiety in its raw form, instead it presents through displacement, repression, denial, sublimation, and conversion (Yalom, 1980). Death anxiety is primal and one's entire sense of being is affected by this hidden dread, it is pushed into their subconscious in order to protect them from being overwhelmed with having to confront it (Yalom, 1980). By being transformed into defense mechanisms, it becomes a less primal type of anxiety that the conscious mind can handle (Yalom, 1980). One example of how death anxiety can be brought back into consciousness is the intensity of major life experiences or trauma, as these shock the system and tear through the self protective defenses (Yalom, 1980). However, the system will quickly reorganize, repair, and adapt, it will once again conceal death anxiety within the subconscious, hidden behind defenses (Yalom, 1980).

Yalom (1980) presents several research studies that show how death anxiety affects people through physical health, mental health, gender differences, marginalized groups and more. Yalom (1980) also points out that conscious and subconscious death anxiety influence a person's presenting behaviours and personality. For example, a study on nightmares found that the most common expressions of anxiety came from nightmares involving murder and death (Yalom, 1980). The study identified multiple death related themes such as being in a life

threatening accident, witnessing a loved one dying, being chased after someone in a life threatening manner, and more (Yalom, 1980). Another study examined the relationship between conscious death anxiety and dreams (Yalom, 1980). The results showed a curvilinear relationship, where people who rate either high or low on conscious death anxiety, have a higher tendency to dream about death (Yalom, 1980). A possible explanation is that high levels of conscious death anxiety spills over into the person's dreams, and low levels of conscious death anxiety are due to the individual's ability to suppress it, but they are unable to maintain this suppression while asleep (Yalom, 1980).

Stoicism on Death

*" Soon you'll be ashes, or bones. A mere name, at most—and even that is just a sound, an echo." (*Aurelius, 161-180 /2002, section 5.33)

Death is an important theme in Stoic philosophy, it would be difficult to read any of the Stoic texts without being faced with constant reminders of our mortality. Consistent with Yalom's theories on death anxiety, the Stoics affirmed that the fear of death influenced how people approach their lives. Epictetus (107-109/2014) states "In a word, it is neither death, nor exile, nor distress, nor anything else of that kind, that causes us to do something or not to do it, but rather our judgements and opinions" (section 1.33). Epictetus suggests that death is not intrinsically bad, however labelling it as terrible, and living in fear of death, is what creates harm in a person's life. Seneca (65/2010) tells people to "First free yourself from the fear of death, for this has set the yoke upon us" (pp. 142-143). The term yoke brings vivid imagery of beasts of burden, being harnessed and constricted, submitting to the will of its master. It is suited to the

message in the statement. The fear of death restricts and suffocates us, its turns us into a slave for a truly evil master, our sense of fear.

Through their practice of logic, the Stoics give us several key reasons as to why one should make intentional efforts to embrace death:

1. *We cannot escape death*

Epictetus (107-109/2014) mocks the reader by asking them "Where can we go to escape from death? Point me to the place, show me." (section 1.9). He engages in morbid humour to point out the absurdity of denying death, yet many do exactly that, existing in a state of death denial. He goes on to remind them that fearing death is pointless, for they are wishing for the impossible. What is possible, and within their power, is escaping fear.

2. *The impermanence of nature*

The Stoics point out that nothing is permanent, not even for a moment. Philosopher Heraclitus, inspiration to Stoics, stated "We cannot step twice into the same river," (as cited in Aurelius, 161-180 /2002, "Introduction"). Nature is constantly changing and transforming itself, and humans must transform along with it. Marcus Aurelius (161-180/2002) tells the reader to contemplate on how nature transforms itself:

> Nature takes substance and makes a horse. Like a sculptor with wax. And then melts it down and uses the material for a tree. Then for a person. Then for something else. Each existing only briefly. It does the container no harm to be put together, and none to be taken apart. (section 7.23)

In another chapter, he states "Everything's destiny is to change, to be transformed, to perish. So that new things can be born" (Aurelius, 161-180 /2002, section 12.21). Marcus

Aurelius reminds the reader, everything that brings us joy in life exists because of death, from the beauty of nature, to the relationships we cherish. The nature of existence is cyclical, what exists is created from what no longer exists, and all things remain in constant transformation. From this perspective, it is death that is responsible for everything that is beautiful and valuable in our lives.

3. We have already been dead, and did not fear it.

Seneca (65/2010) believes there is no need to fear death, as everyone has experienced death before:

> I say to myself: 'What is this? Is death testing me so often? Well, let it then. But I have had a long experience of this.' 'When was that?' you say. Before I was born. Death is not-being. But I already know what that is like. It will be the same after me as it was before. If this entails any torment, then it must have done so previously, before we came into the light of day. But we felt no trouble at that time. I ask you, wouldn't you say a man was very stupid to think a lantern was worse off when it was put out than before it was lit? We too are put out and set alight: in the time between we have some experiences, but on either side there is deep freedom from care. (pp. 81-82)

According to Yalom's (1980) theories on death anxiety, a large part of what causes anxiety is the belief that death brings about a state of nothingness. Seneca agrees that after death, humans enter a state of non-existence, however he maintains there is nothing to fear. Seneca reminds the reader that all people were dead for an infinite number of years before they were born, and will be dead for an infinite number of years after they die. No one remembers suffering before their birth, nor do they display fear and anxiety towards the time before birth. By this

argument, everyone returns to that same state, and it is irrational to have fear and anxiety about this return. Seneca goes as far as to tell the reader that the only period of suffering is what is in between, when people are alive and experiencing painful emotions like fear and anxiety. The worst is not yet to come, the worst is happening right now, and people are clearly capable of handling this "worst". If anything, they should look forward to death, as we will be in a deep state of peace.

The act of embracing death allows us to confront our existential and subconscious death anxiety, yet there are more significant therapeutic benefits that arise from this process, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Responsibility

In 1926, German philosopher Martin Heidegger proposed a concept that is central to the practice of existential psychotherapy (Heidegger, as cited in Yalom, 1980). He stated that while the physical experience of death destroys life, contemplating the idea of death is what saves us (Heidegger, as cited in Yalom, 1980). His model put forth the idea that we are suspended within one of two fundamental states of existence (Heidegger, as cited in Yalom, 1980). The first mode is known as "forgetfulness of being" , or "everyday mode" (Heidegger, as cited in Yalom, 1980). In this mode, the individual is focused on the world around them, and how things are (Yalom, 2008). Their attention may be directed towards styling their appearance, acquiring material goods, maintaining a social reputation etc. (Yalom, 2008). "Everyday mode" is the default mode in which most people live (Yalom, 1980).

The second mode is called "mindfulness of being" or "ontological mode", derived from the Greek word "ontos", meaning "existence" (Yalom, 1980). In this mode, the individual is less focused on how things are in the world, and instead, are amazed that things exist to begin with, the fact that they exist at all (Yalom, 2008). The ontological mode affects people more deeply than everyday mode, one becomes fully aware of their existence, they are faced with their own mortality, and accept the immutable aspects of life (Yalom, 2008). The individual feels anxious in the wake of these realizations, and becomes compelled to make personal changes (Yalom, 2008). Upon fully realizing their own potential and limitations, one faces absolute freedom and

absolute nothingness, this is the space where personal responsibility begins to take form (Yalom, 1980).

The term "authentic" is often used in modern psychotherapy, Heidegger uses authentic as a synonym for authorship (Yalom, 1980).The inauthentic person remains unaware or in denial of their authorship in life (Yalom, 1980). They avoid making choices, and instead let the world choose for them, they passively drift along with the current (Yalom, 1980). Heidegger (as cited in Yalom, 1980) describes everyday mode as inauthentic, and the ontological mode as authentic. In ontological mode, the person willingly takes authorship of their life (Yalom, 1980). They maintain an awareness of their personal responsibility over how they experience life (Yalom, 1980).

Heidegger stated that people do not switch from "everyday mode" to "ontological mode" easily (Yalom, 1980). Simply thinking about the concept, or trying to force one's self to change, does not trigger this type of transformation (Yalom, 1980). Instead, major life experiences that greatly impact us and shake us to our core, can "jolt" us out of everyday mode into ontological mode (Yalom, 1980). While there are many urgent experiences that can trigger this change, a brush with death is unrivaled in its ability to do so (Yalom, 1980).

In existential psychology, responsibility is an important existential concept, as it accounts for how we experience our existence (Yalom, 1980). Jean Paul Sartre illuminates this concept in his novel "Nausea", the protagonist is in a park and observing the setting around him (Sartre, 1938, as cited in Yalom, 1980). He realizes that all of the physical matter were just random, obscure masses that he was taking in through his senses (Sartre, 1938, as cited in Yalom, 1980). The idea that one mass is a tree, and another is a bench, were subjective descriptions that he

applied to the matter (Sartre, 1938, as cited in Yalom, 1980). Trees and benches do not exist, until he comes along and chooses to view them as such (Sartre, 1938, as cited in Yalom, 1980). Heidegger (as cited in Yalom, 1980) described the human ego as having dual characteristics, where the empirical ego exists as an object within the world, and the transcendental ego, creates itself and the world it interacts with. Responsibility and freedom are inextricably connected, where the individual has freedom to define their world in an infinite number of ways (Yalom, 1980). Without this freedom, responsibility is meaningless (Yalom, 1980). This is a double edge sword, where the individual is free to create their experience, but also cursed with an infinite number of choices of how to act, including the choice to not act at all (Yalom, 1980). When the individual understands and embraces their existential responsibility, it is overwhelming and dizzying, the ground beneath them opens up and they feel groundless (Yalom, 1980).

There are many ways in which people protect themselves from being overwhelmed by groundlessness (Yalom, 1980). It is common for the individual to avoid making choices, or to isolate themselves, in order to remain unaware of feeling groundless (Yalom, 1980). Instead they turn to something larger than themselves to get structure, authority, and a grand design (Yalom, 1980). Even a tyrannical authority figure is better than no leader at all (Yalom, 1980). This pattern underlies the development of transference in therapy sessions, where the client looks to the therapist as the authority figure (Yalom, 1980). Fear and denial of death is another way people keep groundlessness out of their awareness, as denial of death goes hand in hand with denial of responsibility (Yalom, 1980). The strongest defense of all is to simply view reality as independent, objective, and external to the self, where one enters the world and eventually exits it (Yalom, 1980).

Yalom (1980) points out that compared to previous times, modern therapy has a heavier focus on personal responsibility, and this is a necessary change. In the times of Frued, society emphasized restricting and repressing personal thoughts and behaviours (Yalom, 1980). This is drastically different from contemporary American culture where there is a permissive atmosphere from childhood, people are coddled and overindulged (Yalom, 1980). Rigid structures are a thing of the past, nothing is forbidden, and people are bombarded with unlimited choice (Yalom, 1980). While in the past, the individual struggled with meeting expectations of what must be done, today, the person struggles with figuring out what they want to do (Yalom, 1980). In his clinical work, Yalom (1980) noticed an increased frequency of clients who don't know what the problem is, but they know they feel like something is missing in life, they feel empty, and like they are drifting in open waters. Yalom (1980) states that not knowing what the problem is, actually is the problem in itself. Yalom (1980) discusses typical manifestations of groundlessness and responsibility avoidance in his clinical sessions.

