

Chatgpt on how to live the Epicurean life in todays society... overall not great

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of October 23, 2023 at 10:39 AM

Living an Epicurean life in today's society can be a rewarding pursuit, as many of its core principles can be applied to modern life. Here are some practical ways to incorporate Epicurean philosophy into your contemporary lifestyle:

1. **Cultivate Simplicity:** Simplify your life by focusing on the essential and eliminating unnecessary complexities. This can involve decluttering your physical space, reducing your commitments, and prioritizing what truly brings you joy and contentment.
2. **Embrace Moderation:** Enjoy life's pleasures in moderation. Epicurus believed that overindulgence could lead to pain and suffering. Instead of excessive consumption, savor and appreciate the simple pleasures in life.
3. **Prioritize Genuine Friendships:** Cultivate meaningful, trustworthy, and genuine friendships. Spend time with people who bring you happiness and support your well-being. Building and maintaining strong social connections is a fundamental aspect of Epicurean philosophy.
4. **Practice Mindfulness:** Be present and mindful in your daily life. Savor the sensory experiences of the moment, whether it's enjoying a good meal, a beautiful sunset, or a conversation with a friend.
5. **Seek Intellectual Pleasures:** Pursue intellectual pleasures by engaging in lifelong learning, reading, and philosophical exploration. Epicurus believed that the highest form of pleasure is intellectual, so feed your mind with knowledge and meaningful ideas.
6. **Limit Unnecessary Desires:** Examine your desires and distinguish between what is truly necessary for a happy life and what is excessive. Reducing unnecessary wants can lead to greater contentment.
7. **Mitigate Fear of Death:** Address existential fears, including the fear of death, by embracing the idea that death is a natural part of life. Focus on living fully in the present moment and making the most of your time.
8. **Practice Self-Care:** Take care of your physical and mental well-being. Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep contribute to a healthy and happy life.
9. **Live in Harmony with Nature:** Epicurus believed that living in harmony with nature was essential for happiness. This can mean respecting the environment, spending time in nature, and aligning your lifestyle with natural rhythms.
10. **Reject Consumerism:** Be mindful of the pursuit of material possessions and consumerism. Epicurean philosophy encourages you to find contentment in what you have, rather than constantly seeking more.

11. **Practice Philanthropy and Altruism:** Helping others and contributing to your community can be a source of happiness. Acts of kindness and philanthropy can create a sense of purpose and fulfillment.
12. **Seek Autarchy:** Foster self-reliance and independence in your thoughts and actions. Make decisions based on your values and rational judgments, rather than being swayed by societal pressures.

Remember that living an Epicurean life doesn't mean avoiding all forms of pleasure; rather, it encourages the pursuit of enduring and meaningful forms of pleasure while avoiding excessive and unnecessary desires. It's a philosophy that emphasizes balance, self-awareness, and the cultivation of a tranquil and contented life. Your interpretation and practice of Epicurean principles can be tailored to suit your own values and circumstances in today's society.

Post by "Don" of October 23, 2023 at 11:29 AM

Ah, ChatGPT... Maybe I'm glass half full, but it could have been worse 😊

Here are some specific problems I see...

4. Practice Mindfulness: Be present and mindful in your daily life. Savor the sensory experiences of the moment, whether it's enjoying a good meal, a beautiful sunset, or a conversation with a friend. (NOTE: While I agree that Epicurus calls us to "[savor the sensory experienced of the moment](#)," the use of the jargony "mindfulness" brings some baggage. Again, I'm not saying I disagree with the sentiment ChatGPT came up with for no. 4, but it could imply advocacy for specific forms of mindfulness meditation, etc.)

5. Seek Intellectual Pleasures: Pursue intellectual pleasures by engaging in lifelong learning, reading, and philosophical exploration. *Epicurus believed that the highest form of pleasure is intellectual, so feed your mind with knowledge and meaningful ideas.* (NOTE: We're back to Epicurus saying "the highest form of pleasure is intellectual..." I can certainly see where ChatGPT is getting that from its large language model since that's a predominant position out there on the internet.)

9. Live in Harmony with Nature: Epicurus believed that living in harmony with nature was essential for happiness. This can mean respecting the environment, spending time in nature, and aligning your lifestyle with natural rhythms. (NOTE: Again, I'm not saying I disagree with the overall sentiment; however, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details.)

11. Practice Philanthropy and Altruism: Helping others and contributing to your community can be a source of happiness. Acts of kindness and philanthropy can create a sense of purpose and

fulfillment. (NOTE: This one's a little more problematic. While, acts of kindness and philanthropy can bring pleasure, i have real problems with the whole "sense of purpose" direction no. 11 is going.)

