



# HOW TO ENDURE LIKE WOLVERINE



# THE MEANING OF ENDURANCE

**What does it mean to endure?** Is it the legacy you leave behind? Your ability to overcome great adversity? Is it simply showing up to do what you do every single day and being the best person you can be?

Maybe it's none of those things. Maybe it's all of those things and more. When looking to answer such existential questions, comics have always helped me.

Superheroes are the mirrors that reflect the best parts of ourselves and the kind of people we could be. They also show qualities we struggle with day to day and give us the opportunity to accept our flaws and learn from them.

A superhero who best represents the multiple meanings of endurance is Marvel's Wolverine.

A member of the X-Men, James 'Logan' Howlett has played many roles and grappled with the meaning of humanity. He's developed a framework and a philosophy that has given him the peace he needs to endure and there's a lot to take away from the character.

In this white paper, you'll learn the origins of Wolverine, his personal philosophy, insights from different schools of thought and what it truly means to endure.



# TRAGIC ORIGINS

# ORIGIN



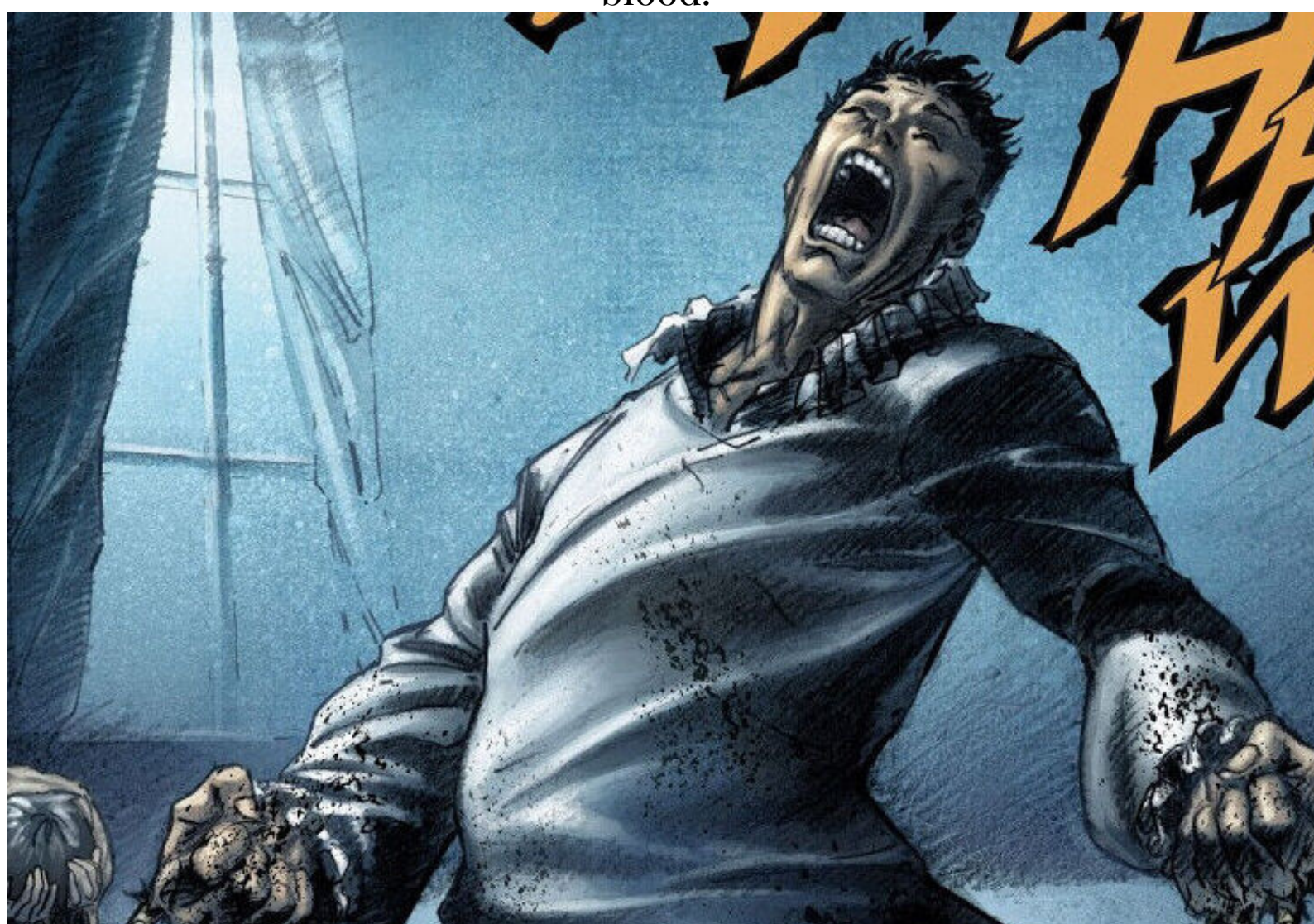
Like any character who goes on to become the poster boy for '90s anti-heroes, Wolverine's origins are steeped in tragedy. James Howlett was born in Alberta, Canada somewhere between 1882 and 1885 to rich farm owners John and Elizabeth Howlett. In reality, James was the illegitimate son of the Howlett's groundskeeper, Thomas Logan.

