

# Pleasure As the Key To Returning to Emotional Health

**Post by "Cassius" of June 12, 2018 at 6:17 PM**

Here is something relevant to the recent discussion of suicide which ought to be highlighted, and I think it is at the root of would likely be the Epicurean approach to "techniques" to deal with adversity, as distinguished from Stoic or other approaches. If we are suffering emotionally, HOW do we most effectively reduce the mental pain? Do we approach it from an "anesthesia" point of view and try to tell ourselves that the pain is not important, or that we can overcome it through willpower? Think back to the root of the Epicurean position that pleasure is the motivating force of life. If we are overwhelmed by emotional pain and suffering which crowds out pleasures, our very will to live is being suppressed. The answer is not anesthesia, but to replace emotional pain with the one antidote which makes life worth living: emotional pleasure. And we find that observation SPECIFICALLY RECORDED in Vatican Saying 37. "When confronted by evil nature is weak, but not when faced with good; for pleasures make it secure but pains ruin it."

This is an example where "nature" has to be interpreted in context as "human nature" - our very life force itself. Pain ruins us and destroys us emotionally if we can see no way around or past it. Pain sickens us like a disease. And what brings health? One thing alone -- pleasure. Isn't the path forward in re-discovering Epicurean techniques likely to lead in exactly this direction? No doubt people who suffer clinical/chemical/biological depression need clinical/chemical/biological help, and that's not what we're talking about.

But the majority of us who suffer situational depression need to know what direction to look in for help, and it seems to me that all of us have things that bring us emotional pleasure, even if it is only pleasing memories (which Epicurus also said to treasure). The experience of pleasure motivates life and brings health, and when times look the darkest the answer is not blinding our sight through anesthesia, but focusing on the restorative power of pleasure and working our way back as best we can back to the point where pleasurable experience regains control of our lives.

And "Pleasure" doesn't just mean physical pleasure, it means ALL KINDS of pleasure, and we know that Epicurus said that mental pleasures can be more intense than physical pleasures. It's not appropriate to treat emotional pain with chocolate cake, but with mental pleasures. "Only love can break a heart - only love can mend it again."

The answer to physical pain can sometimes be mental pleasure, as Epicurus illustrated at the end of his life. But the answer to mental pain is also mental pleasure, which is a truism given that pleasure and pain are the only two categories of feeling, but is something that needs to be highlighted. Whether it is music or knitting or talking with friends or whatever make up our own sources of pleasure, the answer to many types of emotional pain is going to be simply enough in replacing those emotional pains with emotional pleasures. Of course its hugely complicated to address the facts which can be the cause of the emotional pain, and sometimes those pains can't be fixed - and sometimes indeed temporary anesthesia might be appropriate. But anesthesia wears off, and the permanent fix to depression is emotional health, and emotional health comes from pursuing pleasures - which is NOT the prescription of those who tell you to try to conquer pain by telling yourself that pain isn't important.

Note - from Torquatus in On Ends: "Yet we maintain that this does not preclude mental pleasures and pains from being much more intense than those of the body; since the body can feel only what is present to it at the moment, whereas the mind is also cognizant of the past and of the future. For granting that pain of body is equally painful, yet our sensation of pain can be enormously increased by the belief that some evil of unlimited magnitude and duration threatens to befall us hereafter. And the same consideration may be transferred to pleasure: a pleasure is greater if not accompanied by any apprehension of evil. This therefore clearly appears, that intense mental pleasure or distress contributes more to our happiness or misery than a bodily pleasure or pain of equal duration."

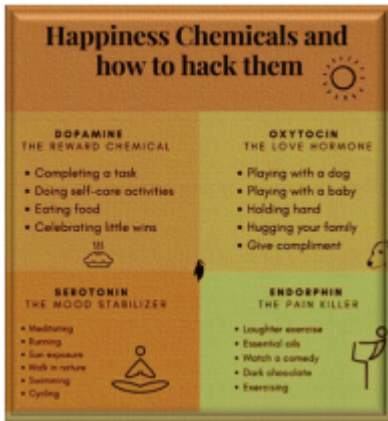
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## **Post by "Pacatus" of December 21, 2021 at 4:21 PM**

I think there are clearly feedback loops between the physical and the mental. But your chocolate cake example illustrates behaviors that may well become addictive, mask the mental pain, but ultimately create for pain/suffering themselves.

Although most of us are aware of psychosomatic responses that feed from the mental to greater physical health and well-being, it can also work the other way around. Non-stressful exercise for example -- walking, yoga, tai chi, laughter yoga (which starts with the physical rather than thoughts of funniness or good humor, but seems to feed fairly quickly -- 10 to 20 minutes -- into mental pleasure as well; the body enjoys laughing). Certain physical activities produce physical pleasure that fairly quickly translates into mental pleasure. I have personally found that physically stimulating the laughter response (e.g., by fluttering my diaphragm to simulate laughter) soon gets me to actually laughing, and becoming more cheerful. Norman Cousins famously testified to the reverse feedback (mental pleasure to physical pleasure), when laughing at funny movies for 20 minutes or so gave him hours of pain-free sleep.

