

# What kinds of goals do Epicureans set for themselves?

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 26, 2026 at 1:50 PM

I've just come up with this question: "What kinds of goals do Epicureans set for themselves?"

This could be within general categories or specific things.

If we look to the [Principal Doctrines](#), Vatican Sayings, Letter to Menoeceus, etc.

And in the Letter to Herodotus, it says this:

## Quote

"Indeed it is necessary to go back on the main principles, and constantly to fix in one's memory enough to give one the most essential comprehension of the truth. And in fact the accurate knowledge of details will be fully discovered, if the general principles in the various departments are thoroughly grasped and borne in mind; for even in the case of one fully initiated the most essential feature in all accurate knowledge is the capacity to make a rapid use of observation and mental apprehension, and this can be done if everything is summed up in elementary principles and formulae. For it is not possible for anyone to abbreviate the complete course through the whole system, if he cannot embrace in his own mind by means of short formulae all that might be set out with accuracy in detail."

"Wherefore since the method I have described is valuable to all those who are accustomed to the investigation of nature, I who urge upon others the constant occupation in the investigation of nature, and find my own peace chiefly in a life so occupied, have composed for you another epitome on these lines, summing up the first principles of the whole doctrine."

So from this text, I would deduce that the **investigation of nature** would be an Epicurean activity and a goal that an Epicurean would set for themselves. And perhaps this goal would be a life-long goal - one that would never end since nature is vast, especially now in our modern understanding. The reason that this goal is important (and I think that this is addressed in *De Rerum Natura*) is so that one understands that god/gods are not creating all the phenomenon of the world but that they come from naturally occurring processes. And a second reason why this is important is so that one understands the causes of things, thereby leading to better decision making and choices - we can't pray things into existence for ourselves, but instead

must take concrete actions.

And...there are other Epicurean goals, which are hinted at in the other texts I mentioned.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of January 27, 2026 at 8:39 AM

Another goal that I believe an Epicurean would set for themselves is **to make and maintain friendships**, based on this Principal Doctrine:

**27. "Of all the things which wisdom acquires to produce the blessedness of the complete life, far the greatest is the possession of friendship."**

You can check out this sub-forum on various aspects of friendship:

[Friendship](#)

And also this specific thread:

Thread

[Cultivation of Friendship within Epicureanism](#)

Principle Doctrine 27:

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

Principle Doctrine 27 is very important for a happy life. Modern life is busy with work and family, and yet we all still need friends. So it is very important to take the time and put the effort into making friends and maintaining friendships. Some people might be satisfied with the number and kind of friendships in their lives, but others...



Kalosyni

January 16, 2022 at 8:54 PM

Maintaining long-term friendships takes some effort and commitment. And if friends move away (or you move to a new city) then you need to put effort into making new friends.

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## Post by “Godfrey” of January 27, 2026 at 1:28 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

one understands that god/gods are not creating all the phenomenon of the world but that they come from naturally occurring processes.

Unrelated to the subject of this thread (with my apologies), I like the way that you worded this [Kalosyni](#) . The wording that you've used here can include both the physical processes by which gods (godlike beings?) exist, as illustrated by the realist position, as well as the natural processes of both people grappling with the unknown and of cultural accretion as perhaps in the idealist position.

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**Post by “Kalosyni” of January 27, 2026 at 1:44 PM**

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

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Unrelated to the subject of this thread (with my apologies), I like the way that you worded this [Kalosyni](#) . The wording that you've used here can include both the physical processes by which gods (godlike beings?) exist, as illustrated by the realist position, as well as the natural processes of both people grappling with the unknown and of cultural accretion as perhaps in the idealist position.

I see now that the referred to object of the pronoun "they" that I used was unclear, and I had intended it to be read this way:

The investigation of nature is important so that one understands that god/gods are not creating all the phenomenon of the world, but that the phenomenon of the world are caused by naturally occurring processes unrelated in any way to god/gods.

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**Post by “Cassius” of January 27, 2026 at 2:59 PM**

Ha - the correction backtracks from what Godfrey praised but his point still stands that it's a good way of talking about gods 😊

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## Post by “Patrikos” of February 5, 2026 at 6:12 PM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

*And in fact the **accurate knowledge** of details will be fully discovered, if the general principles in the various departments are thoroughly grasped and borne in mind; for even in the case of one fully initiated the **most essential feature in all accurate knowledge** is the capacity to make a rapid use of **observation** and **mental apprehension**,*

...

The **investigation of nature** is important so that one understands that god/gods are not creating all the phenomenon of the world, but that the phenomenon of the world are caused by naturally occurring processes unrelated in any way to god/gods.

### [Kalosyni](#) ,

Thank you for raising this topic.