During his childhood, James became close with Thomas' other son Dog and a girl called Rose O'Hara. As they got older, the children grew apart and Dog became warped by his father's influence. One night, he attempted to rape Rose and James stopped it from happening by reporting it to his father.





This caused Thomas and Dog to be kicked off the estate. In retaliation, Thomas invaded the Howlett manor with a shotgun and tried to take Elizabeth with him. John tried to prevent it and he was killed in cold blood.



James had entered the room when this happened and his mutation activated for the first time. He killed Thomas and savagely scarred Dog with his bone claws. James ran away with Rose, hiding in the Yukon Territories. They came up with a cover story of being cousins and James adopted the name Logan while working as a miner.

Over time, Logan earned a reputation as one of the hardest workers in the mine and earned the nickname Wolverine. As he got older, Wolverine learned to accept his feral nature and fell in love with Rose. Only he couldn't act on his feelings because it would blow their cover.

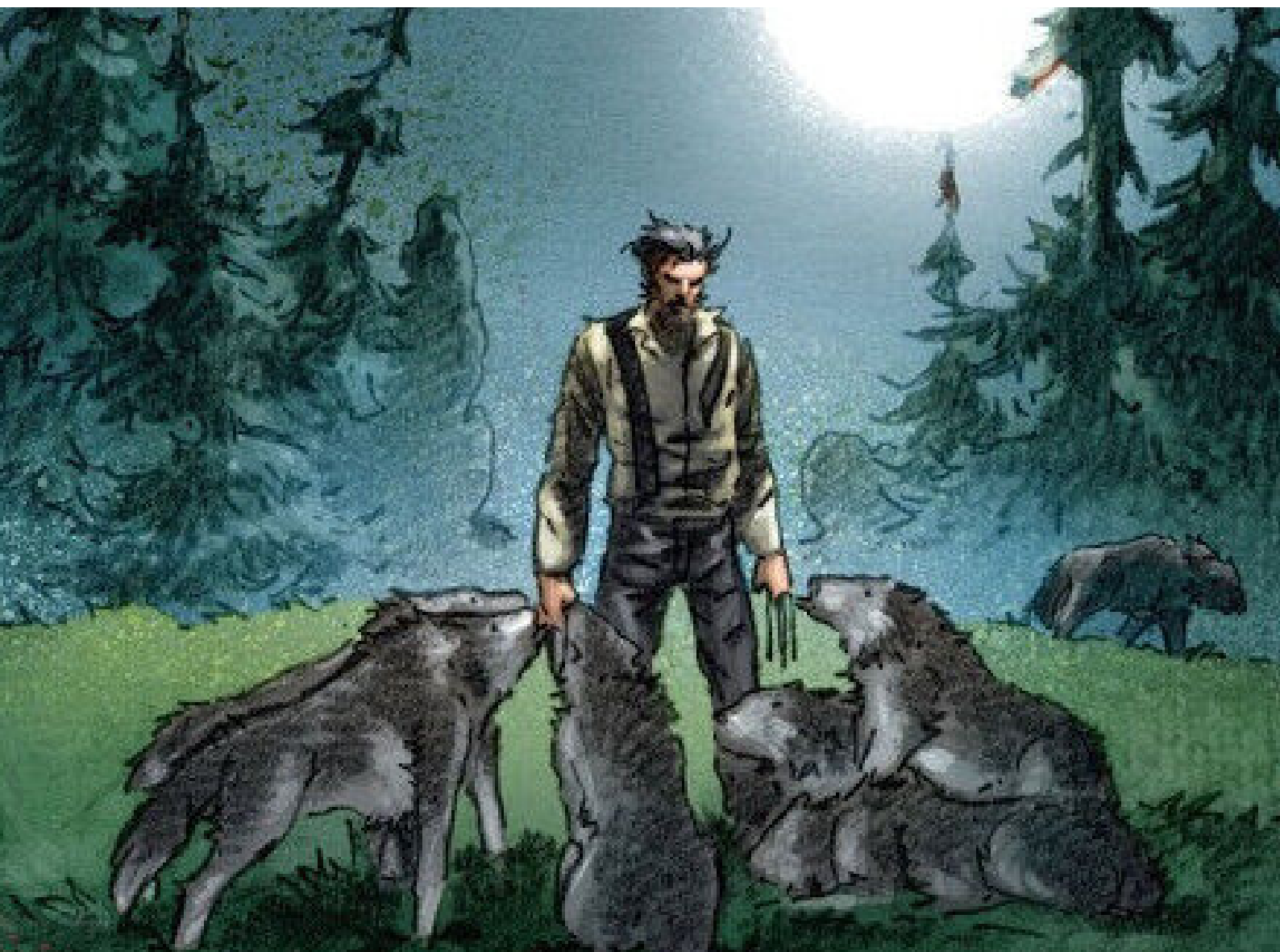
Rose eventually fell in love with a man named Smitty, Logan's mentor. They became engaged and as much as it pained him, Wolverine accepted the relationship because it made Rose happy.



