

# **NPR Fresh Air: Dr. Anna Lembke on pleasure, pain, and addiction**

**Post by "Cassius" of August 28, 2021 at 3:28 PM**

I don't have a problem really with considering the experience of feeling balanced and in equilibrium as a pleasure.

The bogie-man I am always on the lookout for is the identification of any particular type of pleasure as higher or better than the rest, because then I think the advocate of such a position has fatally undermined the logic of the position that "pleasure" is the greatest good.

I prefer to think of the pleasure of eating ice cream while also feeling in balance, or in equilibrium, as the best way to describe what is being discussed.

At any particular time I think we're experiencing a lot of different pleasures (and pains, unfortunately) and at a high level we're looking for the net sum of everything. We might be crippled or have lost a leg, and have pain in our remaining stub of a leg, but otherwise be living a confident and successful life full of all sorts of pleasures. It wouldn't be right to say that the pain we experience in that situation doesn't exist, but it also wouldn't be right to say that the loss of the leg totally ruins a life that is otherwise highly pleasurable.

I don't think you're likely to go in the direction I am concerned about Don, but I am very confident that the Okeefe "Epicurus had a special definition of pleasure as absence of pain" crowd (not to single him out but just as an example) \*would\* go in that direction. They are constantly defining katastematic pleasure as the highest pleasure, saying that active pleasure (including joy and delight) are useful only to get to that state of painlessness, and strongly planting in the minds of their readers that that state has nothing to do with what ordinary mortals think of as "pleasure" at all.

There's no doubt that certain portions of the texts can be read that way, and I can't say enough bad about that position, so it's a constant struggle to make sure that it doesn't creep in when in truth the waging of a campaign against it (and thus to place ordinary pleasure back in its rightful place, as per Gosling & Taylor, [Nikolsky](#), and yes even DeWitt) is probably one of the main reasons for this forum. 😊