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Quotes by Seneca

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Lucius Annaeus Seneca (often known simply as Seneca, or Seneca the Younger) (ca. 4 BC-AD 65) was a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, dramatist, and in one work humorist, of the Silver Age of Latin literature.

No untroubled day has ever dawned for me.

- Seneca

The good things of prosperity are to be wished; but the good things that belong to adversity are to be admired.

- Seneca

Fire is the test of gold; adversity, of strong men.

- Seneca

Brave men rejoice in adversity, just as brave soldiers triumph in war.

- Seneca

The bravest sight in the world is to see a great man struggling against adversity.

- Seneca

Consult your friend on all things, especially on those which respect yourself. His counsel may then be useful where your own self-love might impair your judgment.

- Seneca

As for old age, embrace and love it. It abounds with pleasure if you know how to use it. The gradually declining years are among the sweetest in a man's life, and I maintain that, even when they have reached the extreme limit, they have their pleasure still.

- Seneca

There is nothing more despicable than an old man who has no other proof than his age to offer of his having lived long in the world.

- Seneca

A punishment to some, to some a gift, and to many a favor.

- Seneca

Death is the wish of some, the relief of many, and the end of all.

- Seneca

The final hour when we cease to exist does not itself bring death; it merely of itself completes the death-process. We reach death at that moment, but we have been a long time on the way.

- Seneca

Difficulties strengthen the mind, as labor does the body.

- Seneca

No evil propensity of the human heart is so powerful that it may not be subdued by discipline.

- Seneca

Disease is not of the body but of the place.

- Seneca

Economy is too late when you are at the bottom of your purse.

- Seneca

Sovereignty over any foreign land is insecure.

- Seneca

No evil is without its compensation. The less money, the less trouble; the less favor, the less envy. Even in those cases which put us out of wits, it is not the loss itself, but the estimate of the loss that troubles us.

- Seneca

The road to learning by precept is long, but by example short and effective.

- Seneca

It is quality rather than quantity that matters.

- Seneca

Even if it is to be, what end do you serve by running to distress?

- Seneca

Do everything as in the eye of another.

- Seneca

If thou art a man, admire those who attempt great things, even though they fail.

- Seneca

Fate leads the willing, and drags along the reluctant.

- Seneca

Fate rules the affairs of men, with no recognizable order.

- Seneca

The fates lead the willing, and drag the unwilling.

- Seneca

Where the fear is, happiness is not.

- Seneca

A person's fears are lighter when the danger is at hand.

- Seneca

We are more often frightened than hurt; and we suffer more from imagination than from reality.

- Seneca

A foolishness is inflicted with a hatred of itself.

- Seneca

He who is brave is free.

- Seneca

Freedom is not being a slave to any circumstance, to any constraint, to any chance; it means compelling Fortune to enter the lists on equal terms.

- Seneca

Friendship always benefits; love sometimes injures.

- Seneca

Those that are a friend to themselves are sure to be a friend to all.

- Seneca

It is the superfluous things for which men sweat.

- Seneca

A gift consists not in what is done or given, but in the intention of the giver or doer.

- Seneca

There is no delight in owning anything unshared.

- Seneca

We should give as we would receive, cheerfully, quickly, and without hesitation; for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers.

- Seneca

Drunkenness is nothing but voluntary madness.

- Seneca

It is the constant fault and inseparable evil quality of ambition, that it never looks behind it.

- Seneca

Those who boast of their descent, brag on what they owe to others.

- Seneca

No one is better born than another, unless they are born with better abilities and a more amiable disposition.

- Seneca

He who boasts of his descent, praises the deed of another.

- Seneca

The pleasures of the palate deal with us like the Egyptian thieves, who strangle those whom they embrace.

- Seneca

If a man does not know what port he is steering for, no wind is favorable to him.

- Seneca

If a man knows not what harbor he seeks, any wind is the right wind.

- Seneca

Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. When a man does not know what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind.

- Seneca

Nothing is void of God, his work is everywhere his full of himself.

- Seneca

There is as much greatness of mind in acknowledging a good turn, as in doing it.

- Seneca

It is another's fault if he be ungrateful, but it is mine if I do not give. To find one thankful man, I will oblige a great many that are not so.

- Seneca

See how many are better off than you are, but consider how many are worse.

- Seneca

It is true greatness to have in one the frailty of a man and the security of a god.

- Seneca

For greed all nature is too little.

- Seneca

The display of grief makes more demands than grief itself. How few men are sad in their own company.

- Seneca

Nothing becomes so offensive so quickly as grief. When fresh it finds someone to console it, but when it becomes chronic, it is ridiculed, and rightly.

- Seneca

True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future, not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is sufficient, for he that is so wants nothing. The great blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not.

- Seneca

Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it.

- Seneca

No one can be despised by another until he has learned to despise himself.

- Seneca

Who can hope for nothing, should despair for nothing.

- Seneca

Whatever is well said by another, is mine.

- Seneca

Most men ebb and flow in wretchedness between the fear of death and the hardship of life; they are unwilling to live, and yet they do not know how to die.