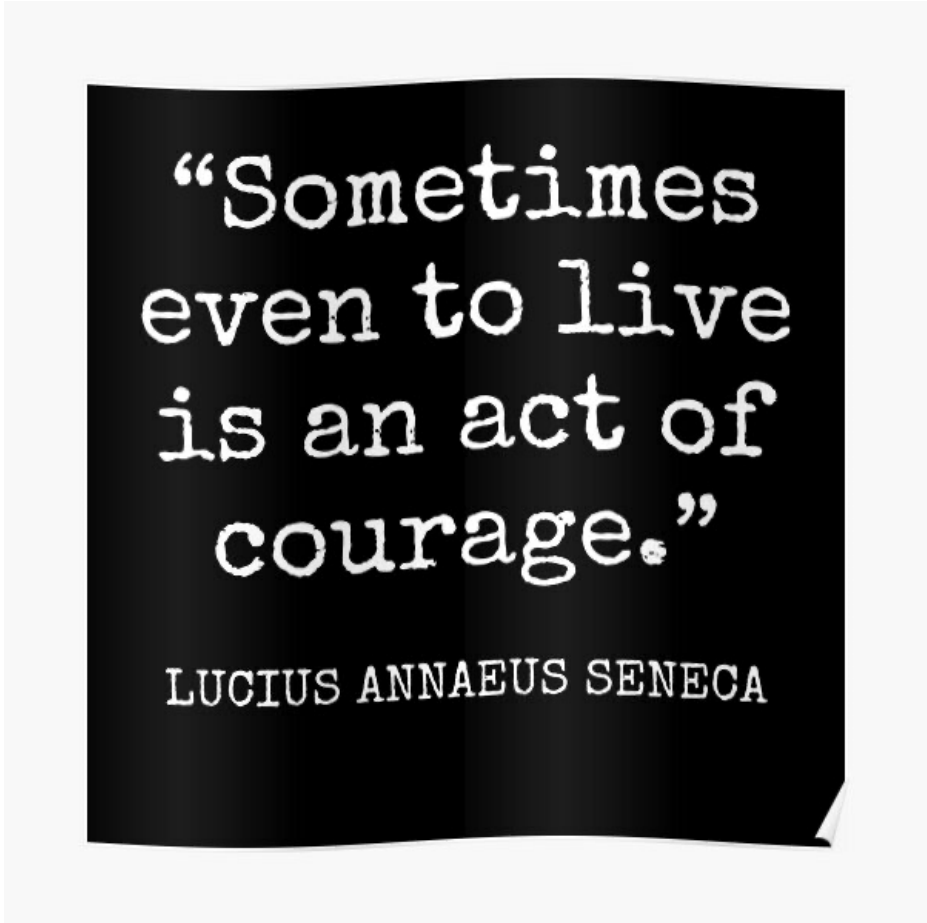
All seemed well until a ghost from the past returned: Dog.

