

Recommendations for Happy Living

Post by "Cassius" of March 2, 2021 at 8:10 AM

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).

Post by “Marco” of November 17, 2021 at 3:46 AM

I find it really useful. What would you change? What is wrong with it? (I just want to learn)

Post by “Cassius” of November 17, 2021 at 1:20 PM

I think my reference to not very good was more a reference to could be better style rather than a problem with the content. As I glance over it now I am still good with the basic thrust of it.

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 17, 2021 at 2:13 PM

This has useful ideas and with some modifications it could become an "official" Epicurean pamphlet.

Suggestions for a few changes and additions.

#7 - is there source material on this? (though it's true, yet it sounds a bit "dark")

#10 - delete "No matter how cute she is." (Or change it to: "No matter how cute *they* are.")

#11 - change the "pulling wings off flies" analogy to something else such as playing Pokemon.

#13 - add a bit more of an explanation on this point

Add something about natural justice (?)

Possibly site reference numbers to PD's, etc.

Post by “Cassius” of November 17, 2021 at 3:53 PM

Those are great suggestions thank you!

As to number seven, that's mainly a reference to:

[PD06](#). Whatever you can provide yourself with to secure protection from men is a natural good.

[PD39](#). The man who has best ordered the element of disquiet arising from external circumstances has made those things that he could akin to himself, and the rest at least not alien; but with all to which he could not do even this, he has refrained from mixing, and has expelled from his life all which it was of advantage to treat thus.

[PD40](#). As many as possess the power to procure complete immunity from their neighbors, these also live most pleasantly with one another, since they have the most certain pledge of security, and, after they have enjoyed the fullest intimacy, they do not lament the previous departure of a dead friend, as though he were to be pitied.

And:

Yet nevertheless some men indulge without limit their avarice, ambition and love of power, lust, gluttony and those other desires, which ill-gotten gains can never diminish but rather must inflame the more; inasmuch that they appear proper subjects for restraint rather than for reformation. (from the Torquatus material in On Ends Book 1)

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 17, 2021 at 10:08 PM

The title of this thread "Recommendations for Happy Living" gives me ideas for creating a very simplified version of an Epicurean pamphlet that could be part of a posting that could be put up on community bulletin boards announcing Epicurean philosophy discussions (for local, in person meetings).

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 17, 2021 at 10:22 PM

Actually should be: 1) a pamphlet with that title, and 2) a separate bulletin poster.

Happiness is also in the idea of finding new friends while creating a happy shared worldview.

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 17, 2021 at 11:26 PM

[Principal Doctrines, by Epicurus](#)

Of all the things that wisdom provides for the
27. complete happiness of one's entire life, by far
the greatest is friendship. [[note](#)]

ὤν ἡ σοφία παρασκευάζεται εἰς τὴν τοῦ
ἄλλου βίου μακαριότητα πολὺ μέγιστόν ἐστιν
ἡ τῆς φιλίας κτήσις.

Post by “Cassius” of November 18, 2021 at 10:20 AM

Kalosyni it occurs to me to mention that I would have no problem with you taking my draft and adopting / adapting it in any way that you see fit if you'd like to pursue these thoughts in greater detail.

One of my key presumptions of everything that I do here is that it is all so heavily based on Epicurus and the ancient Epicureans that I can't imagine complaining about someone taking my writings and adapting them for their own use, just as I do from the Epicureans, so feel free.

Post by “Marco” of November 19, 2021 at 6:51 AM

Cassius, could you explain this? Is it some kind of cynical thinking, and an epicurean shouldn't worry about being a speck of dust in the universe?

....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.

Post by “Cassius” of November 19, 2021 at 7:05 AM

This was an allusion to "nihilism" - the emphasis is on what it means to think that "your life means nothing" - and the heart of that issue is the question of "meaningfulness."

Yes you are indeed made up of atoms and void, and in the Epicurean view there is no "divine spark" mixed in. So if you are looking at the entire situation in terms of matter and space, you are indeed a speck in a huge extent of space.

Does that mean you should consider yourself to be in every respect the equivalent of dirt, and recklessly spend your time as if it were no concern of yours whether you lived or died?

That's the direction I am going with that statement.

Does your life in fact mean anything to the universe? No - the universe is not an animate object and has no concern or evaluation of you.

Does the fact that the universe has no concern or evaluation of you mean anything to you? I would say that Epicurus would answer that by his many statements about the value to us of the pleasure of living, which is implicitly in fact our highest value. There are times when we do voluntarily give up our lives, but we don't make that decision by asking "Universe, should we give up our life today?"

So both are true - we are indeed in terms of quantity a speck in a huge expanse of space. But at the same times, our lives are of most important value to us, so that we should focus our effort on using our time the "best" way possible. And we have to have a philosophical judgment as to what is the "best way possible."