As I read the first quotation you mentioned, I am struck by the need for keen **observation** in order to gain **accurate knowledge**! This means not only looking at something in nature, but really seeing and studying how nature reveals more details. The “**mental apprehension**” I have found is built through repeated experiences; which is how our ‘**prolepsis**’ of a natural phenomenon is further developed. Thus, repeated exposure within nature, especially forests, rivers, coastlines; helps build deeper connections for us humans to thoroughly grasp the details of nature’s miraculous processes.

This message of setting a goal, means we can’t just think or read about nature or a natural process, we have to better understand what are **our** “natural” desires, [*Know Thyself*] and which are necessary for our life of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. So, it seems to me that this message says we need to spend time in and with nature, in order to feel the full effect of the natural processes that helps guide us to make better choices and avoidances, based on more accurate knowledge of ourselves and our natural environment.

This view is not meant as the only way to interpret or apply the principles of the quotation, but simply the way the words resonate with how I find these Epicurean sayings bring me closer to and appreciating nature. I find that daily time in nature has enabled me to be in more of a daily/hourly “flow” with the environment (people, places, news) I encounter each day. This results in the wellbeing spirit (eudaimonia) we seek.

I’d love to hear how other of our Epicurean friends view and apply this concept.

## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 19, 2026 at 10:07 AM

It might be good think about goals for an Epicurean through the framework of lifestages. In modern psychology Erik Erikson and others have presented ideas of lifestages.

I am posting a table of lifestages categories - we could then see if we can compare for any overlaps within Epicurean philosophy.

Query: a table showing adult stages of goals, responsibilities, and psychological growth

AI Overview:

Adult development involves distinct, often overlapping, stages focusing on increasing self-definition, intimacy, and responsibility. The following table synthesizes adult stages, drawing primarily from Erik Erikson’s psychosocial stages, Levinson’s life-structure model, and constructive development theory.

Table: Adult Stages of Development

Adult Stage	Approx. Age	Key Goals	Primary Responsibilities	Psychological Growth
<b>Emerging Adulthood</b>	18-25	Self-exploration, identity formation, testing life choices	Education, early career, establishing independence	Shifting from dependent child to self-sufficient young adult
<b>Young Adulthood</b>	19-40	Forming intimate relationships, career establishment	Career, marriage, starting a family, community participation	Intimacy vs. Isolation: Developing love and partnership

<b>Adult Stage</b>	<b>Approx. Age</b>	<b>Key Goals</b>	<b>Primary Responsibilities</b>	<b>Psychological Growth</b>
<b>Middle Adulthood</b>	40-65	Mentoring others, leaving a legacy, maintaining stability	Parenting (adolescents), caring for aging parents, peak career	Generativity vs. Stagnation: Creating lasting, productive value
<b>Late Adulthood</b>	65+	Reflection on life, adjusting to retirement	Passing on knowledge, leisure, health management	Integrity vs. Despair: Achieving wisdom and acceptance of life

#### Detailed Breakdown of Adult Growth Stages

- **Emerging Adulthood (18-25):** Marked by instability and exploration, this stage is characterized by "trying out" different paths in love and work.
- **Early Adulthood/Young Adulthood (25-40):** The primary focus is "settling down," building a life structure, and forming deep, intimate bonds with others.
- **Midlife Transition/Middle Adulthood (40-65):** Often involves a reevaluation of past goals (midlife crisis) and a shift toward "generativity," or focusing on the next generation and community.
- **Late Adulthood (65+):** Focuses on "integrity," where the individual reviews their life, accepting both successes and failures to achieve a sense of wisdom.

#### Key Concepts in Adult Growth

- **Self-Authoring Mind (Kegan):** Many adults move from a "socialized mind" (relying on others' expectations) to a "self-authored mind," creating their own values and moral compass.
- **Life Structure (Levinson):** Adults alternate between stable periods (building a life) and transitional periods (questioning that life).
- **Goal Orientation Shift:** Younger adults tend to focus on growth-oriented goals, while older adults shift toward maintenance and loss prevention.

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Another aspect to consider is that for some people who had difficult childhoods or had parents that did not provide adequate social/emotional modeling/learning, that those people might need to take effort to deal with and develop those skills during young adulthood (and later)...where as others may already have those skills and move forward more quickly in life.

