*Stoicism: A Philosophy of Ancient Greece & Rome*

* The ancient Greek philosophy of STOICISM was developed in Athens in the third century B.C.E.
* The Stoics developed recommendations for living in harmony with a natural world over which one has no direct control.
* Stoicism has had a direct influence on many important philosophers throughout the ages and is still influential, today.

* Some say the Stoics were ahead of their time. For instance, some of their early writing asserted the equality of women (an idea almost never found in the Ancient World).
* Today, the word "stoic" has come to mean personal calm in the face of adversity. The person who doesn't flinch when they are hurt, or when they hear bad news, is called stoic.
* But Stoic philosophy is much more complex than this.

* Stoics believe that by behaving rationally and controlling their passions, humans can live in more harmony with creation and themselves.

* Stoics taught the absolute necessity of *self-awareness.*

*EPICTETUS*

* One man, a Greek named Epictetus (pronounced Eh-pick-tee-tuss), personified the Stoic ideal. Born in the first century as a slave in the eastern reaches of the Roman Empire, he nonetheless flourished as one of the philosophy's greatest teachers.

* Even though he was born a slave and endured a permanent physical disability, Epictetus held that all human beings are perfectly free to control their lives and to live in harmony with nature.

* Epictetus believed this:  Human beings have things around them which are under their control, but there are other things that are under the control of others or of nature. But one thing that is always free is "the sphere of moral purpose."  In other words, when something happens to you, you are always free to choose how you will act. You control your moral purpose.
* "Things themselves don't hurt or hinder us. Nor do other people," Epictetus said. "It is our attitudes and reactions that give us trouble. . .we cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can choose how we respond to them."
* In other words, a good Stoic should focus on events within his control and separate his/her emotions from things he/she cannot change. In fact, the emotions of a good Stoic would remain level, even under extreme circumstances.
  + Epictetus thought that we can organize our mind-set and choose what to do or what not to do. Although we blame society, or upbringing, or external circumstances for our choices and lives, and though we often behave as if we have no choice but to behave a certain way, Epictetus believed that nothing could truly stop us from living with purpose.
  + A good Stoic has self-awareness and is therefore capable of controlling separating his/her emotions, and is thus able to choose how to act even when they have been made very angry or hurt. They thus make choices based on their values, not on their feelings.