So, overall - for a mindless algorithm pulling from a large language model of sources of text - I'd grade this answer to the question a C or eve B- maybe. I don't think it's a Fail or D grade. A lot of the nuance is lost in the answer, and I can see where ChatGPT's algorithm picked up some of this response it pulled together from disparate sources. I could easily see this posted on someone's website or on Wikipedia and passing it off as legitimate. I am VERY curious to see others' reactions to this.

That said, it should serve as inspiration for posting our own answer to that question!

Thanks for posting, [Eoghan Gardiner](#) !

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of October 23, 2023 at 2:38 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

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Mindfulness has been tagged out to everything, from working out to religions to Stoicism and even "corporate" mindfulness to increase productivity. It's funny that they choose to ignore they other 7 parts of the 8 fold path. Although I do believe it has some medicinal benefits,

though lately reports are coming out that they are not as remarkable as was made out in the early 2000-2017 ish.

I become big into mental wellbeing as a major source of my own life of pleasure though, I just dislike how mindfulness has become THE Answer, which for many it's not. One of the major sources of my mental well-being is the Epicurean view of God and afterlife. No longer do I say "my body is a temple" instead "my body is a playground 😄😄😄 " Michel Onfray said that before I believe.

Post by “Kalosyni” of October 23, 2023 at 3:16 PM

ChatGPT...this paragraph was lol 😄

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

Remember that living an Epicurean life doesn't mean avoiding all forms of pleasure; rather, it encourages the pursuit of enduring and meaningful forms of pleasure while avoiding excessive and unnecessary desires.

How to live the Epicurean life in today's society...or...how to live according to the philosophy of Epicurus -- definitely would be good to create a list. The list should include study the philosophy with a like-minded friend...and other items from the Letter to Menoecus, the PD's, and VS's.

Post by “Martin” of October 24, 2023 at 5:41 AM

I agree with comments #2 - #4.

2. No! Pleasure is the goal, not moderation. Whereas moderation is often the most pleasurable choice, especially with food and other necessary desires, it is misleading as a goal in itself.

5. Intellectual pleasures may have some advantages over physical pleasures, but there is no justification to call out the highest form of pleasure to be intellectual. It is up to the individual to order pleasures into lower and higher ones or not to make that distinction at all. People who detest lifelong learning, reading, and philosophical exploration can still enjoy an Epicurean lifestyle with just a rudimentary understanding of the philosophy. The vast majority of ancient Epicureans in the Roman empire were probably like that because they lacked the education for

intellectual pleasures. Even the Torquatus in Cicero's "On Ends" was not that deep into philosophical exploration as shown by the passage where he was not able to explain something when being pressed hard by Cicero and referred instead to a more intellectual Epicurean than him whom he trusted to know the proper explanation.

E.g., Forrest Gump was not intellectual at all but by the intuitive application of a few simple principles which he was taught by a few trusted people, his life turned out to be fairly close to an Epicurean life.

7. This misses out on the how-to of not fearing the state of being dead.

"the pursuit of enduring and meaningful forms of pleasure":

No! It does not matter how enduring or meaningful (!?) a pleasure is. E.g., the sensation of acceleration or high speed is usually not enduring and has no meaning but can be very pleasurable. Recalling the memory of that physical experience is a great mental pleasure into old age.

"It's a philosophy that emphasizes balance, ..."

This sounds like having no meaning.

"cultivation of a tranquil ... life."

Whereas Epicureans experience tranquility most of the time because of their wise choices, their lives are not necessarily tranquil. Epicureans who pursue lots of excitements within their means do not have tranquil lives. A tranquil life is not their choice.

"Your interpretation and practice of Epicurean principles can be tailored to suit your own values and circumstances in today's society."

This is probably the most excellent characterization of Epicurus' philosophy in that text by ChatGPT.

Post by "Don" of October 24, 2023 at 6:05 AM



In light of [Martin](#)'s insightful comments above, I'm downgrading ChatGPT's answer to a C or C-. I still don't think it failed, but that answer is going to have A LOT of red marks all over it.

As I mentioned previously, too, ChatGPT's "answer" certainly looks like one of the popular interpretations of Epicurean philosophy out there on the Internet, including in some academic texts. It's not hard to see where the algorithm's output came from. That's why Emily Austin's book is such a welcome addition to the books available for a wider, popular audience.

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3440-chatgpt-on-how-to-live-the-epicurean-life-in-todays-society-overall-not-great/>