1. Compulsivity: the individual is not responsible for their actions because there is an internal alien force that acts on their behalf (Yalom, 1980).

2. Displacement of responsibility: The individual avoids personal responsibility by placing it on another (Yalom, 1980). This is commonly seen in therapy sessions, where a client displaces their responsibility to the therapist (Yalom, 1980). As long as the problem is caused by someone else, there is no need for the client to change (Yalom, 1980).

3. Innocent victim: The individual is constantly a victim of circumstances beyond their control (Yalom, 1980). They are shocked and confused by what is happening to them, and remain in a state of denial (Yalom, 1980).

4. Losing control: The individual was temporarily "out of their mind" during their actions, and did not purposely choose to act (Yalom, 1980). Yalom (1980) points out that even if acting unconsciously, it is still that person's unconscious, and still their own behaviour .

5. Avoiding autonomous behaviour: The individual knows what they need to do in order to help themselves, but feel like they cannot do it, and refuse to take action (Yalom, 1980).

Assuming Responsibility in Therapy

The therapist approaches the client from the frame of reference that the client plays a major role in their own problems, and they are not a victim of bad luck (Yalom, 1980). Accepting responsibility is the necessary step that comes before enacting personal change, and therefore solving the problem at hand (Yalom, 1980). Yalom (1980) advocates for working with material that comes up in the "here and now" of the session, as this material is fresh and has not yet been altered by defensive mechanisms. A clinical example of personal responsibility is seen in depression, a significant amount of research shows the importance of one's locus of control in this disorder (Yalom, 1980). Depressed patients experience hopelessness and helplessness, they believe in an external locus of control, where they do not have the power to influence or create their experiences (Yalom, 1980). Yalom (1980) presents multiple research studies that show numerous therapeutic benefits of switching from an external to an internal locus of control, where the individual assumes personal responsibility.

Stoicism on Personal Responsibility

As Stoicism is one of the schools of thought that contributed to existentialism, it is not surprising that there is much overlap in the concepts and ideas presented by each. Yalom (1980) discusses Sartre and Heidegger's concept, that the world is not objective and external to us,

rather it is subjective and something that we create in our minds. In order for us to take personal responsibility over our life, we must start by acknowledging that our perceptions create our experience, and therefore we must take responsibility for how we create our perceptions (Yalom, 1980).

The Stoic texts are overwhelmingly filled with reminders that our problems start with our perceptions, which ultimately we are responsible for. In the first book of his Discourses, Epictetus (107-109/2014) lets the reader know,

From this day forth, then, whenever we fail to act rightly, we'll ascribe the blame to nothing other than the judgement that led us to act as we did, and will endeavour to destroy it and cut it out, even more than with the tumours and abscesses of our body. In like fashion, we will also ascribe what we do rightly to the same cause. And no longer will we blame slave, or neighbour, or wife, or children as being responsible for any of our ills, since we're now convinced that unless we judge things to be of a certain nature, we don't carry out the actions that follow from that judgement. Now when it comes to forming a judgement, or not forming one, we're the masters of that, and not things outside ourselves … So accordingly, from this day onward, we'll investigate and examine the nature and condition of nothing else at all—be it land or slaves or horses or dogs—but only of our judgements.—'That's my wish. (section 1.1)

Epictetus comes off as insistent and strict in this demand, he is willing to talk with any students who want to discuss their own perceptions and judgements. He is not willing to listen to someone talk about why their life is unfair, and how they have been victimized, he wants the individual to place their focus solely on their own judgements and nothing else . He sets the

expectation for their discussion, and does so purposefully. Those who approach him in conversation must be aware that he will only engage in this type of discussion.

There are advantages to this strict methodology that Epictetus employs. It does not allow the client to rely on commonly used methods of avoidance and distractions, such as the methods observed by Yalom (1980) in his clinical sessions. For example, Yalom (1980) pointed out the tendency for clients to displace responsibility to others, and portray themselves as the victims of actions taken by other people.

Epictetus (107-109/2014) illustrates this concept through an example:

The first difference between a layman and a philosopher is this, that the one says, 'Ah, how I suffer because of my child, because of my brother, ah, how I suffer because of my father,' whereas the other, if he can ever be compelled to say, 'Ah, how I suffer,' adds after a moment's thought, 'because of myself'. For choice cannot be hindered or harmed by anything that lies outside the sphere of choice, but only by choice itself. So if we too incline towards this latter course, and whenever we go astray, blame ourselves for it and remember that nothing except our own judgement is capable of causing us to become disturbed or confused, I swear to you by all the gods that we've made progress. (section 3.19)

When taking this quote as an analogy for therapy, Epictetus suggests that a client makes progress when they stop blaming others for their suffering, and instead see their suffering as a product of their own perceptions.

Epictetus and the other Stoics also remind us that it is equally important not to take responsibility for that which is not in our power. Epictetus (107-109/2014) lectures a student who is complaining:

Oh, how miserable I am to have such a father and mother!' What, was it granted to you to choose your parents in advance and say, 'May this man have intercourse with this woman at this hour so that I may come into this world'? No, that wasn't granted to you, but your parents had to exist before you, and then you had to be born in the way that you were. And from parents of what kind? From parents of such a kind as they were. (section 1.12)

Epictetus chastises a student who is complaining about his parents, for these types of statements indicate that the individual is still in everyday mode. He is bothered about something that has nothing to do with him, and is not in his power whatsoever. As Epictetus points out, he did not ask his parents to conceive him nor did he choose which parents he was born to. Epictetus makes statements like this to demonstrate that we should not waste our precious faculties on what is extraneous details, but maintain focus on what is within our power. He also points out that there is a grand scheme in life, a series of chain reactions, that have led to a person's current state. If they are complaining about it and wishing it were different, in that alternate reality, they may not even exist at all.

Alternately, Epictetus (107-109/2014) proposes that one should be grateful that one of their purposes in life is to take personal responsibility. Instead of having to worry or be upset at things in our life that cause stress, they can walk away from situations and say this is not my responsibility. The fact that one is only accountable for what is in their power simplifies things,

reduces their burden, and empowers the person to create a meaningful life. Epictetus

(107-109/2014) states:

> Shouldn't you be giving thanks, rather, to the gods for having enabled you to rise above
>
> everything that they have placed within your power, and having rendered you
>
> accountable only for what is subject to your control? With regard to your parents, they
>
> have discharged you from all accountability; and likewise with regard to your brothers
>
> and sisters, and to your body, and to your property, and life and death. Well then, what
>
> have they made you accountable for? Only for what lies within your power, the right use
>
> of your impressions. Why do you charge yourself, then, with things for which you're not
>
> accountable? You're merely creating trouble for yourself. (section 1.12)

Epictetus is giving his student permission to stop worrying about what their family

member is doing wrong, or what is wrong with their body, or the fact that death looms in the

near future. None of these things are within their power, and therefore not within an individual's

responsibility. Epictetus tells his student to stop creating problems where there are none. The

Gods have created the human experience such that they are only accountable for that which is in

their power. Epictetus (107-109/2014) proposes that becoming educated is one and the same as

understanding what is in your power, and what is outside your power:

> What does it mean, then, to become properly educated? It is to learn to apply our natural
>
> preconceptions to particular cases in accord with nature; and further, to draw the
>
> distinction that some things lie within our power while others do not; within our power
>
> lie moral choice and all actions that depend on that choice, whereas our body and every
>
> part of it are not in our power, and likewise our possessions, parents, brothers and sisters,

children, country, and, in short, everyone with whom we associate. Where, then, are we to place our good? To what kind of reality are we to apply that name? To what lies within our power. (Section 1.22)

To Epictetus, real progress comes from the education and understanding of how to use one's own senses to create accurate perceptions, and determine what falls under our personal responsibility. This concept is of such importance, that Epictetus uses it as a way of defining what is "good" in life, where the terms good and bad can only be applied to that which we are accountable for.

Chapter 4: Meaning and purpose

Marcus Aurelius (Aurelius, 161-180/2002) writes:

 At dawn, when you have trouble getting out of bed, tell yourself: "I have to go to

work—as a human being. What do I have to complain of, if I'm going to do what I was

born for—the things I was brought into the world to do? Or is this what I was created for?

To huddle under the blankets and stay warm?

—But it's nicer here. . . .

So you were born to feel "nice"? Instead of doing things and experiencing them? Don't

you see the plants, the birds, the ants and spiders and bees going about their individual

tasks, putting the world in order, as best they can? And you're not willing to do your job

as a human being? Why aren't you running to do what your nature demands? (section

5.1)

There is a sense of comfort in knowing that even the emperor of Rome from 2000 years

ago faced a familiar human struggle, getting out of bed in the morning (Holiday & Hanselman,

2016). Marcus Aurelius describes a pep talk that he gave himself in the mornings just to find the

willpower he needed to pull off the blankets and get out of his warm and cozy bed (Holiday &

Hanselman, 2016). Marcus Aurelius reminded himself that while it would be more pleasurable to

stay in bed, one must remain focused (Irvine, 2008). There are duties to perform, and an

important purpose to work towards, this is what humans were born to do (Irvine, 2008).

In another section, Marcus Aurelius (161-180/2002)writes "Everything is here for a

purpose, from horses to vine shoots. What's surprising about that? Even the sun will tell you, "I have a purpose," and the other gods as well. And why were you born?" (section 8.19).

Yalom agrees with Marcus Aurelius on this matter, he contends that humans need meaning and purpose in their lives (Yalom, 1980). Yalom relates meaning to freedom, where one is free to create their experience, and therefore their own meaning and purpose (Yalom, 1980). Yalom cites Frankl's theory that modern society contributes to a sense of meaninglessness in people (Yalom, 1980). The individual experiences existential neurosis after losing interest in a life that they believe ultimately has no value (Yalom, 1980). Yalom describes Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl as the pioneer of meaning focused therapy, who dedicated much of his career toward developing this school of thought, and made important contributions to its concepts and ideology (Yalom, 1980).

Logotherapy

Frankl was a Viennese psychiatrist who wrote about his experience in a concentration camp during WW2 (Schulenberg, Hutzell, Nassif, & Rogina, 2007). Frankl asserted that finding meaning in struggle and hardship was therapeutic, and reduced the person's subsequent distress (Schulenberg et al., 2007).

