March Meeting Primer

An optional read-ahead and quick reference, about 10 minutes

On Stoic Living Discussion Series · Guide 3 of 12

Guiding Question: What does this situation call for from me?

At the Meeting

- **Today's reading: Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.18.1–7**. We'll read it aloud during the discussion of repetition.
- **The shared case:** A colleague asks for help while your own deadline approaches, and you begin advising before hearing the whole difficulty. We begin with initial impressions, discuss what makes a response appropriate, then try possible responses. Everyone can use this case, whether or not they have done the weekly practice.

Knowing What to Do—and Doing It

Someone is explaining a problem, and you're already preparing an answer. You interrupt. They stop. You meant to help, but you haven't yet heard what they needed to say.

March asks how appropriate action can become a steady practice. Begin with what the situation requires. Other people, your responsibilities, and what has changed all matter. Give a reason for a fitting response and then carry it out. If the same occasion recurs, a clear cue can help you remember the response before you fall into the old one.

Repeated choices help shape character. They also give us occasions to learn. A response that fits now may need adjustment when circumstances change. You can revise the plan, repair a missed opportunity where possible, and return at the next occasion.

The readings below connect reasons, responsibilities, and repetition. *For ancient texts, use any translation you like.*

Optional Reading (about 8 minutes)

1. **Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.18.1–7** (3 minutes) This is the passage we'll read aloud. How does repeating an activity strengthen a corresponding habit, and what does that ask you to watch in your own repetitions?
2. **Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.10.1–4** (2 minutes) Begin with the roles of human being and citizen. What responsibilities follow from shared membership before Epictetus turns to more particular roles?

3. **Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 6.50** (1 minute) Marcus considers what remains possible when an undertaking is blocked. Which virtue might a change of plan now call for?
4. **Seneca, *Letters* 20.1–3** (2 minutes) Seneca asks for evidence of philosophy in how a person lives. What agreement does he seek between a person's principles and conduct?

Think About

The discussion asks what makes an action fitting, how responsibilities change, and how repetition can strengthen judgment. Bring questions as well as experiences; the shared case is enough to participate.

- What makes listening appropriate here? When might interrupting be justified?
- What can a useful habit contribute, and what must still be judged each time?
- What would make you reconsider your first answer?

Application at the Meeting

- **Application after discussion:** Find the Appropriate Action. Use these steps to compare a response with the reasons the group has explored.
  1. **Notice.** What facts, people, and responsibilities matter here?
  2. **Choose.** I will do this because it fits these circumstances.
  3. **Follow through.** When the cue appears, do it if it still fits.

Compare two possible responses, give their reasons, and try the words aloud. Consider a changed circumstance and ask whether either response still fits.

Key Terms

For reference during the meeting. No need to memorize these.

Appropriate action (*kathēkon*). An action that fits its circumstances and for which a reasonable justification can be given. Consider the people affected as well as your aim.

Roles and relationships. The responsibilities that come with being a parent, coworker, friend, or participant. They answer to the wider responsibilities of a rational, social human being.

Virtue (*aretē*). Excellence in reason and choice. Wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance guide what a fitting response should express.

Implementation intention. A modern planning form connecting an occasion to a response: "When this happens, I will do this." Keep the reason available so you can adapt.

Habit. A response becomes easier to call upon through repetition. What you repeatedly do matters, including when it strengthens an unhelpful disposition.

Making Good Use of Circumstances. Finding and performing the fitting response available when a plan changes. The curriculum also calls this Infinite Opportunity.

Reserve Clause. Pursuing an undertaking with allowance for circumstances that could prevent completion.

The Fundamental Rule. Recognizing what belongs to your judgment and intention and what also depends on circumstances or others. An intended action can be interrupted.

The Discipline of Action. Training appropriate conduct, execution, and steadiness. March's question is *How can I make appropriate action a steady practice?*