

What is an Epicurean viewpoint on dealing with anxiety? Of losing the pleasures that one holds dearest, such as losing friendships or a pet being sick?

Post by "Cassius" of November 23, 2019 at 7:30 AM

To start, Epicurus held (according to his biography) that the wise man (the Epicurean) will feel his emotions more deeply than will other people. So the first point of observation is that it is entirely appropriate to feel loss in those situations you mention. To attempt to suppress a natural and appropriate emotion would be Stoicism, not Epicurean philosophy.

Next, and others will have many other ideas, it would be natural to ask whether the situation can be changed or not. Loss of a friend or pet may not be, but if you mention anxiety or a temporary situation that can be changed, then Epicurus is all about using your faculties to take control of what can be controlled (since he does not believe in fate) to take appropriate action (such as medical care if the anxiety or condition stems from something that is treatable) or simply acting to deal with the situation, like changing jobs or some other action appropriate to the situation.

So what I want to stress in this preliminary response is that Epicurean philosophy is not about "enduring" any pain that can be fixed, nor is it about suppressing feelings of pain that are legitimate under the circumstances.