Frankl underwent extremely adverse conditions in his time at a concentration camp, survival did not seem like an option, much less something to hope for (Frankl, 1988). The chances of survival were, at best, one in twenty eight (Frankl, 1988). Through his time in camp. Frankl observed prisoners dealing with the experience of being held captive (Frankl, 1988). He noticed that those who gave up hope of a future, also began to decay physically and mentally (Frankl, 1988). Without meaning and purpose, there was no reason to hope or fight for survival

(Frankl, 1988). Frankl (1988) saw that the prisoners needed a purpose in order to develop inner resilience to live through this experience:

> Whenever there was an opportunity for it, one had to give them a why—an aim—for their lives, in order to strengthen them to bear the terrible how of their existence. Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose, and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost. The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was, "I have nothing to expect from life any more." What sort of answer can one give to that? (pp. 97-98)

Viktor Frankl developed Logotherapy, derived from the Greek word for meaning, 'logos' (Frankl, 1988). Logotherapy contends that a primary motivational drive in people is their will to find one's own purpose, their unique mark on the world, that makes them feel valuable and needed (Frankl, 1988). Taking personal responsibility is at the core of a meaningful life (Frankl, 1988). The individual must choose to find meaning through the context of their environment and personal circumstances, and direct their behaviour in service of this meaning (Frankl, 1988).

Logotherapy offers an alternative to mainstream models of therapy that encourages people to be happy, and deem unhappiness as a symptom of mental illness that needs to be treated and cured (Frankl, 1988). Many people become caught in a cycle where they are unhappy, then feel ashamed about feeling unhappy, and in turn become even more unhappy (Frankl, 1988). Logotherapy acknowledges that one may be suffering, but they do not have to suffer in vain, they can find meaning and purpose through their suffering, and create something that they can feel proud of, rather than ashamed (Frankl, 1988).

Frankl contested the idea that mental health and wellbeing was a satiated state of mind that one should attain, where the individual is tranquil, happy, and balanced (Frankl, 1988). He (Frankl, 1988) asserted that people thrive under the right amount of tension, their mental health is strengthened when they feel driven, and they are working toward a greater purpose:

> Thus it can be seen that mental health is based on a certain degree of tension, the tension between what one has already achieved and what one still ought to accomplish, or the gap between what one is and what one should become. Such a tension is inherent in the human being and therefore is indispensable to mental well-being. We should not, then, be hesitant about challenging man with a potential meaning for him to fulfill. It is only thus that we evoke his will to meaning from its state of latency. I consider it a dangerous misconception of mental hygiene to assume that what man needs in the first place is equilibrium or, as it is called in biology, "homeostasis," i.e., a tensionless state. What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him. (pp. 127)

Marcus Aurelius seems to agree with Viktor Frankl that humans need a level of tension in order to be challenged and work toward a greater purpose. Marcus Aurelius (161-180/2002) tells the reader that "People who love what they do wear themselves down doing it" (section 5.1). He uses the example of dancers and artists, who "when they are really possessed by what they do, they'd rather stop eating and sleeping than give up practicing their arts" (Aurelius, 161-180/2002, section 5.1). Marcus Aurelius's descriptions bring vivid imagery of a dancer

possessed by their passion of dancing, driven toward the purpose of perfecting their art, and finding fulfillment in this pursuit.

ACT Therapy

While logotherapy approaches meaning and purpose from an existential perspective, another model approaches it from a behavioural perspective (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). In ACT therapy, meaning and purpose is molded through personal values, this is central to the therapeutic endeavour (Hayes et al., 1999). As a behavioural approach, all ACT techniques aim to help clients align their behaviour with their chosen values, even when faced with obstacles (Hayes et al., 1999).

An example of an ACT technique is an exercise called "What do you want your life to stand for" (Hayes et al., 1999), the purpose of this exercise is to introduce the client to the concept of valuing (Hayes et al., 1999). The therapist asks the client to imagine a scenario where the client has passed away, and their family is attending the client's funeral service (Hayes et al., 1999). The client is asked to imagine their friends and family members stepping up to deliver their eulogies (Hayes et al., 1999). The therapist asks the client to think about how his loved ones describe him in their eulogies, what does the client want them to say? (Hayes et al., 1999) As they reflect on his life, how would he want to be described, how would he like to be characterized? (Hayes et al., 1999) The purpose of the exercise is to shine light on the disconnect between the client's current problems, and how he is spoken about by his loved ones (Hayes et al., 1999). For example, if the client is worried about money, the therapist may point out that his loved ones did not bring up his financial worth in their eulogies (Hayes et al., 1999). Through

this exercise, the therapist can demonstrate to the client that they are preoccupied with stress and worry over things that they do not truly value (Hayes et al., 1999).

It is important for clients to clearly understand the difference between values and goals (Hayes et al., 1999). Values can never be achieved or satisfied the way that goals can (Hayes et al., 1999).They are symbolic of a perfect and idealized version of self (Hayes et al., 1999). In ACT's value assessment, the therapist encourages the client to fantasize about their life as if anything was possible, and no obstacles were present (Hayes et al., 1999). The task in therapy is to guide one's intentional actions in the direction of what is valued (Hayes et al., 1999). ACT appropriately uses the metaphor of a compass to describe valuing, where the individual continually uses it to guide their trajectory(Hayes et al., 2012).

To illustrate the difference between goals and values, one example is through the context of romantic relationships (Hayes et al., 1999). An individual can value being a partner who is trustworthy, loyal, loving, and committed (Hayes et al., 1999). This is not a task that a person accomplishes, rather it is something they continually put effort into, throughout their lifetime. In contrast, the goal is a concrete and specific outcome, such as marriage (Hayes et al., 1999). The act of getting married is an important task, and contributes toward the desired value. However maintaining a loving and happy marriage is more complex and requires continuous effort (Hayes et al., 1999).

The concepts present in ACT therapy have similarities with the ideas presented by Marcus Aurelius. He asserted that "The human soul degrades itself ... When it allows its action and impulse to be without a purpose, to be random and disconnected: even the smallest things ought to be directed toward a goal." (Aurelius, 161-180/2002, section 2.16). Marcus Aurelius

suggests that all behaviors should be guided towards a meaningful direction and purpose, he warns against random and impulsive behaviours.

ACT therapy also overlaps with Frankl's stance on mental health benefiting from a certain level of tension, rather than feeling satisfied and tranquil (Hayes et al., 1999). ACT states that many people see achieving goals as a path to happiness, but it is actually harmful and oppressive. The person is missing a very important piece of their selves, their sense of striving toward something, losing this can take away from one's sense of vitality (Hayes et al., 1999). ACT has a saying "Outcome is the process through which process becomes the outcome." (Hayes et al., 1999) The purpose of goals is to steer one's self in the valued direction (Hayes et al., 1999). Goals are a behavioural and action oriented way of engaging with one's values (Hayes et al., 1999). The ACT therapist works with the client to choose goals that embody their values, and then come up with specific actions that the client can take to achieve those goals (Hayes et al., 1999). The Stoic ideology on values and goals will be revisited in chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Anger

A Summary of Seneca's "De Ira", A Stoic Treatise on Anger (Seneca, 65/1889)

Seneca (65/1889) tells us to be especially concerned about anger, it is the most "hideous and wild" (p. 48) of all the emotions. Indeed just looking at the demeanor of a person in a rage will show that anger is a form of temporary insanity, the way that their eyes glaze, breath quickens, and speech becomes barely intelligible (Seneca, 65/1889). From a larger perspective, Seneca (65/1889) cites anger as the motivation behind the countless wars that destroy nations, "no plague has cost the human race more dear: you will see slaughterings and poisonings, accusations and counter-accusations, sacking of cities, ruin of whole peoples" (pp. 49-50).

No other living organism is subject to anger, it is found in humans alone, as we have the capacity of free will and reason (Seneca, 65/1889). Animals may become aggressive and violent, but they do not look to punish, nor do they take pleasure in punishing, they do not plot to return pain for pain (Seneca, 65/1889). Anger is innate to human nature either, it actually directly opposes it. Humans instinctively come to mutual aid and cooperation with others (Seneca, 65/1889). They happily help people, even strangers, and are willing to make sacrifices for the benefit of others (Seneca, 65/1889). Anger is cruel to others and tears people apart. It has no limits, willingly attacking loved ones, even turning on the agent himself (Seneca, 65/1889).

When a person is triggered by external events, their first movements are not anger, rather are just impulses (Seneca, 65/1889). Reason dictates the meaning of the events, "no impulse can take place without the consent of the mind: for it cannot be that we should deal with revenge and punishment without the mind being cognisant of them" (Seneca, 65/1889, p. 79). People design their revenge or punishment, through their cognitive thinking. Seneca gives an example of a man

who believes someone has wronged him, but after internal deliberation, chooses not to retaliate and calms down (Seneca, 65/1889). Seneca (65/1889) states "I do not call that anger, it is an emotion of the mind which is under the control of reason. Anger is that which goes beyond reason and carries her away with it" (p. 79).

What need is there for anger, when humans have the strongest tool at our disposal, the capacity to reason (Seneca, 65/1889). They can be motivated to act upon injustices from a place of virtue, rationale, and duty (Seneca, 65/1889). This is sufficient in itself, they can complete their task in a dignified manner, rather than being malicious from anger (Seneca, 65/1889). Seneca states (65/1889) "virtue will never be guilty of imitating vice while she is repressing it; she considers anger to deserve punishment for itself, since it often is even more criminal than the faults with which it is angry" (p. 81).

According to Seneca (65/1889), we live in a world where "men seem engaged in a vast race of wickedness" (p. 83). Everywhere one turns, they see people committing harm against each other, engaging in vices and wrong actions (Seneca, 65/1889). The strategy against this cannot be anger, for a person will spend much of their life angry, and never have a moment of peace (Seneca, 65/1889). Additionally, people are all aware of the world they live in, they can see that conflict and crime surrounds them, Seneca asks us why is anyone surprised when a wrong is done to them? (Seneca, 65/1889). Is it because they are arrogant and think it can happen to anyone, but not them? (Seneca, 65/1889). Are they so ignorant that they are not aware of the nature of the world they live in?(Seneca, 65/1889). Seneca tells the reader to "think of everything, expect everything" (Seneca, 65/1889, p. 106). It is in man's nature to go wrong, even good men can make mistakes (Seneca, 65/1889). Seneca (65/1889) advises the individual to

"be especially on your guard: when everything seems to you to be peaceful, be sure that mischief is not absent, but only asleep" (p. 107).

Even though the world is filled with strife, the individual should not be angry with others for their faults or weaknesses (Seneca, 65/1889). One of the misfortunes of being born human is that everyone struggles with mental health, and how they engage with the world (Seneca, 65/1889). It is a common occurrence to misuse one' intellect and free will to do wrong, many are "leading one another into vice by our example" ((Seneca, 65/1889, p 85). None of us are born wise, and very few of us become truly wise (Seneca, 65/1889). Wisdom requires a thorough understanding of the circumstances of human life. which is difficult to attain (Seneca, 65/1889). "To avoid being angry with individuals, you must pardon the whole mass, you must grant forgiveness to the entire human race" ((Seneca, 65/1889, p. 85).

Knowing that people do wrong to each other because of poor decision making, Seneca tells the reader to respond from a desire to provide a corrective experience that improves the soul of the offender (Seneca, 65/1889). Try to alter their behaviour "with words, and even with gentle ones, that he may persuade them to do what they ought, inspire them with a love of honour and justice, and cause them to hate vice and set store upon virtue" ((Seneca, 65/1889, p. 55). A good man does not try to return pain for pain, he does not take pleasure in punishment (Seneca, 65/1889).

