

Mental pleasure/pain more intense and longer lasting than physical pleasure/pain

Post by "BrainToBeing" of December 11, 2023 at 7:13 PM

[Quote from frank1syl](#)

I believe that Epicureanism has it right when it says that mental pain is worse than physical pain.

Based on how people consume opioids when they report pain I believe you are right. Addiction as a response to structural pain is rare. The reason for this is that addiction produces dysfunction whereas people with serious structural pain are focused on improving function. Conversely, where chronic pain is primarily psychosocial and existential then addiction to drugs is rather common (because drugs are "mind altering" and "take away" the anguish.)

[Quote from frank1syl](#)

But, taking my cue from the Stoics, the way to lessen mental pain is to realize that this is an area in which we have considerable power, and to focus on our mental capacities and abilities, rather than external events or circumstances, is the best way to approach mental pain. This is often the opposite of how we try to lessen mental pain, which is to try to change our circumstances -- go on a cruise, buy a new car, redecorate our homes, take a pill, increase our aim for what is neither natural nor necessary, etc.

The mechanisms of "mental pain" are complex, and commonly tragic when the issues are severe. We need to remember, of course, that mental pain can come in greatly different levels. If you screwed up the answer on question number 26 of yesterday's gardening test you might feel some mental pain, but a vacation would probably be good. Alternatively, if chronic mental pain is the result of childhood abuse then all of those efforts to "buy the way out of the pain" typically don't work. In my practice I saw many people who felt worse after coming back from an expensive vacation. They learned that they can feel better (and typically the pain was better, or even gone, during the vacation) but then they come back to "reality" and sink into deeper anguish.