[See the full 8 stages of Erikson](#)

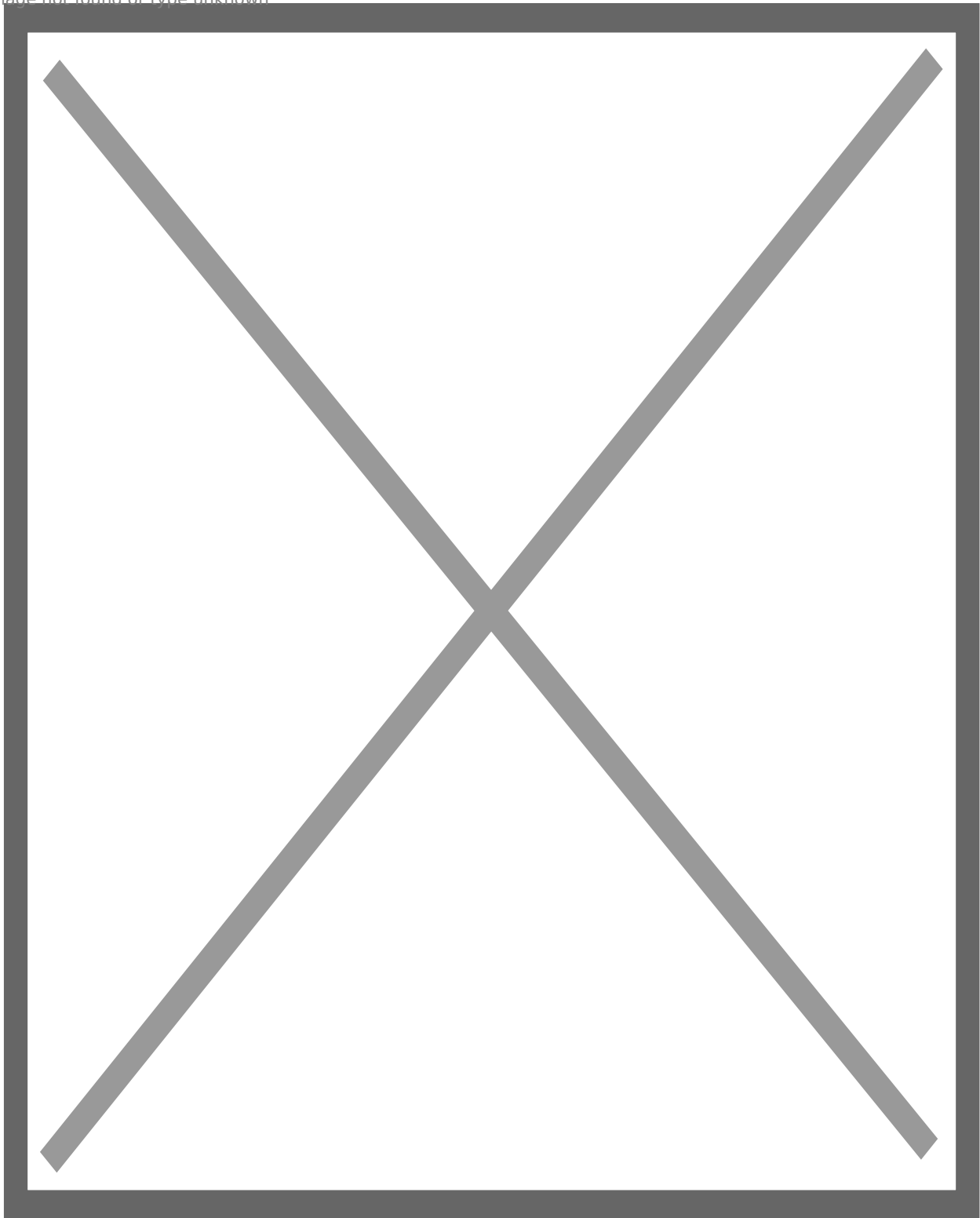
## **Post by “Kalosyni” of February 23, 2026 at 9:00 AM**

From the Letter to Menoecus we see in the opening paragraph that one should study philosophy both when young and when old, and interestingly it does occasionally seem that here on the forum we have a mix of both younger (college age) and older (empty-nesters and/or retired). And it seems that studying philosophy is especially of benefit for those two lifestages - and there may be more time available for studying philosophy when in those two lifestages. Also, there are those who are neither married nor have children and that lifestyle creates more time for studying philosophy.

I started out this thread with asking: "What kinds of goals do Epicureans set for themselves?" and now thinking that another way to look at this question is that each lifestage brings questions and "existential needs" and that these needs (and depending on the lifestage) can be met through the study of Epicurean philosophy in various ways.

On a related note, I found this about Gen Z...

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[Talking to strangers in public is not a Gen Z thing. | Gary Rudman](#)

Talking to strangers in public is not a Gen Z thing. As we've stated here, Gen Z finds comfort in speaking to others safely from behind a screen but when they...

[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

...and thinking that the study of Epicurean philosophy may be helpful for college age Gen Z ...and all the more reason why we need to create a "basic and friendly" guide to Epicurean philosophy. And no matter what lifestage one is in, there is joy in studying philosophy with those of like-mind.