

Marriage & children seem less pleasurable today: financial worry, relational problems, high rates of divorce. Are they worth the pain (tarakhē τάραχή) they entail?

Post by “Noah Calderon” of July 2, 2026 at 9:11 AM

Marriage and children don't seem to have been out of the question for Epicureans, but Epicurus and his followers definitely seemed to place more emphasis on friendship more generally than on pair-bonding, romance, and reproduction. This makes sense because strong friendship and community provide the strongest and most natural sense of security and freedom from worry about not having access to the necessary things in life. It would require a lot of zeroes to already be in one's bank statement or budget to be confident that raising children would be pleasurable enough to justify the cost, as this post points out. Having a good group of friends one is on equal grounds with allows one to spread costs and energy and also just amplifies enjoyment. The same goes for your friendship with the person you are producing the children with or who you are marrying. Lacking respect or equality in gender relations might engender resentment and pain and distort the relationship which should be one of support and mutual pleasure.

Of course, the environment one lives in must also be conducive to raising children, but that veers into how we organize society and therefore politics. If we're looking for just advice for the Epicurean on raising children and marrying, I would say the philosophy makes it quite clear that you have to have a strong community and strong friendships (especially with the person you are marrying) first. Maybe seeing these things as purely individual or familial is eroding the personal pleasure they produce, and placed in the context of supportive friendships they become more bearable. In any case, that's the reason I am personally not prioritizing them as a young person, and I live in a country with very supportive politics for childrearing.

On this note it would be interesting to hear from anyone on this forum that has researched what the marriage institution in Epicurean communities in ancient times actually looked like, and how it might have differed from today.