

The Evil Within

Winning The Battle Against Your Dark Side - by Sgt. Steve

"No man is free who is not master of himself."

– EPICTETUS

As LEOs stepping into the world of Stoicism, you confront the challenge of exchanging old habits for new practices. It's not always easy, and sometimes you need a little help.

The Thought Exercise:

Imagine, if you will, that you are in a battle against an evil version of yourself. The true you (the good person), fights for control against your evil doppelganger. Envision that your malevolent twin is sporting a twisted mustache, an eye patch, and has a sinister laugh delighting in your failures. You can't let that scum-bag win.

Luckily, I know some of the tricks and tactics that the dark side will employ, and I want to give you a heads-up so that you don't fall for it.

THE PLEASURE TRAP

Evil-You tempts and rewards you with dopamine hits for destructive behaviors. Evil-You is training you and conditioning you to harm yourself. Every time you fall for it, Evil hits a little happy-button deep inside your brain, but it wears off quickly and leaves you addicted and craving more. It entices you with: Overeating, Drugs/Alcohol, Venting Anger, Frivolous Spending, and Social Media Validation.

THE ILLUSION OF MATERIAL HAPPINESS

Evil-You convinces you that possessions can bring joy. When you finally get that "thing" that you wanted, Evil is quick to move the goalposts, now pointing to a newer better "thing." Evil-You can keep you on the treadmill for a lifetime this way. Reject the notion that material objects can bring lasting happiness, and don't fall for this trick.

THE LURE OF LAZINESS

Evil-You seduces you into procrastination, draining your energy and ambition. When you finally fight back, the dark-side has a “fake surrender” tactic that usually works: “*Ok, we will do our work...starting tomorrow.*” Defeat laziness by taking action and committing to personal growth **(NOW, RIGHT NOW)**, even when it's challenging.

THE EGO TRAP

Evil-You inflates your ego, making you feel superior to everyone else while also making you hyper-sensitive to criticism. It creates a fragile sense of self. Don't fall for it. What goes on in someone else's head is out of your control and none of your business. Entitlement and ego are the path to misery.

The Counter-Attack

I relish every triumph against my Evil-Twin-Within. It's payback for all the harm that he's done to me over the years.

- ✖ Every time I eat a healthy meal, I imagine my evil doppelganger holding his nose and saying *yuck*.
- ✖ Every time I get up early to get work done, I imagine him groaning and pouting.
- ✖ When I go for a run, I imagine that I am dragging him along and that he hates every step.
- ✖ When I practice gratitude I imagine him rolling his eyes, and being exasperated.
- ✖ When I treat someone with kindness, I imagine him howling in pain and punching his fist into the wall.

My Secret Weapon: The 4 Stoic Virtues

In every situation, I try to ask myself “How does what I'm about to do or say exhibit **Wisdom, Courage, Justice (kindness), or Discipline?**”

If it doesn't meet up to the virtue test, it's probably not right for Steve.

I like to imagine that Evil-Steve is huddled in the corner of the cage I keep him locked in. **BUT... I keep a sharp eye on him.** He is just waiting for me to get lax. If I drop my guard he will bust free, stab me in the back and take control.

Hopefully knowing a few of the tricks that Evil You likes to pull, and how to test your actions against Virtue will help you. I wish you all the best of luck in your battle, against yourself.

**Amor Fati,
Sgt. Steve**