 Seneca tells the reader to imagine the situation from a doctor's perspective, take a neutral stance toward the patient, and work to find a cure for the "wrong" in the person's motivations (Seneca, 65/1889). This is how a person who is honourable and just, can show respect and care

for humanity without resorting to anger (Seneca, 65/1889). He does so without becoming cruel himself, as well as not allowing people to continuously harm people (Seneca, 65/1889).

Seneca advises the individual to never engage in a battle of anger, even if approached by another angry person. It is pointless to be pulled into a quarrel, instead respond to him with good will (Seneca, 65/1889). A conflict cannot take place unless both engage in it, and Seneca (65/1889) advises that true glory belongs to the person who can take the higher ground:

If anyone is angry with you, meet his anger by returning benefits for it: a quarrel which is only taken up on one side falls to the ground: it takes two men to fight. But suppose that there is an angry struggle on both sides, even then, he is the better man who first gives way; the winner is the real loser. (p. 111)

Seneca (65/1889) even tells the reader to befriend their supposed enemies, for "how can we gain more glory than by turning anger into friendship?" (pp. 110-111). Seneca (65/1889) believes these petty squabbles are not important, remember what matters:

Pass the little remnant of our lives in peace and quiet, may no one loathe us when we lie dead". While we are caught up in petty arguments and squabbles, life is quickly passing and soon death will be upon us. (p. 160)

Overlap with Other Therapeutic Models

Breaking Anger into its Components

It is a commonly held belief among people who struggle with anger, that it is an automatic, immediate response to an offense (Beck, 1999). They move through the process so fast that they are unaware of the subtle first responses that occur before anger, such as their interpretations (Beck, 1999). If they were to slow the response down, and allow for more

reflection, they would be able to recognize the sequence of events, as described in this chart (Beck, 1999):

Event -- Distress -- Wronged -- Anger -- Mobilize to attack

After being triggered by an external event, and experiencing internal distress, the individual evaluates the distress as unfairly caused by another (Beck, 1999). This perception inevitably leads to anger, and the person mobilizes to attack, whether through physical violence or other passive aggressive means, such as hostile facial expressions (Beck, 1999).

This model of anger proposed in cognitive therapy has similarities with the model of anger proposed in ACT therapy, where they break down five components of the anger process. (Eifert, McKay, & Forsyth, 2006)

Pre Anger feelings -- Trigger thoughts -- Anger feelings -- Impulse to Act -- Anger Behaviour

Seneca's model outlines 3 stages of anger that describe how it grows, the first movement describes the involuntary reactions to a trigger/external event, where the body is preparing to launch into an emotion (Volk & Williams, 2006). The second movement is the agent's contemplation, the person thinks they have been harmed and debates whether they should retaliate (Volk & Williams, 2006). Seneca describes this movement as more flexible, the person actively and voluntarily contributes to it through their thoughts (Volk & Williams, 2006). The

third movement is the full experience of anger, it is out of the person's control, and it moves to fulfill its own agenda, revenge (Volk & Williams, 2006).

Involuntary reactions -- Agent's logic -- Anger

In all three models proposed above, the authors illustrate to the reader, that there is a specific time where the agent's own thoughts and perceptions, directly feed into creating the anger experience.

Beck (1999) identifies this in stage 3, called being "wronged", where one misinterprets or exaggerates the details of interpersonal interactions. This is influenced by stubbornly held problematic beliefs such as "if my wife does not show me appreciation, it means she does not care about me"

Eifert et al. (2006) identifies this in stage 3, called trigger thoughts, where one creates good or bad judgements about people, describing the self as victim, and others as perpetrators. Eifert et al. (2006) emphasizes that anger is almost impossible without these judgements .

Seneca describes the second movement of anger as the point where the agent makes a choice between assenting to anger or calming down (Volk & Williams, 2006). In these moments, the person is able to think about the conflict, and can choose to stop himself from becoming angry (Volk & Williams, 2006). Either the person's anger submits to their logic, or their logic sumits to their anger, this is the moment where they have control (Volk & Williams, 2006)

See the Big Picture

People have a natural tendency to interpret situations in a way where they overemphasize the effects on themselves, and underestimate the effects on other people (Beck, 1999). The tendency to see one's self at the center of the stage known as the "egocentric perspective" (Beck, 1999). It is heightened when a person is in situations of stress or threat, and they focus on minute or irrelevant details (Beck, 1999). When we are in conflict with another, rather than acknowledging that there are multiple factors that contribute to the other's behaviour, we tend to over emphasize specific details, based on how it affects the self (Beck, 1999).

Unhealthy functioning of the egocentric perspective is found in many clinical mental health issues (Beck, 1999). For example, a client with paranoia interprets the behaviour of others as an indicator of a manipulative plan to harm or deceive his (Beck, 1999). As pointed out by Beck (1999), as outside observers we have witnessed many people commit evil deeds, but they are only evil to us. From the perpetrator perspective, which is influenced by his own circumstances, he believes he is doing the right thing (Beck, 1999). This is the danger of the egocentric perspective (Beck, 1999).

Seneca (65/1889) encourages the reader to step outside their egocentric perspective, and thoroughly examine the "disposition and purpose of the offender" (p. 105). He points out that there is always a reason behind the offense, and these reasons vary from person to person (Seneca, 65/1889). Seneca draws upon multiple possibilities including that perhaps the person did not know any better, maybe he made a mistake, or you received the wrong information (Seneca, 65/1889). Maybe he was acting on behalf of a loved one, or defending his honour, or

his country (Seneca, 65/1889). People do wrong against each other not out of malevolence, but because they do not know better, they believe they are doing the right thing, even when harming each other (Seneca, 65/1889).

Beck (1999) points out another expression of the egocentric perspective, the tendency to be tolerant with ourselves, but judgemental towards others, when it comes to particular behaviours. Society enacts laws and social codes in order to protect its constituency, and insists upon the maintenance of these rules, even though each person does not necessarily always abide by them (Beck, 1999). For example, when we see someone run a stop sign, we become irate and punitive, their actions could be dangerous to one's own safety (Beck, 1999). However, if we run a stop sign, we are not as irate or punitive. We represent a special exemption from the rules, or have special circumstances (Beck, 1999).

Seneca reminds the reader that no one is without fault, all people have done wrong acts (Seneca, 65/1889). Those who say they are completely innocent, are simply people who won't admit to their wrongs, people who claim innocence by means of technicality, or those who intended to do wrong but were stopped short (Seneca, 65/1889). All people are capable of doing wrong, and may do many wrongs in the future as well. Seneca (65/1889) states:

> We have other men's vices before our eyes, and our own behind our backs" When someone does wrong against you, you can keep yourself from becoming angry by saying "I have done this very thing myself". For example, if someone talks badly about you "think of how many persons you have yourself spoken ill. Let us not, I say, suppose that others are doing us a wrong, but are repaying one which we have done them" (p. 103).

Does Venting your Anger Help?

In ACT therapy for anger, the therapist and client address some common misconceptions about anger, as these may be contributing to his anger issues (Eifert et al., 2006). A popular myth is that it is unhealthy to "bottle up" anger, it festers internally and takes a toll on a person's mental and physical health (Eifert et al., 2006). Expressing anger is seen as cathartic, the person releases the pent up energy and feels much better after (Eifert et al., 2006).

Anger researcher Carol Tarvis (1989) observed that not only does venting anger increase one's level of anger, the person on the receiving end becomes angry as well (Eifert et al., 2006). She cites several studies that show how venting anger causes the hostile response to "freeze", where they continue to carry these feelings and opinions (Eifert et al., 2006).

For example, a study on third grade children compared the reactions and experiences of children in conflict (Tarvis, 1989). When children got frustrated with their peers and were encouraged to express these feelings, they ended up harbouring dislike toward those peers for an extended period of time (Tarvis, 1989). In contrast, the children who were not permitted to express their anger, showed significantly less negative beliefs and feelings toward those classmates (Tarvis, 1989). A study on male college students replicated similar findings as well (Tarvis, 1989).

A single blind study conducted by Bushman (2002) tested the idea that venting anger through physical aggression, which represented a cathartic release, led to reduction in the levels of anger. The experimental groups were asked to hit a punching bag, while the control group were asked to sit quietly for a short period of time (Bushman, 2002). The results showed that the

"punching bag" groups consistently showed more anger and aggression in comparison to the control group (Bushman, 2002). Bushman (2002) stated that "venting to reduce anger is like using gasoline to put out a fire—it only feeds the flame" (p. 729).

Rather than venting it out, ACT therapy encourages the client to approach their anger with mindful acceptance and gentle awareness (Eifert & Forsyth, 2011). The client works to develop multiple skills, including developing the courage to "do nothing" in response to anger feelings (Eifert & Forsyth, 2011). Instead, the client learns to sit with his feelings and thoughts of anger, be mindful of them, such that he can further develop kindness and compassion for his experience (Eifert & Forsyth, 2011). Similarly, Tarvis (1989) advises people to walk away before they lose their temper, taking time allows them to calm down, so that they can return to the situation and deal with it appropriately. Seneca (65/1889) also advises the reader to do their best to not express anger:

"Fight hard with yourself and if you cannot conquer anger, do not let it conquer you: you have begun to get the better of it if it does not show itself, if it is not given vent. Let us conceal its symptoms, and as far as possible keep it secret and hidden. (p.130)

Anger is an incredibly powerful emotion, when a person allows it to enter their mind, it immediately takes over and embarks on its own rash and destructive agenda (Seneca, 65/1889). The person's capacity for reason becomes unable to take back control, their mind is dragged along by the pure force of their anger (Seneca, 65/1889). It is the only emotion that instantly takes away one's sanity, and within moments of conception, grows "more and more powerful, like lightning flashes or hurricanes, or any other things which cannot stop" (Seneca, 65/1889, p. 116)

Similar to methods proposed by ACT therapy (Eifert & Forsyth, 2011) and research by Tarvis (1989), Seneca (65/1889) repeatedly states that "the greatest remedy for anger is delay" (p. 104). This is not just a means of letting the other person win the conflict, it is so that the angry person will be able to calm down, regain their senses, and make an accurate judgement about the issue (Seneca, 65/1889). They may even notice that after some time has passed, the issue that once drove them frantic, has become significantly less pressing (Seneca, 65/1889. It may even vanish from our mind altogether, where we no longer care to solve the conflict (Seneca, 65/1889). In order to avoid doing something we may later regret, we must take time to calm down(Seneca, 65/1889). Seneca (Seneca, 65/1889) states "While you are angry, you ought not to be allowed to do anything. "Why?" do you ask? Because when you are angry there is nothing that you do not wish to be allowed to do" (p. 130).

Chapter 6: Resilience

Defining Resilience

Humans have always been captivated by resilient characters (Masten et al., 2009).

