

# Recommendations for Happy Living

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This morning I was cleaning up some old files and I came across this list which I had prepared some years ago. It's not very good, but rather than just delete it I will post it here in case someone who is working on a better list might find small parts of it useful.

## Recommendations for Happy Living

1. First, last, and always remember that pleasure is the goal of life. Do not allow yourself to be distracted from this goal. Do not think that virtue is an end in itself. Do not try to reason yourself to something higher and more worthy. Pleasure is the guide given you by Nature. Follow Nature intelligently, and not just for the pleasure of the moment, but for a lifetime. Remember always, and shout to the world, that pleasure is the goal of the best mode of life.

2. If you are not thoroughly convinced that there is no god who wants to reward or punish you for your actions in this life, then drop everything and get your heart straight on this. It is impossible for you to live happily if you fear reward or punishment by gods. The best way to convince yourself of these truths is to study nature. You will find that the evidence confirms in your mind that the universe as a whole has always existed, and it was not created by any god to make you a plaything. Another way to understand this is to remember that almost all people who believe in a supernatural god believe that he/she/it/they are both immortal and blissfully happy. Why would an immortal and blissfully happy god want to spend time harassing you or making your life miserable, or hoping you will tell him "thanks for everything?" Work on this until you have thoroughly understood what is at stake.

3. If you are not convinced that this life is the only one you have; if you think that your life is just a warm-up for the big event to come later in heaven; if you think that you are just a speck of dust in an infinite universe and your life means nothing - drop everything and get your heart right on these issues. You are not going to be punished or rewarded after your death. Your death ENDS your consciousness. Period. Nothing afterward. Nothing! That is not a problem, because you won't be there to know it, but if you don't understand that the time you have in this life is all you have, then you are wasting time. Work on understanding that pronto before you waste another minute thinking that you have all the time in the world.

4. Do not be discouraged by those who tell you that pleasure should not be your goal because the desire for it can never be satisfied. You are a human being and you have a limited lifetime and a limited capacity. You can work to experience all the pleasure that is possible to you, and you can work to reduce the pain that you experience to pay for that pleasure to a minimum. That is the goal nature set for you. Don't argue with her.

5. Do not spend your life obsessing about running from pain. Any pain that comes your way that is terrible will not last long - it will kill you and you won't know it anymore. Any pain that comes your way that is not terrible will be manageable, and you will learn to bear it if you keep in mind that you will experience nothing after death, so that pleasure experienced now is worth the bearable pain that it costs you.

6. Keep in mind that in order to live happily you must live wisely, honestly, and justly. You can't live happily unless you do, but IF you do, you WILL live happily. But don't get confused. You are NOT living in order to be wise, honest, or just. You are living in order to be happy. If you forget the priority and reverse them, you will end in disaster. And that is why you must:

7. Never forget that other people are NOT all your friends, and many of them will try to take advantage of you in many ways. You must protect yourself from these people, and ANY means that you find necessary to protect yourself from them is sanctioned by nature.

8. Do not let the world convince you that fame and status and power will make your life happy. Many people pursue that and are totally miserable. You have to judge the proper amount of all of those to pursue according to one goal: living pleurably under your personal circumstances.

9. As you pursue pleasure, don't let someone else tell you that what you find pleasurable is no good. ALL pleasures are good, but some pleasures come at a cost of pain that you will find to be too great. Judge the things you choose and avoid solely by that criteria: how much pleasure and pain will result from the action I am about to take?

10. Don't allow yourself to stress out that you aren't achieving what you think is some totally blissful pleasure. Remember that if you attained a state where you were overwhelmed by that pleasure and experienced nothing else, you would never be able to experience other pleasures. That would get boring very fast. No matter how cute she is.

11. If you haven't yet convinced yourself that pleasure is the goal of life, remember again that ALL PLEASURES ARE GOOD, and the ONLY guide Nature gave you to life is the faculty of perceiving pleasure and pain. If the pleasures of pulling the wings off flies IN FACT led to happy living, no one would have any right to laugh at you for spending all your time doing that. But you have to eat. You have to get clothing and shelter. You have to learn to protect yourself from whooping cough and sleep apnea. If you spend all your time pulling the wings off of flies, you will never learn to do those things, and you will wake up all night wheezing and with a terrible Antisthenesheadache in the morning. Don't let that happen to you.

12. Prepare an outline of your understanding of Epicurean philosophy to enhance your understanding, because as Epicurus said in the letter to Herodotus, you don't frequently need all the details, but you do frequently need to refer to the main points and be able to find the rest.

13. Surround yourself as much as possible with beneficial images (visual) and thoughts (philosophy).