

Guide to resuming / sustaining activity after being frozen / stuck

Post by “Julia” of November 7, 2024 at 9:10 AM

The Guidance of Satisfaction

Upon committing to pleasure as the guide to life, it becomes apparent that a calculated embrace of certain pains is a necessary evil. (For example: The mind requires a recurrent experience of discomfort to derive pleasure from comforts. The human body requires movement to stay healthy. Avoidance of work results in the pains of poverty (for most people), and even inconsequential procrastination leads to an anguish of the soul.) While I know this rationally, I struggle putting it into practice, and this self-sabotage is an unnecessary pain in itself. Furthermore, I know cognitively that I can be happy along the way by keeping my goal in mind and thus savouring the pleasure derived from completion of each (painful) step (and in this sense, pleasure guides my life by allowing me to measure my success (according to the needs and wants of my body, mind, and soul, not necessarily according to societal prescription), which means pleasure remains my guide while I'm engaged in painful tasks). Despite this, I am recurrently tempted by ill-advised short-term pleasures and immediate gratification, which makes me struggle to get going and keep going. It is important for me to specifically pursue satisfaction – the pleasure of reward –, as opposed to just any pleasure (see [post #6 here](#) for more explanation). Of course, your mileage may vary, but here is how things work for me: In my mind, there is a conscious, cognitive process, which happens somewhat automatically, and is recurrent sufficiently often without deliberate intervention. This process acts as a hedonic calculator to determine my mid- to long-term plans. In contrast, any short-term planning is something I need to perform as a deliberate part of my daily practice (if I don't write it down, I sleepwalk through mindless, unstructured days). In order to stick to these short-term plans (which are the steps towards my mid- to long-term plans), I cannot (yet?) think of "pleasure" as my guide and goal, because that would get me derailed by opportunities for immediate gratification. Instead, I need to align my feelings, thoughts and actions with maximising "satisfaction" (instead of "pleasure"). By specifically focussing on satisfaction, I can stick to my plans *much* better. Because this serves to maximise the long-term net sum of all my pleasures, it just adds an intermediate layer, is merely an aid for translating mid- to high-level Epicurean philosophy into immediate, low-level actions (see [this thread](#) for more on that).

To assist me in overcoming the initial resistance when starting a challenging activity, and also to assist me in staying with it, in seeing things through, I use this post to gradually compile a list of cherry-picked, *concise, formulaic* quotes of why and how Epicureans embrace delayed gratification and pleasures which require prior, recurring struggle to capture:

- As The Good is easy to get, So The Bad is patiently met. (Philodemus; Tetrastichos; [Hedonicon translation](#))
- We are born once and cannot be born twice, but for all time must be no more. But you, who are not master of tomorrow, postpone your happiness. Life is wasted in procrastination, and each one of us dies while occupied. ([VS14](#))
- To grow accustomed therefore to simple and not luxurious diet gives us health to the full, and makes one alert for the needful employments of life, and when after long intervals we approach luxuries disposes us better towards them, and fits us to be fearless of fortune. ([Letter To Menoecus](#), 131)

Please see the cross reference for why "satisfaction" is *not* a the guide to life; it is merely a helpful trick to not neglect Choice (to not be stuck in Avoidance).

Cross Reference / Related Threads:

- [Why isn't "satisfaction" the guide to life?](#)
- [Aspects of Pleasure - Dopamine, Endorphine, Continuity](#)
- [Why Do We Consider The Absence of Pain To Be Pleasure?](#)