He attacked Logan and as brutal as he was, Dog was no match for Wolverine's healing factor and animal strength.

Wolverine planned to kill him, only for Rose to try and stop him. In the confusion, she accidentally impaled herself on his claws. The trauma of her death forced Wolverine's mind to shut down and he ran off into the wilderness.



So continued a chain of tragic events that came to hang over Wolverine's head like a black cloud...



“Sometimes  
even to live  
is an act of  
courage.”

LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA

## WHAT IS THE WOLVERINE METHOD OF ENDURING?

Viewing endurance through the lens of Wolverine’s life is fascinating. On a superficial level, we can take it to mean his superpowers. Logan’s main ability is his healing factor. He can recover rapidly from injury and it’s given him a long physical life.

We can also look at it from a mental perspective. Wolverine’s healing factor extends to his mind, repairing psychic trauma and forcibly removing painful memories. For a long part of his history, Logan didn’t know anything about his past and even though the pain was gone, the trauma still endured within him.



It's in Wolverine's spiritual endurance that we see who he is as a man and superhero. Since his powers activated, Logan has struggled with the feral side of his personality. He's lapsed into a berserker rage, lashing out like a wild animal and losing control.



This berserker rage is a curse and a blessing. On one hand, Wolverine's bestial side has caused him a lot of pain and drove him to kill people he's cared about. On the other hand, it's also saved his life by keeping him alive in dangerous situations.



# WOLVERINE AND



The dichotomy of these two sides defines Wolverine. His personal philosophy acts as a powerful coping mechanism and it was born in Japan.

Wolverine first came to The Land Of The Rising Sun in the years before WW2 to train in eastern philosophies and calm his animal instinct.

He studied under Ogun, one of the world's greatest martial artists, and learned a variety of techniques.





Since then, Logan has experienced some of his greatest highs and lows in Japan. It's had a profound effect on his worldview, representing honour, peace and duty. At his core, Wolverine is a ronin, a failed samurai constantly seeking redemption and it's the philosophy of bushido that keeps him moving.







# THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Bushido is the philosophy of the samurai, translating to the way of the warrior. It's a moral code that's loosely tied to the European idea of chivalry and there's a lot of complexity surrounding the idea.

Like all philosophies, there are positive and negative aspects and it's important to point out historical samurai were products of their time. Samurai means 'one who serves' and at their worst, they could be street thugs and at their best they were fiercely devoted warriors who served their masters and fell in line with the traditional image of a knight in shining armour.

Wolverine is aware of these complexities, choosing to adhere to the aspects of bushido that promote loyalty, honour and protecting the innocent. He lives by the seven key virtues.





# THE SEVEN VIRTUES OF BUSHIDO

義

**GI**

Integrity

Be acutely honest throughout your dealings with all people. Believe in justice, not from other people, but from yourself. To the true warrior, all points of view are deeply considered regarding honesty, justice and integrity.



Warriors make a full commitment to their decisions.

礼

**REI**

Respect

True warriors have no reason to be cruel. They do not need to prove their strength. Warriors are courteous even to their enemies. Warriors are not only respected for their strength in battle, but also by their dealings with others.



The true strength of a warrior becomes apparent during difficult times.

勇

**YU**

Heroic Courage

Hiding like a turtle in a shell is not living at all. A true warrior must have heroic courage. It is absolutely risky. It is living life completely, fully, and wonderfully.



Heroic courage is not blind. It is intelligent and strong.

名誉

**MEIYO**

Honor

Warriors have only one judge of honor and character, and this is themselves. Decisions they make and how these decisions are carried out is a reflection of whom they truly are.



You cannot hide from yourself.

仁

**JIN**

Compassion

Through intense training and hard work the true warrior becomes quick and strong. They are not as most people. They develop a power that must be used for good. They have compassion. They help their fellow man at every opportunity.



If an opportunity does not arise, they go out of their way to find one.

真

**MAKOTO**

Honesty and Sincerity

When warriors say that they will perform an action, it is as good as done. Nothing will stop them from completing what they say they will do. They do not have to "give their word" They do not have to "promise".



Speaking and doing are the same action.