I came across the following awhile back. Maybe it will be helpful:

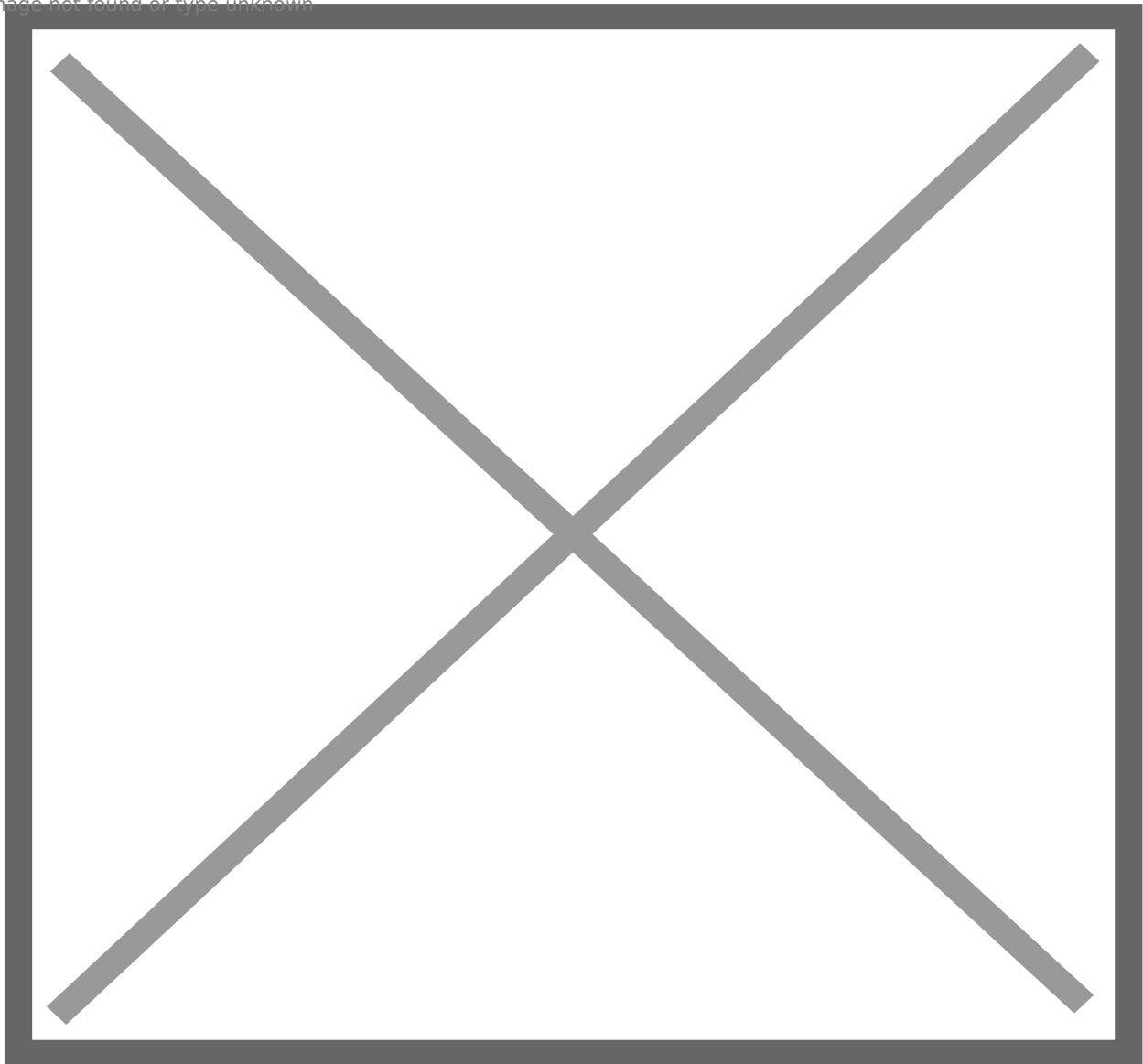


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**Post by “Don” of December 21, 2021 at 7:05 PM**

Just read this today. Thought it might be applicable here:

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[Use the '20-5-3' Rule To Make Yourself Happier and Stronger](#)

Americans spend 92 percent of their time indoors, and their physical and mental health are suffering. This three-number formula for how much time to spend in...  
menshealth.com

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**Post by “Kalosyni” of December 21, 2021 at 9:04 PM**

Quote

## 20 Minutes

**That's the amount** of time you should spend outside in nature, like a neighborhood park, three times a week. Hopman led a new study that concluded that something as painless as a 20-minute stroll through a city botanical garden can boost cognition and memory as well as improve feelings of well-being. "But," she said, "we found that people who used their cell phone on the walk saw none of those benefits."

Other research discovered that 20 minutes outside three times a week is the dose of nature that had the greatest effect on reducing an urban dweller's levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

Excerpt from the above article 😊

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## Post by "Joshua" of December 23, 2021 at 11:58 AM

### Quote

Other research discovered that 20 minutes outside three times a week is the dose of nature that had the greatest effect on reducing an urban dweller's levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

I'm outside 35+ hours a week, I must be as beatific as the Dalai Lama!

For me, it's the evening walks that I find restorative, and mostly when the stars are out—walking *caeli subter labentia signa*, under the gliding signs of heaven. Or, *below that heraldry of star and planet*, as Humphries renders it.