*The Ancient Art of Living*

**Stoic Time Use Exercise**

“People are frugal in guarding their personal property; but as soon as it comes to squandering time they are most wasteful of the one thing in which it is right to be stingy.” (Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*)

“The greatest obstacle to living is expectancy, which hangs upon tomorrow and loses today… The whole future lies in uncertainty: live immediately.” (Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*)

“Of all people they alone are at leisure who take time for philosophy, they alone really live; for they are not content to be good guardians of their own lifetime only. They annex every age to their own; all the years that have gone before them are an addition to their store.” (Seneca, *On the Shortness of Life*)

Seneca thinks that what matters is not how long our lives are, but how we use the time that we have. We are going to use his essay *On the Shortness of Life* to reflect on our own use of time and our relationship with busyness and leisure. Begin by carefully reading through his essay and then **answer the following questions (200-400 words)**

*Phase 1: Engagement with Seneca*

* Why does Seneca think that those who seem to accomplish the most are typically not satisfied and are not really living?
* Did Seneca’s discussion challenge how you spend your time or are you confident that you are already using your time well?
* Why does Seneca think that contemplation of the past is satisfying to the wise?
* What does using time well look like for Seneca?

*Phase 2: Time Use Diary.*

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fIRGWeVAWGQ2y3A9mHGEqpl-OSywDeBW5Ksbt0XjoQc/edit?usp=sharing>

For one week, keep track of how you use your time, employing something like the following chart. You should note both the sort of activity you were doing for a given time and the predominant emotion you felt during that time. I have offered some suggested activity and emotion categories below, but you may modify them in whatever way you find helpful. You do not have to be entirely precise, but do your best to accurately reflect the way you spend your time.

Activity Categories

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| B | Basic Bodily Maintenance/Sleep |
| V | Cultivation of Virtue/Philosophy/Contemplation of Past |
| W | Pursuit of Wealth (e.g. job, vocational training etc.) |
| P | Pursuit of Pleasure (e.g. Netflix, cooking a gourmet meal) |
| R | Engaging in Relationships/Completing Duties for Friends or Family |
| H | Pursuit of Honor or Status (e.g. posting to Instagram, networking etc.) |

Emotion Categories

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| J | Feeling joyful and enjoying what you’re doing |
| S | Pained or saddened by what you’re doing and experiencing |
| D | Desiring something you don’t yet have/wanting something you’re missing out on |
| F | Fearful about what’s going to happen to you or the world; anxious or worrying |
| U | Unfocused, distracted or bored, disengaged from what you’re doing |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mon** |  | **Tues** |  | **Weds** |  | **Thurs** |  | **Fri** |  | **Sat** |  | **Sun** |  |
|  | Act | Emot | Act | Emot | Act | Emot | Act | Emot | Act | Emot | Act | Emot | Act | Emot |
| 12-2am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2-4am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4-6am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6-7am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7-8am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8-9am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9-10am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10-11am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11am-12pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12-1pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-2pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2-3pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3-4pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4-5pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5-6pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6-7pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7-8pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8-9pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9-10pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10-11pm |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11pm-12am |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Then **answer the following questions (200-400 words)**

* Were there any things about your time use chart that surprised you?
* Based on your time use chart, which things do you wish you spent less time on? Which things do wish you spent more time on?
* What would you want your time use to look like if you did not have to spend any time earning money?

*Phase 3: Final reflection*

After thinking through Seneca’s views and reflecting on your own use of time, conclude this exercise by **answering the following questions (200-400 words)**

* Does adding more project and goals to your life make you more anxious or more fulfilled?
* Does your busyness take away from your overall enjoyment in life?
* Do you have leisure to enjoy life and think and feel together with others about the world and your place in it? If not, are there steps you could take to have more leisure and peaceful time in your life?