忠義

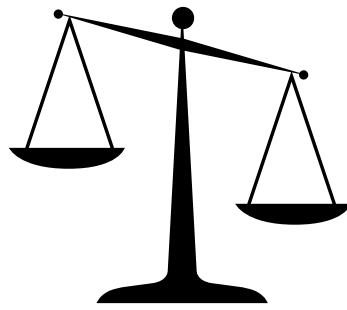
**CHU**

Duty and Loyalty

Warriors are responsible for everything that they have said. And all of the consequences that follow. They are immensely loyal to all of those in their care.



To everyone that they are responsible for, they remain true.



**1. Gi/Justice:** Also viewed as rectitude, a samurai knows how to bring justice to any situation.

“Rectitude is one’s power to decide upon a course of conduct in accordance with reason, without wavering; to die when to die is right, to strike when to strike is right.” – Nitobe Inazo



**2. Rei/Courtesy:** In the Japanese sense of the word, courtesy is linked to benevolence. It’s not just having good manners. It’s having empathy for everyone you meet.

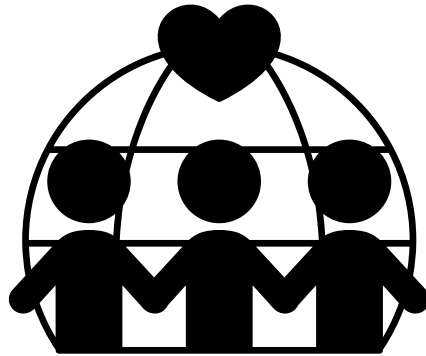


**3. Yu/Courage:** In the context of bushido, courage is acting with righteousness.





**4. Makoto/Sincerity:** Samurai were taught not to find value in materialistic things like money and luxury. Value came from seeking wisdom and using external things to live a virtuous life.



**5. Jin/Compassion:** A samurai was expected to use force when necessary and be able to show mercy and compassion to his foes.



**6. Meiyo/Honour:** A sense of honour meant being someone who kept their word, having patience, treating people fairly and more.

“The sense of honour, a vivid consciousness of personal dignity and worth, characterised the samurai. He was born and bred to value the duties and privileges of his profession. Fear of disgrace hung like a sword over the head of every samurai ... To take offense at slight provocation was ridiculed as ‘short-tempered.’ As the popular adage put it: ‘True patience means bearing the unbearable.’” – Nitobe Inazo



**7. Chu/Loyalty:** Samurai were expected to be loyal to friends, lords, family and society as a whole.







## STOIC INSIGHTS FROM WOLVERINE

Bushido is arguably the main philosophy Wolverine chooses to embrace. But there are aspects of other schools of thought in the character, particularly Stoicism. This Hellenistic school was founded in Ancient Greece and is built on four virtues of justice, self-control, wisdom and courage. (See the similarities with bushido?)

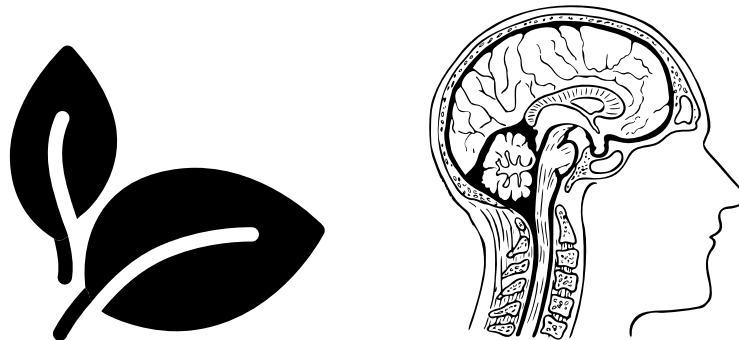
I'm not saying Wolverine is pure Stoic. What I'm saying is there are certain Stoic lessons that can be taken from how he lives his life. They are:

