

The concept of resilience vs. ataraxia

Post by “Titus” of November 1, 2023 at 5:19 PM

I've come across the concept resilience through a paper I found in a pile of documents and it reminded me of my recent interest on clearing my personal definition of ataraxia.

The American Psychological Association (APA) describes in its Dictionary of Psychology resilience [as follows](#):

"*n.* the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. A number of factors contribute to how well people adapt to adversities, predominant among them (a) the ways in which individuals view and engage with the world, (b) the availability and quality of social resources, and (c) specific [coping strategies](#). Psychological research demonstrates that the resources and skills associated with more positive adaptation (i.e., greater resilience) can be cultivated and practiced. Also called **psychological resilience**. See also [coping behavior](#); [coping-skills training](#). —**resilient** *adj.*"

APA describes in a short article main pillars of [how to build resilience](#). While they promote the obligatory stoic-like "Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter", resilience sounds all-over more like a modern-day version of Epicurean ataraxia. Taking care of one's body and prioritizing healthy relationships with others for the sake of strengthening one's adaptability to life's difficulties sounds very Epicurean.

What are your thoughts on this topic?

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 1, 2023 at 6:30 PM

I think there are elements of "resilience" with Epicurean philosophy, but yet in the modern psychology it seems that people use resilience as a way to put up with all the nonsense of unnecessary desires (such as desires for fame and status, etc.).

From the Letter to Menoeceus (Saint-Andre translation):

Quote

Third, keep in mind that some desires are natural whereas others are groundless [note]; that among the natural desires some are natural and necessary whereas others are merely natural; and that among the necessary desires some are necessary for happiness, some for physical health [note], and some for life itself. The steady contemplation of these facts enables you to understand everything that you accept or reject in terms of the health of the body and the serenity of the soul — since that is the goal of a completely happy life.

I would understand "serenity of the soul" as being the same as a healthy mind (a mind not filled with fear or anxiety), and within this healthy mind arises a feeling of ataraxia. So ataraxia is not something you do, but it is a feeling which is a result of wise living.

Post by “Godfrey” of November 1, 2023 at 9:51 PM

Quote from the article

Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors. As much as resilience involves “bouncing back” from these difficult experiences, it can also involve profound personal growth.

Quote from the article

While certain factors might make some individuals more resilient than others, resilience isn't necessarily a personality trait that only some people possess. On the contrary, resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that anyone can learn and develop.

To my understanding, ataraxia enhances resilience. It isn't the same thing as resilience, and resilience doesn't necessarily promote ataraxia. Ataraxia reduces the background noise which causes undue stress, anxiety and panic, so when a challenging event occurs you're more able to assess the situation and respond effectively.

The list in the article of how to build resilience strikes me as more Aristotelian than Epicurean. Some of the items overlap, such as friendship, self-care, seeking help, and healthy thoughts. What healthy thoughts are, of course, depends on your overarching philosophy. Purpose and meaning, at least for me, can be a gateway to virtue ethics or duty ethics. From my experience these add to the background noise, largely because duty and virtue are nebulous mental constructs. Living with pleasure ethics, on the other hand, you become sensitive to how your

feelings are guiding you in a particular situation and, from there, can apply reasoning as to how best to deal with the situation given the pleasure or pain that it brings.

Post by "Titus" of November 3, 2023 at 8:34 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

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My interest in the topic comes from the sphere,

a.) that I've always considered ataraxia as not only a tranquil stopover to the all-over happy life, but also a resisting force towards disturbing elements, so I definitively agree with your statement.

b.) that the concept of ataraxia must finally find some resonance in science, because I experience it to be working.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

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Can you specify what you mean with Aristotelian?

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

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Thus it seems, there may be the main difference. Ataraxia is embedded in the Epicurean system of thought, while resilience is a concept that strikes for curative matters only, preventing to align with a partisan philosophy.

Quote from Kalosyni

I would understand "serenity of the soul" as being the same as a healthy mind (a mind not filled with fear or anxiety), and within this healthy mind arises a feeling of ataraxia.

So ataraxia is not something you do, but it is a feeling which is a result of wise living.

I think so quite similarly, but being in this state also requires to have access to the tools which build up and maintain it.

Post by “Godfrey” of November 3, 2023 at 5:55 PM

Quote from Titus

Can you specify what you mean with Aristotelian?

I used that term to associate with duty ethics and virtue ethics, which to my extremely limited understanding are grounded to some extent in Aristotle's ethics. Probably Plato's as well. My exposure to Aristotle is limited, so I may have used that term rather loosely. I think it's fairly accurate, but my main point was to contrast duty and virtue ethics with pleasure ethics. My take is that the former are grounded in ideas that tend toward abstractions whereas the latter is grounded in physical reality and therefore provides a more effective guide to a pleasant life.

