

## Key Takeaways From “Meditations” by Marcus Aurelius

- Encouraged me not to be afraid of work, to be sparing in my wants, attend to my own needs, mind my own business, and never listen to gossip
- The need to make decisions for myself instead of depending on the hazards of chance, and never for a moment to leave reason out of sight
- Cautioned me against frequent use of the words “I am too busy”
- Approach each action as though it were your last
- Were you to live three thousand years, or even thirty thousand, remember that the sole life which a man can lose is living at the moment; and furthermore, that he can have no other life except the one he loses
- For the passing minute is every man’s equal possession, but what has once gone by is not ours
- In the life of a man, his time is but a moment, his being an incessant flux, his senses a dim rushlight, his body a prey of worms, his soul an unquiet eddy, his fortune dark, and his fame doubtful
- See then that the flow of your thoughts is kept free from idle or random fancies, particularly those of an inquisitive or uncharitable nature. A man should habituate himself to such a way of thinking that if suddenly asked, “What is in your mind at this minute?” he could respond frankly and without hesitation; thus providing that all his thoughts were simple and kindly, as becomes a social being with no taste for the pleasures of sensual imaginings, jealousies, envies, suspicions, or any other sentiments that he would blush to acknowledge in himself
- Welcoming whole-heartedly whatever falls to his lot and rarely asking himself what others may be saying or doing or thinking except when the public interest requires it
- He confines his operations to his own concerns, having his attention fixed on his own particular thread of the universal web; seeing to it that his actions are honorable, and convinced that what befalls him must be for the best- for his own directing fate is itself under a higher direction
- He knows that it is not the world’s opinion he should follow, but only those of men whose lives confessedly accord with Nature
- In your actions let there be a willing promptitude, yet a regard for the common interest
- One whose chief regard is for his own mind, and for the divinity within him and the service of its goodness, will strike no poses, utter no complaints, and crave neither for solitude nor yet for a crowd. Best of all, his life will be free from continual pursuings and avoidings

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Taken directly out of the book

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- Remember that man lives only in the present, in this fleeting instant: all the rest of his life is either past and gone, or not yet revealed
- The good man’s only singularity lies in his approving welcome to every experience the looms of fate may weave for him, his refusal to soil the divinity seated in his breast or perturb it with disorderly impressions, and his resolve to keep it in serenity and decorous obedience to God
- Remember the doctrine that all rational beings are created for one another
- Never struggle or strain; but be master of yourself, and view life as a man, as a human being, as a citizen, and as a mortal
- The whole universe is change, and life itself is but what you deem it
- Remember that in a very little while both you and he will be dead, and your very names will quickly be forgotten
- Reject your sense of injury, and the injury itself disappears
- What does not corrupt a man himself cannot corrupt his life
- Whatever happens, happens rightly
- You have only to revert to the teachings of your creed and to reverence for reason, and within a week those now class you with beasts and monkeys will be calling you a god
- Fate is at your elbow; make yourself good while life and power are still yours
- He who ignores what his neighbor is saying or doing or thinking, and cares only that his own actions should be just and godly, is greatly the gainer in time and ease
- Anything in any way beautiful derives its beauty from itself and asks nothing beyond itself
- Most of what we say and do is not necessary, and its omission would save both time and trouble
- The pursuit of any object depends for its value upon the worth of the object pursued
- Men ever at odds with their own closest companion
- Spend these fleeting moments on Earth as Nature would have you spend them
- If there is something good to be done or said, never renounce your right to it
- The man who has done one good action does not cry it aloud but passes straight on to a second
- Awareness that his actions are social is the mark of a social being
- The more a man deprives himself, or submits to be deprived, of such things and their like, the more he grows in goodness
- Your mind will be like its habitual thoughts

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- Nothing can happen to any man that nature has not fitted him to endure
- Press on steadily, keep to the straight road in your thinking and doing, and your days will ever flow on smoothly
- Look beneath the surface: never let a thing’s intrinsic quality or worth escape you
- The man who values a soul that is rational and universal and social no longer cares for anything else
- If anyone can show me, and prove to me, that I am wrong in thought or deed, I will gladly change
- The man of ambition thinks to find his good in the operations of others; the man of pleasure in his own sensations; but the man of understanding in his own actions
- One thing alone troubles me: the fear that I may do something which man’s constitution disallows, or would wish to be done in some other way, or forbids till a future day
- Soon you will have forgotten the world, and soon the world will have forgotten you
- Do not indulge in dreams of having what you have not, but reckon up the chief of the blessings you do possess, and then thankfully remember how you would crave for them if they were not yours
- Our master-reason asks no more than to act justly, and thereby to achieve calm
- Fix your thought closely on what is being said, and let your mind enter fully into what is being done, and into what is doing it
- Love nothing but that which comes to you woven in the pattern of your destiny
- When in pain, always be prompt to remind yourself that there is nothing shameful about it and nothing prejudicial to the mind at the helm
- Nothing can be good for a man unless it helps make him just, self-disciplined, courageous, and independent
- You may break your heart, but men will still go on as before
- The first rule is to keep an untroubled spirit. The second is to look things in the face and know them for what they are, remembering that it is your duty to be a good man
- Curb arrogance to rise above pleasures and pains
- Never go beyond the sense of your original impressions
- Men exist for each other. Then either improve them or put up with them
- It is a sin to pursue pleasure as a good and avoid pain as an evil
- Erase fancy; curb impulse; quench desire; let sovereign reason have the mastery

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- Desire one thing alone: that your actions or inactions alike should be worthy of a reasoning citizen
- Leave another’s wrongdoing where it lies
- Loss is nothing but change
- Man is born for deeds of kindness; and when he has done a kindly action, he has done what he was made for
- When will you be content with your present state, happy in all about you, persuaded that all things are yours, that all comes from the gods, and that all is and shall be well with you, so long as it is their good pleasure and ordained by them for the safety and welfare of that perfect living
- When another’s fault offends you, turn to yourself and consider what similar shortcomings are found in you
- The good life can be achieved to perfection by any soul capable of showing indifference to the things that are themselves indifferent
- A man is always justified in seeking his own good
- Tell yourself, when you feel exasperated and out of all patience, that this mortal life endures but a moment; it will not be long before we shall one and all have been laid to rest
- Our anger and annoyance are most detrimental to us than the things themselves which anger or annoy us
- Kindness is irresistible, so long as it be genuine and without false smiles or duplicity
- If a man’s life has no consistent and uniform aim, it cannot itself remain consistent or uniform
- If it is not the right thing to do, never do it; if it is not the truth, never say it