- Seneca

A happy life is one which is in accordance with its own nature.

- Seneca

It is often better not to see an insult than to avenge it.

- Seneca

In my own time there have been inventions of this sort, transparent windows tubes for diffusing warmth equally through all parts of a building short-hand, which has been carried to such a perfection that a writer can keep pace with the most rapid speaker. But the inventing of such things is drudgery for the lowest slaves; philosophy lies deeper. It is not her office to teach men how to use their hands. The object of her lessons is to form the soul.

- Seneca

If you would judge, understand.

- Seneca

If you judge, investigate.

- Seneca

May be is very well, but Must is the master. It is my duty to show justice without recompense.

- Seneca

Wherever there is a human being there is an opportunity for kindness

- Seneca

The foremost art of kings is the ability to endure hatred.

- Seneca

He is a king who fears nothing, he is a king who desires nothing!

- Seneca

It is more fitting for a man to laugh at life than to lament over it.

- Seneca

No one is laughable who laughs at himself.

- Seneca

He who dreads hostility too much is unfit to rule.

- Seneca

That is never too often repeated, which is never sufficiently learned.

- Seneca

A well governed appetite is the greater part of liberty.

- Seneca

The approach of liberty makes even an old man brave.

- Seneca

So live with men as if God saw you and speak to God, as if men heard you.

- Seneca

I will govern my life and thoughts as if the whole world were to see the one and read the other, for what does it signify to make anything a secret to my neighbor, when to God, who is the searcher of our hearts, all our privacies are open?

- Seneca

Life is warfare.

- Seneca

Not how long, but how well you have lived is the main thing.

- Seneca

Anger: an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.

- Seneca

The greatest remedy for anger is delay.

- Seneca

The deferring of anger is the best antidote to anger.

- Seneca

Anger is like those ruins which smash themselves on what they fall.

- Seneca

Nothing is so wretched or foolish as to anticipate misfortunes. What madness is it to be expecting evil before it comes.

- Seneca

The mind that is anxious about the future is miserable.

- Seneca

There are more things to alarm us than to harm us, and we suffer more often in

apprehension than reality.

- Seneca

There are no greater wretches in the world than many of those whom people in general take to be happy.

- Seneca

It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor.

- Seneca

Believe me, that was a happy age, before the days of architects, before the days of builders.

- Seneca

Leisure without literature is death and burial alive.

- Seneca

Those whom true love has held, it will go on holding.

- Seneca

If you wish to be loved; Love!

- Seneca

Fidelity purchased with money, money can destroy.

- Seneca

What once were vices are manners now.

- Seneca

Nothing is so contemptible as the sentiments of the mob.

- Seneca

It is medicine, not scenery, for which a sick man must go searching.

- Seneca

Things that were hard to bear are sweet to remember.

- Seneca

The mind is a matter over every kind of fortune; itself acts in both ways, being the cause of its own happiness and misery.

- Seneca

That moderation which nature prescribes, which limits our desires by resources restricted to our needs, has abandoned the field; it has now come to this -- that to want only what is enough is a sign both of boorishness and of utter destitution.

- Seneca

It is the sign of a great mind to dislike greatness, and prefer things in measure to things in excess.

- Seneca

Modesty forbids what the law does not.

- Seneca

But it is a pretty thing to see what money will do!

- Seneca

A great fortune is a great slavery.

- Seneca

I never come back home with the same moral character I went out with; something or other becomes unsettled where I had achieved internal peace; some one or other of the things I had put to flight reappears on the scene.

- Seneca

If you live according to the dictates of nature, you will never be poor; if according to the notions of man, you will never be rich.

- Seneca

Night brings our troubles to the light, rather than banishes them.

- Seneca

That which is given with pride and ostentation is rather an ambition than a bounty.

- Seneca

Remember that pain has this most excellent quality. If prolonged it cannot be severe, and if severe it cannot be prolonged.

- Seneca

Pain, scorned by yonder gout-ridden wretch, endured by yonder dyspeptic in the midst of his dainties, borne bravely by the girl in travail. Slight thou art, if I can bear thee, short thou art if I cannot bear thee!

- Seneca

Philosophy does not regard pedigree, she received Plato not as a noble, but she made him one.

- Seneca

Enjoy present pleasures in such a way as not to injure future ones.

- Seneca

So enjoy present pleasures as to not mar those to come.

- Seneca

All art is an imitation of nature.

- Seneca

We never reflect how pleasant it is to ask for nothing.

- Seneca

It's the admirer and the watcher who provoke us to all the inanities we commit.

- Seneca

The courts of kings are full of people, but empty of friends.

- Seneca

Not he who has little, but he whose wishes more, is poor.

- Seneca

There is a noble manner of being poor, and who does not know it will never be rich.

- Seneca

Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power.

- Seneca

If you sit in judgment, investigate, if you sit in supreme power, sit in command.

- Seneca

He is the most powerful who has himself, in his power.

- Seneca

Authority founded on injustice is never of long duration.

- Seneca

Do not ask for what you will wish you had not got.