History is filled with myths, fairy tales, art, and literature that tell tales of archetypal heroes

(Masten et al., 2009). These characters remain strong in the face of difficult challenges and find

ways to overcome them (Masten et al., 2009). Early research on resilience found that resilience

has the potential to transform the practice of psychoanalysis, the research provided findings that

developed resilience theory, research, and interventions (Masten et al., 2009).

According to Southwick & Charney (2012), most people will face adverse and traumatic

experiences over the course of their lifetime. The effect of traumatic stress has harmful

consequences, people become depressed, withdrawn, angry, and pessimistic (Southwick &

Charney, 2012). Trauma causes PTSD, some will turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as

using drugs and alcohol to numb their pain (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In contrast, a select

few people have shown resilience, they are able to recover from their traumatic experience with

unharmed, or less of it (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Resilience is defined as the ability to face

the challenge, bounce back, and continue to pursue purposeful lives (Southwick & Charney,

2012). For some people, it is almost as though the trauma never happened, people who still feel

affected find healthy ways to cope (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Resilience is also seen in

survivors who change for the better, they find a new appreciation of their lives, and create a new

sense of purpose (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The term resilience is taken from the physical sciences, when a material is able to return

to its original shape after being bent or stretched, it is called resilient (Southwick & Charney,

2012). Harvard University psychologist George Vailant compares resilient individuals to "a twig with a fresh, green living core. When twisted out of shape, such a twig bends but it does not break. Instead, it springs back and continues growing." (Vailant, 2002, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012, p. 6). The APA's definition of resilience is "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and even significant sources of stress" (American Psychological Association Help Center, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012, p. 6). In the Stoic texts, Marcus Aurelius (161-180/1992) describes resilience through a metaphor of a spring of water:

> They kill you, cut you in pieces, pursue you with curses.' What has this to do with your understanding abiding pure, sane, temperate, and just? As if a man should stand by a sweet and crystal spring of water and curse it, but it never ceases bubbling up in water fresh to drink, and if he throws in mud or dung, it will quickly break it up and wash it away and will in no way be discoloured. How then shall you possess an ever flowing fountain, not a mere cistern? If you guard yourself every hour unto freedom, contentedly, too, simply and reverently. (p. 60)

Marcus Aurelius contemplates the idea of being brutalized through torture, he advises the survivor to meet this challenge with resilience. His description paints a vivid image of his metaphor, where the abuser's attacks are depicted as mud attacking a spring. The survivor is symbolized by the spring of water that continues to bubble up and shoot out fresh water, it refuses to be discoloured, nor does it stop shooting water. In this metaphor, a resilient person is a spring, their goodness is represented by the endless water. It wills itself to continue fighting, and cannot be defeated or tainted.

In another section of *Meditations* (Aurelius, 161-180/1992), Marcus Aurelius continues this metaphor, stating "delve within; within is the fountain of good, and it is always ready to bubble up, if you always delve" (p. 50).

Marcus tells the individual to search deep within himself in order to find that spring, it is dwelling deep within them and ready to bubble up. Otherwise, their fate is to be a cistern or tank, where one's goodness becomes discoloured from mud, their sense of happiness and optimism becomes permanently damaged.

Realistic Optimism

Optimism is an essential building block in developing resilience, it gives an individual the motivation and drive to overcome hardships (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Optimists approach life with an attitude that the future is bright (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They are hopeful, and feel confident that their efforts will lead them to success (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In contrast, pessimists feel helpless, they view themselves as victims of their circumstances (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They do not feel confident they have the skills needed to accomplish their goals (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Optimists and pessimists have very different expectations for their life outcomes, they also have different patterns of thought process (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Optimists are more likely to demonstrate an internal locus of control, they believe that their actions directly influence and mold their lives (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

There is a common misconception that Stoicism is cynical or pessimistic, it is not surprising as the founders of Stoicism spent a lot of time imagining catastrophic situations and the worst case scenarios (Irvine, 2008). Nonetheless, author William B. Irvine (2008) contends

that Stoic texts are full of remarkably optimistic characters. Irvine (2008) noticed that the Stoics place a high level of value on finding joy in life. They were aware that a life plagued with negative emotions, such as anger, fear, and grief, was not a life worth living (Irvine, 2008). They analyzed human psychology, and developed techniques to help an individual counteract these emotions, especially when one is going through severe distress (Irvine, 2008).

The Stoics believed that humans do not need to rely on external reasons to be optimistic or joyful, because then their joy is conditional (Irvine, 2008). Instead, they can choose to feel joy from within, from what they already have, and nothing can take that away from them (Irvine, 2008). Where a traditional optimist is able to appreciate the glass as half full, a Stoic optimist can widen his appreciation to a glass existing at all (Irvine, 2008). This is seen in the Stoic writings of Seneca (65/2007):

> Our enquiry, then, is directed at how the mind should proceed always on a steady and favourable course, may have good intentions towards itself, and may take pleasure in regarding its state and have no interruption mar this joy, but remain in a peaceful condition, at no time raising itself up or casting itself down: this will be tranquillity. (pp. 115-116)

Seneca (65/2007) proposes that a man who lives by Stoic philosophy will inevitably find a deep and unshakable sense of optimism:

> It is inevitable that a man with such a grounding, whether he wills it or not, will be accompanied by continuous cheerfulness and a profound happiness that comes from deep inside him, since he is one who takes pleasure in his own resources and wishes for no joys greater than those of his own heart. (pp. 88-89)

To Seneca, joy and optimism come from love and appreciation for human life in itself. The Stoic is genuinely optimistic and does not need external things or events to fuel his optimism, he has a deep tranquility that cannot be disturbed. This type of optimism is much more stable and unwavering, the person is able to maintain their disposition even during times of struggle.

From a biological perspective, having an optimistic approach towards life can increase one's resilience. Researcher Barbara Fredrickson (2001, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012) studied the differences between positive and negative emotions. She found that negative emotions are important to helping a person survive in a dangerous situation (Fredrickson, 2001 as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). They activate the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the fight-or-flight response, and heightened physiological arousal (Fredrickson, 2001, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). In this state, the person's vision narrows, and their body prepares to defend against attacks, or flee from a predator. In contrast, positive emotions trigger the opposite physiological responses in their body (Fredrickson, 2001 as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). The person's attention widens, they are more creative, flexible, inclusive, and integrative (Fredrickson, 2001 as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). A positive mood increases one's capacity of attention, their ability to actively solve problems, their interest in socializing, and desire to engage in leisurely or difficult activities (Frederickson & Branigan, 2005, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The ability to broaden one's attention is helpful when dealing with stressful situations (Southwick & Charney, 2012). A broader scope of attention allows the person to identify effective coping strategies that are goal directed, and focused on the issue (Southwick &

Charney, 2012). They examine the problem from multiple perspectives, and reframe the stressor in a way that diffuses the tension and intensity (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Reframing also allows them to see the stressor a challenge they can conquer, and to look for hidden opportunities, and find meaning in their struggle (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Realistic optimists do not deny that there is a problem, but they focus on finding the silver lining (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Resilient people have a unique approach to optimism, they are realistic in what they are optimistic about (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They do not view the world in a naive manner, they are not blindly optimistic (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They remain aware of the negatives of a situation, and they do not endlessly fixate on them (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They know what aspects they can influence, and they channel their energy towards that (Southwick & Charney, 2012). When something isn't fixable, they quickly cut their losses and detach from the problem (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The Stoics are also unique in their approach to optimism, they look to identify all possible negatives (Irvine, 2008). By contemplating all the ways a situation can go wrong, they are able to have a more realistic perspective, and not be riddled with anxiety about an unknown future (Irvine, 2008). The Stoics would practice negative visualization exercises, in order to be more prepared for if or when circumstances change, when one is faced with losing what is important to them (Irvine, 2008). Epictetus (107-109/2014) illustrates this concept by describing a sailor who faces bad weather at sea:

It is rather as if we had to set off on a sea-voyage. What lies within my power? To choose the helmsman, the sailors, the day, the moment. Then a storm descends on us. Now why

should that be of any concern to me? For my role has been completed. This is now

somebody else's business, that of the helmsman. But now the ship begins to sink. So

what can I do? What I can and that alone. (section 2.5)

Epecitetus describes a realistic outlook that is resilient. The sailor is to embark on a sea

voyage, this is his duty and skill as a sailor, however he is still risking his life in the process. The

sailor has done his part, he hired the right staff, and chose an appropriate time to sail. He cannot

control the weather nor should he try to, instead he chooses to maintain awareness that there can

be a storm, one that could even sink his ship.

According to Irvine (2008), for some, this form of negative visualization is anxiety

provoking, but the purpose of the exercise is to reduce anxiety. Irvine (2008) contends that

regularly practicing negative visualizations can transform individuals into full-blown optimists.

A key difference is that visualization exercises facilitate intellectual contemplation, which is not

the same as worrying about a situation (Irvine, 2008). It is important to engage in negative

visualization exercises without becoming overcome by anxiety (Irvine, 2008). In return, it makes

the individual more able to enjoy and appreciate what they do have, to take advantage of what

they are capable of doing, and make the best of any circumstances (Irvine, 2008). It also teaches

people that nothing is guaranteed, and anything can be taken away at a moment's notice (Irvine,

2008). These exercises are meant to facilitate the person to fully enjoy life's pleasures but not be

a slave to them (Irvine, 2008).

Fear

Negative visualizations contribute to resilience in several ways, they also allow people to

confront their fears in a safer manner. According to Southwick & Charney (2012), how a person

deals with fears greatly impacts their ability to be resilient, even the most courageous of people have felt fearful. While for some, fear can be paralyzing and restricting, others turn it into a source of motivation and personal growth (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Nelson Mandela (1995, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012) endured years of imprisonment as part of his fight against oppression, and spoke on his experience:

> I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. I felt fear myself more times than I can remember,but I hid it behind a mask of boldness. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. (pp. 39)

In order to develop internal resilience, the individual must confront their fears (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In their research, Southwick & Charney (2012) interviewed Al DeAngelis, a forensic detective who worked on SWAT teams and narcotic squads. DeAngelis understood the importance of facing his fears from his own experiences (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In 1989, DeAngelis and some of his friends went skydiving, as a way to prepare for parachuting out of a military plane (Southwick & Charney, 2012). While in mid air, part of the plane exploded, and the cabin filled with smoke (Southwick & Charney, 2012). The pilot's many years of experience came to his rescue, as he was able to safely land the plane, despite the chaos and blinding smoke (Southwick & Charney, 2012). After being rescued from the wreckage, DeAngelis insisted that he wanted to return to the sky-diving site, and try again the next day (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In his interview, DeAngelis (Southwick & Charney, 2012) recalled this moment to researchers:

> I told my friends, "I am going up on the next flight." I said, "If I don't go up on this next plane, I am never going to get in an airplane again, let alone skydive again." They

thought I was crazy." The next day, he went through with his plan, and successfully skydived out of the plane. He said that when he successfully landed: "it was probably the greatest feeling that I have had in my entire life. I did it and got it out of the way. (pp. 42-43)

Research on cognition shows that in the period of time after a significant event occurs, the brain is still processing information, and the memories have not been fully encoded yet (Southwick & Charney, 2012). During this time, a person's memories are unstable and still malleable, and if the person intervenes with new memories of an event or setting, it is possible to alter the permanency of the memory (Southwick & Charney, 2012). There is promising research being conducted in this area, with an additional focus on interventions to alter memories to traumatizing events that happened years prior (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Studies in neuroscience found that training a person to extinguish their fears actually strengthens the ability of the prefrontal cortex to inhibit the biological fear response from the amygdala (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The Stoics used negative visualizations, also known as pre-meditation, as a way of engaging with feelings of fear (Robertson, 2010). They would imagine a catastrophic scenario, as though it was happening in the moment (Robertson, 2010). This is the weapon of the Stoic warrior, he feels more prepared to handle the problem if or when it does arise (Robertson, 2010). He is able to use current internal resources to maintain a calm state while contemplating how to manage in a fearful scenario (Robertson, 2010).