Post by "Kalosyni" of November 20, 2021 at 2:21 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

our lives are of most important value to us, so that we should focus our effort on using our time the "best" way possible. And we have to have a philosophical judgment as to what is the "best way possible."

What I find valuable about this forum (Cassius@ under your direct guidance) is that you advocate that each individual should be allowed to make their own choices as to what the "best way possible" is. Of course, we assume that we have developed the wisdom to make choices that are ethical, and so we don't choose to do things that cause any pain or suffering to others.

As to personal choices, I myself won't ever choose bungee jumping or sky diving, and yet there could be considered a place in "hedonism" for those who have high testosterone levels and seek to enjoy themselves in potentially risky or intense sensory experiences. I think these kinds of choices would be considered a "modern" interpretation of Epicureanism. Epicurus himself led a quiet life and I can't see him wanting to do any risky behaviors. There is much more sweet pleasure to be had in the "Garden".

Quote

"To-morrow, dearest Piso, your friend, beloved by the Muses, who keeps our annual feast of the twentieth * invites you to come after the ninth hour to his simple cottage. If you miss udders and draughts of Chian wine, you will see at least sincere friends and you will hear things far sweeter than the land of the Phaeacians. But if you ever cast your eyes on me, Piso, we shall celebrate the twentieth richly instead of simply."

<http://www.attalus.org/poetry/philodemus.html>

Post by "Cassius" of November 20, 2021 at 2:52 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Of course, we assume that we have developed the wisdom to make choices that are ethical, and so we don't choose to do things that cause any pain or suffering to others.

One of the most challenging issues (ask Don! 😊) is that this wording itself probably has to be parsed, because there is no list if ethical vs non ethical to consult, and in the end Epicurus says there are no such lists. There's no guarantee that everyone feels pain when another person is harmed, and some in fact take pleasure in it in some circumstances. In the end much of the pain that can be expected to come from hurting other people depends on the circumstance that we can expect that others will punish us for that action, and if we have reason to expect that we will not be punished, that motivation will not exist.

All of which is not intended to invoke rabbit hunting, but to be a reminder that there are no supernatural forces lurking in the background to tell us what is ethical, or waiting to punish those who are unethical. Even back to Epicurus' time the majority thinks that such bright lines and supernatural forces do exist, so it's very interesting to think about how we should internalize and act on that knowledge.

Post by “Don” of November 21, 2021 at 7:14 AM

Interestingly, Epicurus doesn't seem to refer to ethics and morals but just and unjust actions. I did a quick search for ηθικός (ēthikos - same word for ethics/morals) in Diogenes Laërtius's Book X on Epicurus and the only instances are where someone is talking about Epicurus, not from his own writing. Even the translation is misleading. Epicurus's Περί Τέλος (Peri Telos) is translated in the Perseus Digital Library as "On the Ethical End" but ethical is chosen by the translator. Telos is goal, fulfillment, etc. That modifier ethical doesn't occur in the Greek. And, as I understand, ηθικός is simply the "right" way to live, to conduct one's life. So, I'm sure the word shows up in Epicurus's writings, but it seems to me that he was much more concerned with just and unjust rather than what we would characterize as moral/immoral or ethical/unethical.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In the end much of the pain that can be expected to come from hurting other people depends on the circumstance that we can expect that others will punish us for that action, and if we have reason to expect that we will not be punished, that motivation will not exist.

I would also add that, in a society or community, even if the person harming other people is sociopathic and feels no remorse or anxiety, we - as members of society- have put in structures and "contracts" to deal with "injustice" to keep ourselves safe.

Post by “Cassius” of November 21, 2021 at 7:36 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

we - as members of society- have put in structures and "contracts" to deal with "injustice" to keep ourselves safe.

Yes hopefully so - but whether they are in fact in place is one of those contextual circumstances which has to be considered in projecting what will happen if we take particular actions. The point of writing this being that there is no supernatural automatic enforcement mechanism like the religious majority believes to be the case.

Post by “Don” of November 21, 2021 at 11:48 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

there is no supernatural automatic enforcement mechanism like the religious majority believes to be the case.

Oh, definitely. Agreed. You're not "going to Hell" if you're "immoral" or "unethical."

Post by “Cassius” of November 21, 2021 at 1:04 PM

Yep. Nor is there a book in which you can find an absolute list of "things that are and are not ethical.". I think that is probably the harder pill to swallow.

We hate the things we find unjust, and we need to act against them, but we shouldn't confuse our own views with those of God or Nature.