- Seneca

We often want one thing and pray for another, not telling the truth even to the gods.

- Seneca

We all sorely complain of the shortness of time, and yet have much more than we know what to do with. Our lives are either spent in doing nothing at all, or in doing nothing to the purpose, or in doing nothing that we ought to do. We are always complaining that our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end of them.

- Seneca

Precepts or maxims are of great weight; and a few useful ones on hand do more to

produce a happy life than the volumes we can't find.

- Seneca

The first and greatest punishment of the sinner is the conscience of sin.

- Seneca

Every guilty person is his own hangman.

- Seneca

There is no person so severely punished, as those who subject themselves to the whip of their own remorse.

- Seneca

Why do I not seek some real good; one which I could feel, not one which I could display?

- Seneca

I shall never be ashamed of citing a bad author if the line is good.

- Seneca

It is part of the cure to wish to be cured.

- Seneca

He who repents of having sinned is almost innocent.

- Seneca

Remove severe restraint and what will become of virtue?

- Seneca

What should a wise person do when given a blow? Same as Cato when he was attacked; not fire up or revenge the insult., or even return the blow, but simply ignore it.

- Seneca

The acquisition of riches has been to many not an end to their miseries, but a change in them: The fault is not in the riches, but the disposition.

- Seneca

To keep oneself safe does not mean to bury oneself.

- Seneca

The first step in a person's salvation is knowledge of their sin.

- Seneca

Whatever has overstepped its due bounds is always in a state of instability.

- Seneca

There's one blessing only, the source and cornerstone of beatitude -- confidence in self.

- Seneca

Other men's sins are before our eyes; our own are behind our backs.

- Seneca

If sensuality were happiness, beasts were happier than men; but human felicity is lodged in the soul, not in the flesh.

- Seneca

You must live for another if you wish to live for yourself.

- Seneca

What madness it is for a man to starve himself to enrich his heir, and so turn a friend into an enemy! For his joy at your death will be proportioned to what you leave him.

- Seneca

Shame may restrain what law does not prohibit.

- Seneca

It makes a great deal of difference whether one wills not to sin or has not the knowledge to sin.

- Seneca

A large part of mankind is angry not with the sins, but with the sinners.

- Seneca

Slavery takes hold of few, but many take hold of slavery.

- Seneca

When ever the speech is corrupted so is the mind.

- Seneca

When I think over what I have said, I envy dumb people.

- Seneca

Success is not greedy, as people think, but insignificant. That is why it satisfies nobody.

- Seneca

Success consecrates the most offensive crimes.

- Seneca

What was hard to suffer is sweet to remember.

- Seneca

A man who suffers before it is necessary, suffers more than is necessary.

- Seneca

Calamity is virtue's opportunity.

- Seneca

Many shed tears merely for show, and have dry eyes when no one's around to observe them.

- Seneca

Time discovered truth.

- Seneca

The greatest loss of time is delay and expectation, which depend upon the future. We let go the present, which we have in our power, and look forward to that which depends upon chance, and so relinquish a certainty for an uncertainty.

- Seneca

Whenever you hold a fellow creature in distress, remember that he is a man.

- Seneca

What is true belongs to me!

- Seneca

What were once vices are the fashion of the day.

- Seneca

Why do people not confess vices? It is because they have not yet laid them aside. It is a waking person only who can tell their dreams.

- Seneca

All cruelty springs from weakness.

- Seneca

What difference does it make how much you have? What you do not have amounts to much more.

- Seneca

The sun also shines on the wicked.

- Seneca

No action will be considered blameless, unless the will was so, for by the will the act was dictated.

- Seneca

Wisdom does not show itself so much in precept as in life -- in firmness of mind and a mastery of appetite. It teaches us to do as well as to talk; and to make our words and actions all of a color.

- Seneca

When an author is too meticulous about his style, you may presume that his mind is frivolous and his content flimsy.

- Seneca

It is the failing of youth not to be able to restrain its own violence.

- Seneca

A quarrel is quickly settled when deserted by one party; there is no battle unless there be two.

- Seneca

Happy the man who can endure the highest and the lowest fortune. He, who has endured such vicissitudes with equanimity, has deprived misfortune of its power.

- Seneca

Conversation has a kind of charm about it, an insinuating and insidious something that elicits secrets just like love or liquor.

- Seneca

He that does good to another does good also to himself.

- Seneca

Courage leads to heaven; fear leads to death.

- Seneca

Let us train our minds to desire what the situation demands.

- Seneca

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.

- Seneca

Fortune can take away riches, but not courage.

- Seneca

The pressure of adversity does not affect the mind of the brave man. It is more powerful than external circumstances.

- Seneca

There is nothing in the world so much admired as a man who knows how to bear unhappiness with courage.

- Seneca

Crime when it succeeds is called virtue.

- Seneca

He has committed the crime who profits by it.

- Seneca

One crime has to be concealed by another.

- Seneca

Constant exposure to dangers will breed contempt for them.

- Seneca

Religion is regarded by the common people as true, by the wise as false, and by the rulers as useful.

- Seneca



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