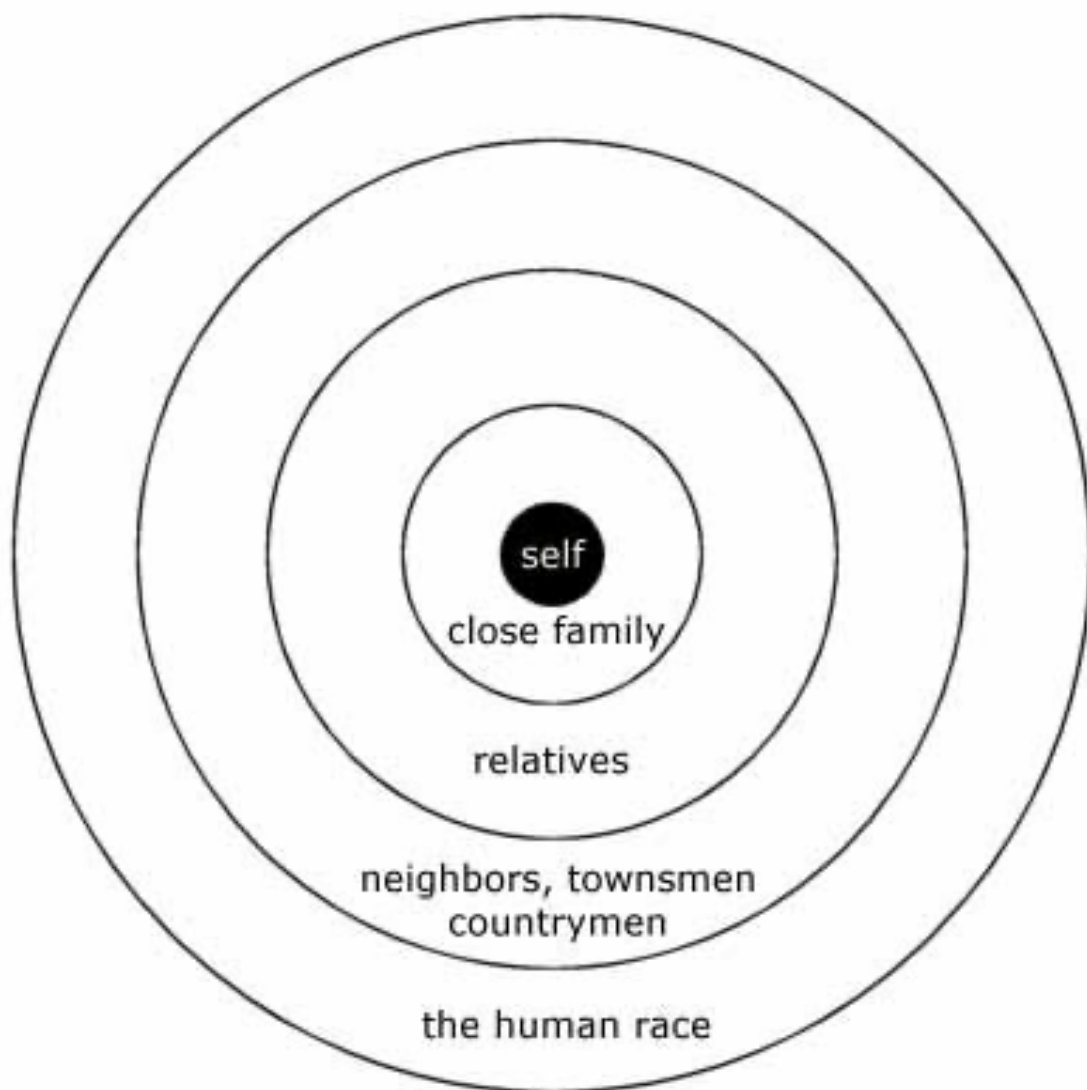
# Living In Accordance With Nature

The ancient Stoics believed in living in accordance with nature. This means living in harmony with the wider universe, with the people around you, with plants and animals and with yourself.

Logan's version of this is trying to reconcile the animal and the man that lives inside of him. He may never find the perfect balance or get it right all the time. But he's come to accept his nature and he strives to be better than he was the day before.

This gels with the idea of the Stoic sage, a person who has achieved complete enlightenment. Getting to that point is unlikely yet we can all strive to live that ideal.





## **Adopting The Circles Of Concern**

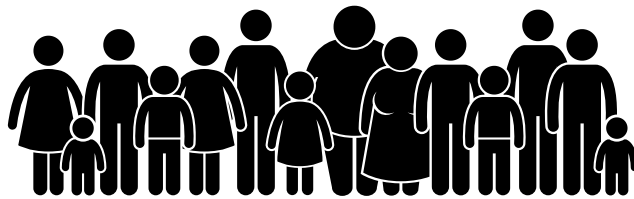
In Stoicism, there's a concept called The Circles Of Concern, an idea proposed by the philosopher Hierocles. This concept was designed to bring more awareness of our surroundings and our sense of self.

