

## Coping with the Stress and Negative Emotions of Care-Giving by Using Techniques from Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius

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**Abstract :** There are many challenges that a caregiver faces in average everyday life. One such challenge is coping with the stress and negative emotions of caregiving. The Stoics (i.e. Lucius Annaeus Seneca [4 B.C.E. - 65 C.E.], Epictetus [50-135 C.E.], and Marcus Aurelius [121-180 C.E.]) have provided coping techniques that are useful for dealing with stress and negative emotions. This paper lists and explains some of the fundamental coping techniques provided by the Stoics. For instance, some Stoic coping techniques thus follow (the list is far from exhaustive): a) mindfulness: to the best of your ability, constantly being aware of your thoughts, habits, desires, norms, memories, likes/dislikes, beliefs, values, and of everything outside of you in the world (b) constantly adjusting one's expectations in accordance with reality, c) memento mori: constantly reminding oneself that death is inevitable and that death is not to be seen as evil, and d) praemeditatio malorum: constantly detaching oneself from everything that is so dear to one so that the least amount of suffering follows from the loss, damage, or ceasing to be of such entities. All coping techniques will be extracted from the following original texts by the Stoics: Seneca's Letters to Lucilius, Epictetus' Discourses and the Encheiridion, and Marcus Aurelius' Meditations. One major finding is that the usefulness of each Stoic coping technique can be empirically tested by anyone in the sense of applying it one's own life especially when one is facing real-life challenges. Another major finding is that all of the Stoic coping techniques are predicated upon, and follow from, one fundamental principle: constantly differentiate what is and what is not in one's control. After differentiating it, one should constantly habituate oneself in not controlling things that are beyond one's control. For example, the following things are beyond one's control (all things being equal): death, certain illnesses, being born in a particular socio-economic family, etc. The conclusion is that if one habituates oneself by practicing to the best of one's ability both the fundamental Stoic principle and the Stoic coping techniques, then such a habitual practice can eventually decrease the stress and negative emotions that one experiences by being a caregiver.

**Keywords :** care-giving, coping techniques, negative emotions, stoicism, stress

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