

## Play your given roles well

*Remember that you are an actor in a play determined by the author: if short, then short; if long, then long. If he wants you to act as a beggar, then act even that with excellence, just as a cripple, a ruler or a citizen.*

*Because that is your objective: to act the role that is given to you well. To select the role is up to someone else.*

**Epictetus, *Enchiridion* 17**

Each of us has different roles to play: a human being, a citizen of the world, a father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, teacher or pupil. Some roles come naturally like being a human being, a daughter, and a sister. And some are acquired like being a wife and a teacher.

These roles are not the same for all of us. Even if both of us are sons; my father might be supportive and kind, and your father discouraging and aggressive. So our roles are different.

### **Each of our roles has specific duties**

Like an actress in a play, you must play your given role well, even if you don't like it. Act in a way that is consistent with your role. You're given the ability to use reason, and you're free to choose your actions, so you're able to play your roles well.

### **Roles often relate to others**

If you're a daughter, your role is to be a good daughter in relation to your parents. Your mother's role in relation to you is to be a good mother. Her role in relation to your father is to be a good wife.



Epictetus says that if you fulfill your duties toward others, then you're living in agreement with nature, which is the direct path to a happy and smoothly flowing life.

### **Focus on your side of the relations to**

**others.** It's possible that you're a good daughter, but your father isn't a good father, and he doesn't play his role well. That has nothing to do with you. You were given this role as a daughter and must play it well.

### **Fulfilling your side of the relationship is enough**

Fulfill your duties as a daughter even if your father doesn't fulfill his duties as a father to you. That's ultimately his loss, not yours. He's doing damage to himself by not living in harmony with nature. If he hurts you, he pays the price in one way or another. You might not see it at the moment, but he loses something by not fulfilling his duties.

### **No man is bad without suffering some loss and damage.**

**Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.10**

But if you try to hurt your father in return, then you don't fulfill your duties as a daughter and as a consequence injure yourself. You lose part of your character—the gentle, patient, and dignified.

Use this Stoic idea and play your given roles well by trying your best, focusing on what you control, and ultimately being a good person.

Play your roles well, even if others don't.



Jonas Salzgeber of [jonas@njlifehacks.com](mailto:jonas@njlifehacks.com) is an author. At the core of his actionable philosophy lies the goal of leading a happy life even—and especially—in the face of adversity. He is the author of *The Little Book of Stoicism*.  
<https://www.njlifehacks.com/the-little-book-of-stoicism/>)