There are several techniques in modern day therapy that exemplify this practice (Robertson, 2010). Beck developed "cognitive rehearsal" to treat clients with suicidal ideation

(Beck et al., 1979, as cited in Robertson, 2010). The client is asked to imagine themselves in a frightening or challenging situation, they allow their typical thoughts and feelings of despair and suicidal ideation to arise (Beck et al., 1979, as cited in Robertson, 2010). Then, they rehearse counteracting these thoughts with possible solutions to the issue, while maintaining tolerance of negative feelings (Beck et al., 1979, as cited in Robertson, 2010). Similarly, Meichenbaum developed the "stress-inoculation" intervention where the client imagines stressful situations and then rehearses more productive ways of thinking and behaving in the situation (Meichenbaum, 1977, as cited in Robertson, 2010).

Many psychotherapy models ask clients to repeatedly engage with stressful events or memories through their imagination, using techniques such as role play, visualization, and verbal discourse (Raimy, 1975, as cited in Robertson, 2010). Using mental imagery is an effective method of repeatedly viewing emotionally arousing events (Raimy, 1975, as cited in Robertson, 2010). Beck and his colleagues note that using this technique with patients actually reduced the persons avoidance behaviours toward the problem (Beck et al., 2005, as cited in Robertson, 2010). It is important to note that dwelling on one's fears can be harmful, and this technique is only effective when one is calm, systematic, and intentionally working to cope or solve the problem at hand (Robertson, 2010). Seneca (65/1969) truly believes that meditating on fears can a person defeat them:

> Escape them you cannot, scorn them you can. And scorn them you will if by constant reflection you have anticipated future happenings. Everyone faces up more bravely to a thing for which he has long prepared himself, sufferings, even, being withstood if they have been trained for in advance. Those who are unprepared, on the other hand, are

panic-stricken by the most insignificant happenings. We must see to it that nothing takes

us by surprise. And since it is invariably unfamiliarity that makes a thing more

formidable than it really is, this habit of continual reflection will ensure that no form of

adversity finds you a complete beginner. (pp. 198)

While one cannot escape them, they can certainly combat them by having already

anticipated them. A person is always stronger in face of fear when they have prepared in

advance. By using pre-meditations to visualize one's fears, when the time finally comes, the

event will feel familiar, and therefore the person feels more confident in their ability to cope.

Marcus Aurelius (161-180/2002) gives an example on how pre-meditation can help an

individual be resilient in dealing with difficult people:

When you wake up in the morning, tell yourself: The people I deal with today will be

meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous, and surly. They are like this because

they can't tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good, and the ugliness of

evil, and have recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own—not of the

same blood or birth, but the same mind, and possessing a share of the divine. And so

none of them can hurt me. No one can implicate me in ugliness. Nor can I feel angry at

my relative, or hate him. We were born to work together like feet, hands, and eyes, like

the two rows of teeth, upper and lower. To obstruct each other is unnatural. To feel anger

at someone, to turn your back on him: these are obstructions. (section 2.1)

Marcus Aurelius practices negative visualization by imagining interacting with people

who behave in ways that are incompatible with his values. Rather than feeling fear or dread at

starting the day and having to interact with others, one can imagine the interactions in advance,

and prepare themselves on how to deal with them. Marcus' meditation encourages the reader to aim for tolerance, compassion, and patience towards the people they fear, avoid, or dislike. He gives the reader a meaning and purpose behind why he should behave in such a way, he does not want to be implicated in the harmful behaviours of another person, nor should he turn his back against a fellow human being. This type of pre-meditation can be helpful for someone who has feelings of dread, fear, and anxiety about having to interact with people who trigger feelings of stress.

There are additional ways in which pre-meditations are helpful to combating fear and building resilience. Fear is fueled by the unknown (Southwick & Charney, 2012). When the individual cannot specify what exactly will happen, but knows that something terrifying is coming. An ideal example of resilience can be found in military personnel (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In the military, officers believe knowledge is power and in order to conquer fear, one must acquire as much information as possible regarding the subject they fear (Southwick & Charney, 2012). When interviewing former POWs who were combat pilots, researchers found that the pilots learned from the experiences of instructors and colleagues, as well as their own experiences, and this allowed them to feel prepared (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In order for a person to defeat what they fear, they must learn everything they can about that which is feared (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The Stoics agreed with this idea, and encouraged individuals to learn as much as they can about that which they fear. Epictetus (107-109/2014) draws on the teachings of Socrates, who compared fears to "bogeys", a term for ghosts:

Socrates rightly referred to such fears as bogeys. For just as masks seem horrible and frightening to children because of their lack of experience, we allow ourselves to be affected like that too by events, for just the same reason as children are frightened by bogeys, and in the same fashion. For what is a child? Ignorance. What is a child? Lack of knowledge. For in those areas in which he does have some knowledge, he is in no way inferior to us. What is death? A bogey. Turn it round and you'll find out; look, it doesn't bite! (pp. 71)

Epictetus compares the experience of fear to a young child afraid of a ghost, the child is young and naive and does not understand what he fears. He advises the reader to turn the item around and examine it from all angles, in order to acquire knowledge about it. When a person knows more, their fear decreases.

In addition to acquiring more knowledge, one must continually learn and rehearse the skills of combating their fears (Southwick & Charney, 2012). This is done by repeating exercises, and practicing skills, until they are second nature and automatic (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Former POW pilots were interviewed about their experience of being ejected from a fighter jet that had burst into flames while they were flying at high speeds (Southwick & Charney, 2012). The pilots stated that they do not remember feeling afraid, instead their automatic responses kicked in and they immediately knew how to respond (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They had spent countless hours in training, learning what to do in situations like these, and repeatedly practicing mock ejections (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They were able to react in a way that enabled them to survive an incredibly dangerous situation (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Seneca (65/1969) understood the importance of acquiring information about specific fears, and practicing the skills needed to master them:

What is quite unlooked for is more crushing in its effect, and unexpectedness adds to the weight of a disaster. The fact that it was unforeseen has never failed to intensify a person's grief. This is a reason for ensuring that nothing ever takes us by surprise. We should project our thoughts ahead of us at every turn and have in mind every possible eventuality instead of only the usual course of events. . . . This is why we need to envisage every possibility and to strengthen the spirit to deal with the things which may conceivably come about. Rehearse them in your mind: exile, torture, war, shipwreck. (pp. 178)

Seneca advises people to use pre-meditation as a way of identifying all the possible ways that something might harm us. This way, they are able to keep tabs on the unknown dangers that lie ahead, and feel more secure that they are capable of handling them when the time comes. Repetition of practice helps it become more deeply ingrained. When it comes to the unknown, it is always better to be prepared. When a person is caught off guard, they are more vulnerable to irreparable harm and destruction.

There are additional ways to combat fears and develop resilience (Southwick & Charney, 2012). When a person is faced with a dangerous or fear inducing scenario, it is important to not be distracted by the negatives, or what they are afraid of (Southwick & Charney, 2012). At a point where one must react quickly, they must not waste time or precious resources worrying about what can go wrong (Southwick & Charney, 2012). When interviewing Special Forces instructors, researchers noted that soldiers who are battling fear in dangerous situations are

taught to maintain their focus on their task, and the mission they are completing on behalf of their team (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

This is an important concept in Stoicism as well, it is important to maintain focus on the task at hand, and not be distracted by fears and worries. Epictetus (107-109/2014) uses a sports metaphor to illustrate this concept:

Experienced ball players can also be seen to act in such a way. None of them is concerned about whether the ball is good or bad, but solely about how to throw and catch it. It is there accordingly that the player's agility, and skill, and speed, and good judgement are demonstrated; so where I for my part can't catch the ball even if I spread out my cloak to do so, an expert will catch it whenever I make a throw. But if we're anxious or nervous when we make the catch or throw, what will become of the game, and how can one maintain one's composure; how can one see what is coming next? But rather, one player will be saying, 'Throw!', and another, 'Don't!', and another again, 'Don't throw so high!' In truth, that is a brawl and not a game. (section 2.5)

Epictetus suggests that experienced ball players focus on their specific task, throwing and catching, this is the skill they need to practice. If they were to give in to their worry and anxiety, they will be overly focused on the outcome, rather than improving their process. When each person focuses on their task, and their role within the team, the game can play out in a proper manner. When each person is worrying about how the overall game will turn out, their anxiety interferes with the process, and it inevitably turns into chaos. Each person is completing their role on behalf of a team mission, and it is in their best interest to maintain their focus.

For the Special Forces instructors, fear is an important and necessary tool that is used to their benefit (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Soldiers are trained to view fear as a normal experience which is useful in guiding their work (Southwick & Charney, 2012). It is an opportunity to challenge themselves and grow from the experience (Southwick & Charney, 2012). SF instructor Hickey often says to himself "I'm scared, but I can learn from this", and "This is a test that is going to make me stronger" (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In the midst of dangerous training or missions, he feels a combination of excitement and fear (Southwick & Charney, 2012). He contends that fear can make the person sharper, and more cautious (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Without fear, it is easier for a soldier to make mistakes (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Similarly, Epictetus (107-109/2014) advises the person to welcome challenging or fearful experiences:

> It is difficulties that reveal what men amount to; and so, whenever you're struck by a difficulty, remember that God, like a trainer in the gymnasium, has matched you against a tough young opponent." 'For what purpose?', someone asks. So that you may become an Olympic victor; and that is something that can't be achieved without sweat. It seems to me that no one has had a difficulty that gives a better opportunity than the one you now have, if only you're willing to tackle it as an athlete tackles his young adversary. (pp. 51)

Epictetus reminds us that the very thing a person is afraid of is actually what will push them to become stronger. They are better off by seeing this challenge as an opportunity and a chance to develop their skills. A person can discover their true potential, and achieve it to the highest possibility. One cannot become the best version of themselves without challenges and

difficulties, they must be willing to face it, and they too will become an Olympic victor.

Epictetus shows why one should feel excitement when they encounter what they fear.