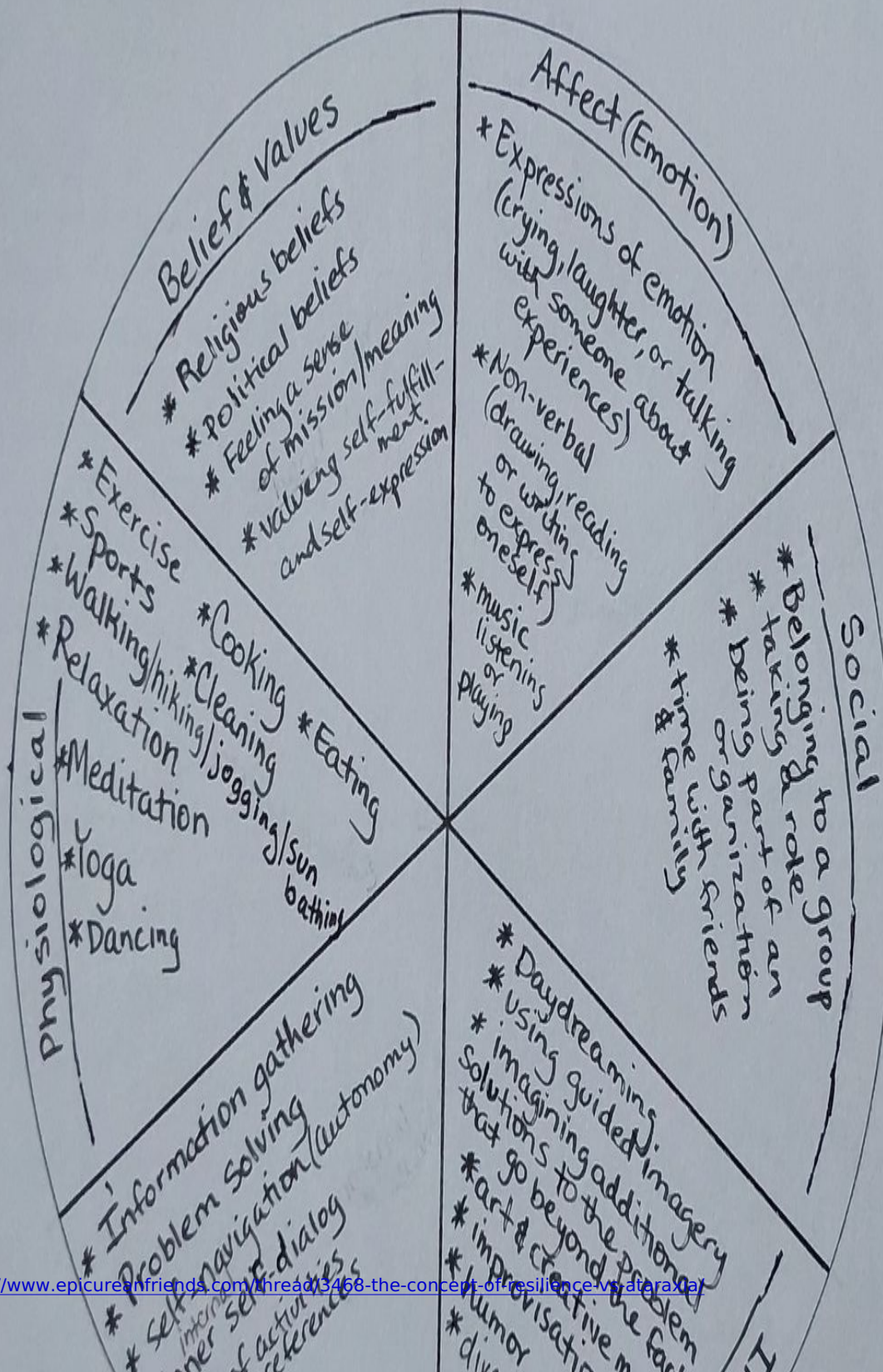
Post by “Kalosyni” of January 13, 2024 at 10:34 AM

In another thread the idea of "finding meaning" came up, and it reminded me about this much more useful model, which I think is much more effective for coping -- it is called the "**BASIC-ph Model of Coping**" created by Mooli Lahad.

It incorporates 6 aspects for good coping...and one of them is physical pleasure (under the label "Physiological").

Here is a diagram I drew:

BASIC-ph Model of Coping - Mooli Lahad



Here is a website that has brief explanation (but it's not the site from which I created the above diagram).

[Resilience and Trauma – The BASIC Ph Model - Brighton Therapy Partnership](#)

The BASIC Ph model is a method of understanding resilience in the face of trauma, and was developed by Professor Mooli Lahad. About Professor Mooli Lahad...
brightontherapypartnership.org.uk