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 21, 2021 at 3:08 PM

Quote

A Call to Joyous Epicurean Living

Rejoice in the joys of the spirit. Rise up and dance! For the spirit keeps safe the seat of wisdom. Partake in the joys of the body often and with prudence. For the spirit animates the body and it knows the wisest way to enjoy living.

As the ancient song of Seiklos says: "While you live, shine! Have no grief at all. Life exists only for a short while, and time demands its due."

The spirit does not live forever, as some may believe. For it only comes to animate the flesh just as heat comes from a burning fire. And when the heat of the body dissipates, so too does the spirit.

And just as a kernel of wheat ripens, so too the spirit ripens with experience of wisdom. Even in the midst of a feast of pleasure, you must always hold pain in its proper place, or you will lose the benefit of its guidance. For pain always guides one who makes foolish mistakes. By pain we learn what to avoid, and by pain we learn wisdom. A life of joy takes no pride in pain or the endurance of painful over-indulgences. Instead, a life of joy rejoices in the merits of wisdom, the fullness of delight, and the intimacy of uplifting friendship.

<https://epicureanphilosophyblog.blogspot.com/2021/11/joyful-right-living.html>

Display More

Post by “Cassius” of November 21, 2021 at 3:35 PM

That's a nice start to a website!

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 22, 2021 at 12:06 AM

Thanks! And I hope to start an in person philosophy group next year in January. So I have a bit time till then to do more blogging and set up some very basic introductory Epicurean philosophy pages.

Post by “Cassius” of November 22, 2021 at 6:22 AM

That is great and I wish you lots of success!

Post by “kochiekoch” of December 5, 2023 at 9:12 PM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1906-recommendations-for-happy-living/>

An Epicurean style take on happiness I stumbled upon:

[What actually makes us happy \(axios.com\)](#)

Gotta love it:

>>**Know what counts** as connection. Focus on real-time communication, which isn't a text or posting on someone's social media feed. As primates, we're evolved for live conversations, which can be virtual.<<

>>**Happiness doesn't mean** dispelling all negative emotions, which are part of what make us human. "I think especially in the tough times we're dealing with, negative emotions are normative. We need to pay attention to them because they're signaling changes that we need to make," Santos says. "Happiness really is about a decent ratio of positive to negative emotions."<<

Post by “Bryan” of December 6, 2023 at 9:58 AM

I can confidently give one recommendation — do not watch television! I was fortunate enough to grow up in a house without television and I sill keep a far distance from it just as I would for any other screaming lunatic. Life IS easy and great — but your TV will argue against this fact!

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of December 6, 2023 at 10:54 AM

[Quote from Bryan](#)

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Social media too, if you want to be filled with anxiety about your weight, finances etc... spending an hour on insta or tiktok is a great way to achieve it.

Post by “Kalosyni” of December 6, 2023 at 4:16 PM

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

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Some anxiety is your conscience warning you of possible pain in the future. Of course things on the internet can often be "over the top" and annoying.

Yet these are practical issues...when it comes to weight, modern medicine gives tips for a range of what is considered a healthy weight based on height and gender. As for finances, it is important to consider your long-term situation, and thus relieve the anxiety by brainstorming solutions to any improvements that are needed and thus increase confidence in a sense of long-term security ...and this includes knowing which friend or family member would let you sleep on their couch if things went really wrong for whatever reason (but hopefully you've got all bases covered so nothing really wrong will ever happen).

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of December 6, 2023 at 4:21 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

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will ever happen).

Yeah some anxiety can be useful to avoid future pains (obviously we don't want anxiety at all but none of us has reached Epicurean Theosis yet 😊)

I guess the anxiety I was referring too was more seeing men who are on enhancement drugs and comparing or hundred millionaire lifestyles etc.. My anxiety was caused by unnatural and unnecessary desires rather than natural and necessary ones as you mentioned! Thank you for helping me clarify my own thoughts.

Post by “Pacatus” of December 6, 2023 at 6:22 PM

Ironically, financial anxiety was much higher in the years we had an income three times greater than today (we live in a small apartment now, on a fixed income; but are fortunate enough to have saved some assets). Partly because we were hit with some high-cost situations – but mostly because we were not at all frugal, and had running debt we tried to juggle. Some of that changed during our life-simplification years in the country.

Although we use credit cards to pay regular bills, we pay that off every month and never carry a balance – so we are effectively debt free. Our celebrations are simpler in fare, but just as festive in spirit. We just live in a simpler, more frugal comfort. Any brief anxieties are situational and short-lived (and, for me, as often as not knee-jerk reactivity – still a bit ingrained – but which I am able to dispel rather quickly).

As for guilt-anxiety – I pretty much let that go. Regrets can either be amended or not, that's all. If so, I try to do that; if not, it's sad but can't be helped – so no sense clinging to it.