Morals and Values

While interviewing resilient people, Southwick & Charney (2012) found that they often

have a strong sense of what they believe is right and wrong, which is a source of strength for

them during difficult times.

While values differ from person to person, researchers found that many resilient people

strongly believed in a set of morals and values, and they strive to live up to them (Southwick &

Charney, 2012). In order to be more resilient, an individual should first aim to define their

values, and then assess how they can work toward what they value (Southwick & Charney,

2012).

In ACT therapy, there is an important distinction made between values and goals (Hayes

et al., 1999). Values are abstract goals that remain stable over time, and can never be fully

achieved Hayes et al., 1999). This creates a useful relationship between the person and the value,

such that the values are always being pursued and are never completed or satisfied (Hayes et al.,

1999). A goal on the other hand, is specific and tangible, they can be achieved and change over

time (Hayes et al., 1999). The Stoics had a similar conception of virtues, for example, Cicero (45

BCE/2004) and his interlocutor discuss Stoic virtue:

Take the case of one whose task it is to shoot a spear or arrow straight at some target.

One's ultimate aim is to do all in one's power to shoot straight, and the same applies with

our ultimate good. In this kind of example, it is to shoot straight that one must do all one

can; nonetheless, it is to do all one can to accomplish the task that is really the ultimate

aim. It is just the same with what we call the supreme good in life. To actually hit the target is, as we say, to be selected but not sought. (pp. 72)

In this analogy, the interlocutor describes Stoic virtue through the analogy of spear throwing (Nussbaum, 1994). The target represents Stoic virtue, or personal values (Nussbaum, 1994). The individual does his best to aim for the target and shoot straight, but hitting the actual target is not what is most important (Nussbaum, 1994). Likewise, a person's values act like a target, the purpose is not to achieve the value, rather to consistently direct one's actions towards that value (Nussbaum, 1994).

The Stoics believed that virtue is the only thing one needs to achieve "eudaimonia", a life that is flourishing and truly good (Nussbaum, 1994). Virtue is intrinsically worthy, it is chosen for its own sake, and is not affected by external influences (Nussbaum, 1994). The things that are outside of one's control, external influences, do not define one's ability to achieve eudaimonia (Nussbaum, 1994).

Seneca (65/2016) believes that virtue is greatest good that one can possibly achieve:

For the Supreme Good cannot diminish, nor may virtue retrograde; rather is it transformed, now into one quality and now into another, shaping itself according to the part which it is to play. Whatever it has touched it brings into likeness with itself, and dyes with its own colour. It adorns our actions, our friendships, and sometimes entire households which it has entered and set in order. Whatever it has handled it forthwith makes lovable, notable, admirable. Therefore the power and the greatness of virtue cannot rise to greater heights, because increase is denied to that which is superlatively great. You will find nothing straighter than the straight,

nothing truer than the truth, and nothing more temperate than that which is temperate. Every

virtue is limitless; for limits depend upon definite measurements

Seneca believes that virtue is the "Supreme Good", everything it touches turns to gold. It

makes everything better, and sets things in order. This is an important concept in resilience,

Seneca believes one can transform negativity into positivity by way or virtue. He believes that

virtue cannot lead a person wrong, and when they are unsure of how to cope, virtue can guide

their actions. Virtue represents an ideal, it cannot be improved or measured. This is similar to the

ACT concept of values, which are not tangible or achievable, but represent an ideal to aim for.

Resilient individuals use their system of values for guidance, motivation, and strength

during difficult times (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Southwick & Charney (2012) describe the

experience of naval veteran and POW survivor James Stockdale, whose plane was shot down

during a mission in Vietnam.

He parachuted and hit the ground, severely injuring himself, and was then captured and

imprisoned by North Vietnamese officials (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Stockdale was imprisoned with fellow officers and POWs (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick &

Charney, 2012). As a higher ranking officer, he was obligated to give them guidance on how to

handle the brutal torture they were experiencing (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney,

2012). After multiple sessions of torture and interrogation, Stockdale was forced to divulge

information (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Stockdale felt a deep shame

about revealing confidential information, he felt like he had let himself and his fellow military

officers down. (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Stockdale (1995, as cited in

Southwick & Charney, 2012) realized that his physical suffering paled in comparison to the agony of feeling shame:

> A shoulder broken, a bone in my back broken, a leg broken twice were peanuts by comparison … Shame is heavy, a heavier burden than any physical wounds … the thing that brings down a man is not pain but shame. (pp. 59)

Stockdale reflected on Epictetus' teachings, that even in the harshest of circumstances, a person has the ability to differentiate between what is under their control, and what is beyond their control (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). When one focuses on what is under their control, they will have more than enough tasks to work on (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Taking influence from Epictetus' writings, Stockdale developed a set of values that supported his fellow POWs' basic need for self-respect, he understood how much this affected how they would handle the experience (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). He wanted to ensure that when they were freed, they "returned home with their heads held high" (Stockdale, 1984, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012, pp. 59). Stockdale created an acronym called "BACK US", symbolizing a set of rules that the soldiers could follow (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). These were designed to keep the soldiers' pride and dignity, to minimalize receiving torture, and to place highest importance on the unity and well being of the group (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The experiences of James Stockdale represent qualities and values that are admired and respected worldwide, a key factor being that they require courage (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Stockdale defined courage as the ability of the soul to endure, he believed that courage and fear are inextricably linked (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). An individual

channels courage when he faces his fears, he proves to himself that he is capable of handling them (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). While Stockdale had great respect for soldiers with immense courage in their behaviours, he was most deeply affected by displays of moral courage (Stockdale, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

According to Rushworth Kidder (2006, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012), who is a director at the Institute of Global Ethics, there are specific steps to being morally courageous . One must strongly believe in a set of morals and values, and be willing to commit to them (Kidder, 2006, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Additionally, they must acknowledge the possible risks and dangers of this commitment, and be willing to endure them in order to uphold their principles (Kidder, 2006, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Moral courage is the foundation of an individual becoming truly virtuous (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Meaning and Purpose

Fredrich Nietchze (as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012) once wrote "He who has a why can endure almost any how" (pp. 158). Indeed, this saying is true for the experiences of people who face their fears, heal from trauma, and develop resilience (Southwick & Charney, 2012). At ehe West Point Academy for military training, instructors train future military commanders to find a meaning and purpose in their work (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They place emphasis on the fact that the duties of soldiers are valuable and significant (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They make major sacrifices in their lives in order to serve their nation (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Soldiers who are able to derive a sense of purpose for their mission, go on to report greater benefits from the experience (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Southwick & Charney (2012) worked with the Yale University affiliated division of the National Center for PTSD, they helped develop a therapeutic program based on logotherapy for veterans who were suffering from PTSD (Southwick & Charney, 2012). The veterans who participated in the program reported feeling overwhelmed by painful memories, feelings of guilt, self doubts, and feelings of aimlessness (Southwick & Charney, 2012). These feelings impacted their daily functioning and ability to engage with life (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Within the therapeutic program, facilitators sought to restore a sense of meaning and purpose to the veterans' lives (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They began by reminding veterans of the different types of expertise they brought to their community (Southwick & Charney, 2012). These veterans had overcome trauma, pain, loss, hopelessness, and had survived to become incredibly resilient (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Facilitators identified an area of expertise for each veteran and assigned them to a related position of community service (Southwick & Charney, 2012). For example, a veteran who had experienced homelessness was assigned to work with Habitat for Humanity (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Another veteran who had been isolated for years, worked in a program delivering meals to people struggling with agoraphobia (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Veterans were also encouraged to develop a project of their own choosing if they had ideas of what services they wanted to provide (Southwick & Charney, 2012). For example, a veteran who had encountered children orphaned by war, chose to work with disadvantaged children in his community (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Over the course of interviews conducted by Southwick & Charney (2012), many participants shared incredibly difficult and courageous narratives of trauma, meaning, and resilience. One example is Jerry White, who lost his leg from a landmine explosion. Reflecting

on his experience, White suggests that when a person is recovering from trauma, they begin to ask questions, such as "why me?", followed by feelings of self pity (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Over time, White realized that the question he needed to be asking was simply "why?", this represented a search for meaning (Southwick & Charney, 2012). White contends that trauma survivors have a choice, they can choose to transform from victims into survivors (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They can choose to get back up, refuse defeat, and pursue a meaningful life (Southwick & Charney, 2012). White describes this as getting "unstuck", when the individual is able to move forward as a survivor (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They find purpose and even healing from a new mission in life, by giving back to their community and helping others (Southwick & Charney, 2012). According to trauma researcher and author, Judith Herman (as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012), survivors discover new realizations regarding the political and spiritual aspects of their hardships. They experience call to action and social justice (Herman, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The Stoics understood that it is a common occurrence for someone recovering from trauma to become stuck in wondering why something happened to them. Seneca expands on a quote by writer Publilius, to poke holes in this mentality:

What can happen to one can happen to all.' If you let this idea sink into your vitals, and regard all the ills of other people (of which every day shows an enormous supply) as having a clear path to you too, you will be armed long before you are attacked. It is too late for the mind to equip itself to endure dangers once they are already there. 'I didn't think it would happen' and 'Would you ever have believed it would turn out so?' Why ever not? (Seneca, 65/2007, "On Tranquility of Mind, para. 11)

Seneca warns the individual against mistakenly believing that what happens to others will not happen to them as well. No one is immune from hardships or suffering, and it can happen to anyone at any time. Seneca's advice is useful when an individual is stuck in thoughts of "why me?" and feeling self pity. Seneca uses logic to poke holes in the idea of "why me", and also gives them a reason not to think that way. When a person maintains awareness that anything can be taken away from them, their mindset is able to be prepared and resilient. It also helps to become "unstuck" from the "why me" mindset, and refocus on what is important and meaningful.

Marcus Aurelius (161-180/2002) advises the reader not to get attached to a problem free life, "I was once a fortunate man but at some point fortune abandoned me. But true good fortune is what you make for yourself. Good fortune: good character, good intentions, and good actions" (section 5.37). Marcus Aurelius describes the mindset of someone who in the wake of a traumatic experience, is able to move from a "why me" mindset to simply "why?" When the individual experiences suffering and hardship that permanently changes them, it feels like their good fortune has abandoned them. By changing their perspective, they can use their suffering into something meaningful, and therefore create their own good fortune.

An important influence and advocate of meaning focused resilience is holocause survivor Viktor Frankl, he looked for meaning in the most difficult and tragic of experiences: (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Viktor Frankl was an important figure in the development of meaning centered therapies (Southwick & Charney, 2012). As a survivor of the holocaust, Frankl realized that even in the worst of circumstances a person has the ability to find meaning (Southwick & Charney, 2012):

We must never forget that we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a

hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed. For what then matters is to

bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a personal

tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement. When we

are no longer able to change a situation– just think of an incurable disease such as

inoperable cancer: We are challenged to change ourselves. (Frankl, 1963, as cited in

Southwick & Charney, 2012, p. 163)

Frankl believed in the human capacity to find meaning even in the most dire of

circumstances, he called this "tragic optimism" (Frankl, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Even when facing a hopeless situation, a person has the potential to transform his pain into

something meaningful, through a call to action (Frankl, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

An example of this is the experience of Lt. Col. Morrissey, a psychiatrist who directed the

mental health program at West Point Academy (Southwick & Charney, 2012). In 2006, Col.