The first circle contains the mind/self and the outer circles contain categories of people and roles. For example, the second circle is close family, the third contains relatives etc.



Hierocles' idea was that we should draw each circle closer to our centre and treat each category like members of our immediate circle. This could mean treating friends in the same way we treat our parents and we increase the concern and compassion we show to the rest of humanity.

The Circles Of Concern model is evident in Wolverine's life. His mind is at the centre and he extends his circles out to the X-Men, who he sees as his family, his children Laura Kinney and Daken, people he mentors such as Kitty Pryde and Jubilee and so on.



## **Serve Your Community**

Stoicism emphasises the importance of community. We're all part of a greater cosmopolis of people who have a duty to each other and the universe.

Doing the right thing and serving your community is a way to bring some goodness into the world and Wolverine embodies that attitude as a member of the X-Men. He's like a samurai. A warrior who serves communities that are outside of his own and stays loyal to the things he believes in.

## **Embrace Your Role**

The role you play is another key point in Stoicism, with ancient Stoics like Panaetius of Rhodes and Epictetus proposing acceptance of who you are in the moment.

Are you a father? A friend? A sister? A daughter? Think about the nature of who you need to be at any given time and do your best to live it in relation to the person you're interacting with.

Wolverine has been in a lot of roles: soldier, hero, father, brother, son, vigilante, spy and more. He's struggled against certain roles. He's not always been able to live up to each one but he continues to try.

**"WE CANNOT  
CHOOSE OUR  
EXTERNAL  
CIRCUMSTANCES,  
BUT WE CAN  
ALWAYS CHOOSE  
HOW WE RESPOND  
TO THEM."**

**EPICTETUS**



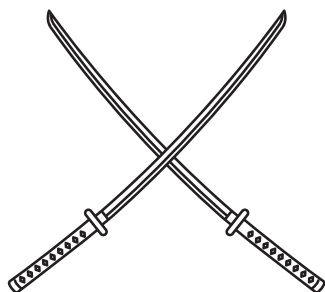
# 10 RANDOM WOLVERINE FACTS FOR COMIC BOOK GEEKS

1. Wolverine's first appearance was in a teaser panel in *The Incredible Hulk* #180, October 1974.
2. In his original backstory, Logan was a mutated wolverine cub who evolved into a man-shaped ball of rage courtesy of a mad scientist. (Yes, really).
3. Writer Chris Claremont and artist Frank Miller were responsible for redefining Wolverine as a failed samurai and connecting him to Japan in the 1980s.
4. Logan once survived six months under a glacier by eating parts of his own arm and letting his healing factor regrow the skin.
5. During one time-travel adventure, Logan invented beer.





6. Wolverine's most dangerous quality isn't his healing factor or claws. It's his mind.
7. Every year Wolverine ventures into Native American wilderness to remind himself that he's more man than animal.
8. The comic version of Wolverine is a short arse. He's 5'3.
9. Logan is fluent in several languages including English, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, Arabic, Lakota, Blackfoot and Cheyenne.
10. Affectionately refers to his claws as the six sisters of doom.





# INSPIRATIONAL WOLVERINE QUOTES TO APPLY TO YOUR LIFE

“

“The key isn't winning or losing. It's making the attempt. I may never be what I ought to be, want to be, but how will I know unless I try? Sure it's scary. But what's the alternative? Stagnation. A safer, more terrible form of death. Not of the body. But of the spirit.”

“An animal knows what it is and accepts it. A man may know what he is, but he questions. He dreams. He strives. Changes. Grows.”

“Inside of me there are two dogs. One of the dogs is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog, all of the time.”  
When asked which dog wins, he reflected for a moment and replied "The one I feed the most."

“There's a part of me as wild an' fierce as my namesake. I'm a hard man.. given to hard ways.. when I fight, it's to win. That isn't pretty, an' it sure isn't nice. But bein' a man.. that means choosin' to grow an' change an' put aside the old ways.”

“A death isn't like losing a job or getting divorced. You don't "get over it." You have to integrate it into your life. Learn to live with it. But... life does get better.”

”



## CLOSING THOUGHTS

**What does it mean to endure?** It means to understand. To be aware of what's going on inside of you. To be conscious of what's going on with other people. To be steadfast in the face of your own failures and to keep showing up for the people who're worth showing up for.

Wolverine has demonstrated all of these facets of endurance and will continue to be a source of resilience, strength and courage for people across all walks of life.





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