Morrissey served overseas as a physician in Iraq during time of war (Southwick & Charney,

2012). Col. Morrissey treated Iraqi children who were suffering from severe burns due to various

reasons (Southwick & Charney, 2012). His limited equipment and resources were not adequate

for proper medical care, and many children did not survive (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Col.

Morrissey coordinated with military personnel and the U.S embassy to set up the "Iraqi

Children's Project" (Southwick & Charney, 2012). They collected funding for transporting sick

and injured children to participating U.S. hospitals where they could receive proper medical care

(Southwick & Charney, 2012). This was not a simple process as they had to secure passports,

visas, transportation, and find hospitals willing to donate care (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

The "Iraqi Children's Project" was able to save 18 out of thousands of children in Iraq who were in need of care (Southwick & Charney, 2012). While 18 may seem like a small number in comparison, it was better than not helping or saving any children (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Col. Morrissey found a way to create meaning in circumstances where he felt hopeless to make a difference (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Similar to an ancient Jewish proverb, "It is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness", Col. Morrissey found a way to not be discouraged by the situation, and focus his efforts into doing what was possible within their abilities (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Seneca (65/1928, p. 9) speaks on how good men can take action, "they should not shrink from hardships and difficulties, nor complain against fate; they should take in good part whatever happens, and should turn it to good. Not what you endure, but how you endure, is important." Seneca tells the person not to shrink away in difficult or hopeless circumstances. Like Col. Morrissey, he advises them to face the situation, and transform it into something positive. It is not about what happens to the individual, rather how they react to their situation and how they direct their actions, that mold their personal meaning and experience.

Posttraumatic Growth

There is a process to the aftermath of a traumatic experience, as described by University of Massachusetts Professor, Dr. Ronnie Janoff-Bulman (1992, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Immediately after the traumatic experience, the individual is trying to process what has happened (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). They may be in a state of shock, or unable to believe that someone they love is gone forever (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Their belief in a safe, stable, and predictable world

might be shattered, leaving them feeling fearful or vulnerable (Janoff-Bulman as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). They may have intrusive thoughts and vivid flashbacks from the trauma (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Over time, many survivors slowly shift into another phase of processing, where they try to find meaning from their experience, and even grow from it (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). In recent studies, many researchers have found reports of self-transcendent, useful, and constructive aspects of posttraumatic growth (Zoellner & Maercker, 2006, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012).

Researchers Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun (1996, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012) created the "post traumatic growth inventory" assessment to identify changes within individuals who were healing from traumatic experiences .

The inventory included a section on changes to self perception, with statements such as "I've been through the absolute worst that I know and no matter what happens, I'll be able to deal with it" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Another section in the inventory measured changes in perception of relationships with others, it described feeling increased compassion towards suffering of others, and feeling a stronger connection to people (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). A third section examined philosophical changes, and included questions on existential topics of the meaning of life, and one's purpose in a world full of suffering (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996, as cited in Southwick & Charney, 2012). Southwick & Charney (2012) used the PTGI assessment tool in a study on U.S. veterans who survived missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The results of the study showed that 72% of the 300 participants reported experiencing growth in one or more of the 3

specific sections (Southwick & Charney, 2012). The study also showed that the most common areas of posttraumatic growth were specific to changes in priorities about what is most important in life, and the belief in one's own ability to handle difficult experiences (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Posttraumatic growth represents the ability of survivors to use meaning and purpose to transform their pain and suffering into a profound experience that shapes their character (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

> In the Stoic texts, Seneca (65/2007) greatly values the benefits of post traumatic growth:
>
> You are unfortunate in my judgement, for you have never been unfortunate. You have passed through life with no antagonist to face you; no one will know what you were capable of, not even you yourself.' For a man needs to be put to the test if he is to gain self-knowledge; only by trying does he learn what his capacities are." (p. 10)

Seneca is able to reframe his unfortunate circumstances by finding meaning in having experienced struggle. He proposes that people who have had easy or perfect lives are unlucky and unfortunate. Seneca tells us that it is actually a gift and a blessing to go through hardship, because it gives one an opportunity to discover the strength and resilience they are capable of. The individual is able to channel their suffering into a meaningful experience that builds their character, and their perspective of life. People learn more about themselves in hard times, as compared to when their lives are easy and perfect.

In another text, Seneca reminds people that the most important benefits are not materialistic or external:

So let us also win the way to victory in all our struggles, – for the reward is not a garland or a palm or a trumpeter who calls for silence at the proclamation of our names, but rather virtue, steadfastness of soul, and a peace that is won for all time. (65/2016, p. 81)

Seneca believes that when facing hardships or struggles in life, winning the battle is not what is most important, nor is it a worthwhile victory. The growth that the individual experiences after going through hardship is the real victory. They develop their internal resources, and become stronger and wiser. They find a sense of meaning and purpose, and their newfound perspective on life brings a deep inner peace.

Chapter 7: Stoicism as a Model of Psychotherapy

Present day psychotherapy is rooted in ancient schools of philosophy (Robertson, 2010). Two of the pioneers of CBT, Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis, have both cited Stoicism as the philosophical origin of their respective approaches to therapy (Robertson, 2010) . Ellis stated that rational-emotive behavioural therapy is rooted in the Stoic idea that a person is not innately affected by external events, rather their perceptions and attitudes towards external events (Ellis, 1962, as cited in Robertson, 2010). Both REBT and Stoicism put emphasis on the client's personal responsibility, rational thinking, monitoring one's own thoughts and behaviours, and using these to modify irrational emotions (Still & Dryden, 1999, as cited in Robertson, 2010).

Stoic concepts are present in a multitude of therapeutic models (Robertson, 2010). In Alcoholics Anonymous, a well known program for people struggling with alcohol abuse, members often recite the serenity prayer. They recite "God grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, And wisdom to know the difference." (Robertson, 2010). This saying bears a strong resemblance to the Stoic ideology. One of the essential handbooks in Stoicism, known as the Enchiridion, opens with the statement: "Some things are up to us and others are not" (Epictetus, as cited in Robertson, 2010, p. 10). This idea by Epictetus (107-109/2014) is also seen in the first chapter of his Discourses, which is titled "About things that are within our power and those that are not" (section 1.1). This concept is essential to Stoic philosophy, Epictetus maintains that the study of Stoicism is essentially the study of learning how to make this distinction and apply it (Robertson, 2010). There are several psychological theorists who have taken influence and inspiration from Stoic texts, such as Hans

Eysenck, David Meichenbaum, Arnold Lazarus, Paul Dubois, and many others (Robertson, 2010).

Present day military officials draw from Stoic philosophy to train personnel and develop their soldiers' resilience (Robertson, 2013). For example, Special Forces Major Thomas Jarrett implemented a Stoic "Warrior Resilience Training" program (Jarrett, 2008, as cited in Robertson, 2013). The facilitators administered questionnaires for more than 900 participants, and the data showed that participants felt they benefited from the training (Jarrett, 2008, as cited in, Robertson, 2013). They believed the training would help them be more resilient while deployed, and when returning home (Jarrett, 2008, as cited in Robertson, 2013). Professor Nancy Sherman, who formerly served as Chair in Ethics at the US Naval Academy, published a book titled "Stoic Warriors", where she compared the similarities between Stoic concepts and current military values (Sherman, 2005, as cited in Robertson, 2013).

Unfortunately, there is not enough scientific research on the efficacy of Stoicism as a model of psychotherapy (Robertson, 2013). While there is a multitude of indirect evidence, such as scientific research showing the effectiveness of CBT, there is a lack of direct evidence (Robertson, 2013). One example of direct evidence is seen in a 2012 study conducted by a doctoral student, Patrick Ussher, at the University of Exeter (Ussher, 2012, as cited in Robertson, 2013). Dr. Ussher developed an informal pilot study, where a multidisciplinary team of philosophers, psychologists, psychotherapists, and classicists contributed to the project (Ussher, 2012, as cited in Robertson, 2013). They developed a handbook using basic Stoic theories and techniques and published them online (Ussher, 2012, as cited in Robertson, 2013). Participants visited the website and were asked to apply the exercises to their daily lives over the course of a

week (Ussher, 2012, as cited in Robertson, 2013). The website received approximately 14,000

visits during the one week time period, with 80 actually participating, and data from 42

participants was collected (Ussher, 2012, as cited in Robertson, 2013). The data showed

promising results, for only one week of practice, people reported a 10% increase in

psychological well being, which was measured through various self reports (Ussher, 2012, as

cited in Robertson, 2013). Data also showed a 5% increase in positive emotions, and a 10%

decrease in negative emotions (Ussher, 2012, as cited in Robertson, 2013). Overall, participants

enjoyed doing the exercises, they found them to be helpful, and were interested in learning more

(Ussher, 2012, as cited in Robertson, 2013).

Conclusion

While Stoic philosophy is an ancient body of work, it is relevant and useful in modern times for people who are seeking a life that is meaningful, fulfilling, and truly "good" (Irvine, 2008). The Stoics did not approach life with passivity, despite their awareness of the cruelty and injustice in the world (Irvine, 2008). They were determined to fully participate in life, and fought to make the world around them a better place (Irvine, 2008). When other people attempted to disturb their peace of mind, the Stoics found a way to maintain their sense of tranquility (Irvine, 2008). They saw philosophy as a guide to life, one that could never lead a man into wrong, as it comes from the pursuit of wisdom (Robertson, 2013). Epictetus saw philosophy as the art of living, and taught his students how to approach their own lives (Irvine, 2008). He believed that by mastering this art, the individual could be sure they would have a good life, regardless of what hardships they may encounter (Irvine, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the therapeutic value of Stoic philosophy. Many people who enter therapy are experiencing varying levels of distress. Stoicism can offer them a way to overcome their pain, to achieve a life that is joyful and worth living. While this paper covered a few of the topics that are brought into therapy, the Stoic literature is rich with several theories, techniques, and topics in human psychology. From the Stoic texts, one can learn about grief, anxiety, mindfulness, habit formation, discipline, acceptance, desire, spirituality, empathy, and many more areas of study. The range of topics are vast and comprehensive, any and all therapeutic clients may benefit from Stoic ideology in some form. Additionally, Stoicism enables the therapist to engage the client through philosophical and existential discussions, as well as practical exercises or techniques that can be applied. Stoic philosophy can be applied to varying

levels of severity, for clients who are mildly distressed, to those who are experiencing extreme

mental or emotional breakdowns. While there is much value in contemporary models and

theories, it can be helpful to go back to the roots of therapy to examine how the original

practitioners approached the therapeutic endeavour. Stoicism has much to offer to the field of

mental health, it should be taken seriously and utilized effectively.

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