

Daily life of ancient Epicureans / 21st Century Epicureans

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 22, 2025 at 12:01 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

[Quote from Robert](#)

As 21st-century Epicureans, how do you integrate it into your daily life? Is there any particular structure or set of practices involved?

Perhaps @Eikadistes may have something to share in regard to that.

Most definitely! More than just passing curiosities, the teachings of the Garden provide practical guidance so we can confidently respond to the obstacles that characterize daily life:

"We must simultaneously laugh and philosophize and manage a household and administrate the economic affairs and never let go of the language of the true philosophies." (VS 41)

(1) Memorizing and reciting the *Doctrines*, and parts of the *Epitomes* are prescribed spiritual practices from the Hegemon. A few random, but specific examples I can think of:

- You can't have permanently "bad luck". *It's not like there's a supernatural STD...*
- Forgive yourself for anger, but restrain yourself against rage.
- FDR took this one, but, literally: the source of the worst turmoil is *"the fears themselves"*.
- **"What Would Epicurus Do?"** Our acronym "SFOTSE" essentially conveys this idea.
- There is no "Perfect State". Your historical fears are comparatively normal. Breathe.
- WHEN you get stressed working in an artificial climate, go take a breather outside.
- Don't eat alone. (*You're not a rogue tiger; no need to cosplay as one*).
- Try to make friends with everyone you can. If you can't, do your best to avoid them.
- Make the most of the time you're given (*thanks, Gandalf*). You only live once.

I'm just paraphrasing, but the sources of those statements help us focus on the most important things, spiritual/intellectual tools. Along those lines, he specifically calls 1-4 the "most important".

Incidentally, Philódēmos calls *Doctrines* 1-4 the "most important", and preserves them in his proverbial "*Tetrapharmakos*", a recipe to prepare a person for the blessed life. It contains a short list of ingredients: recognition that life is a product of nature, acceptance that we only live once, assurance that life is worth living, remembrance that terror is temporary; pleasure is inevitable.

That last one is actually really helpful in dealing with turmoil (that 4th doctrine), that *pain is temporary*. For me, it's a kind of spiritual mantra akin to "*All Things Must Pass*". No matter how bad things get, you're one step closer to the pleasurable goal of life. Even facing terminal conditions, as long as we still have awareness, we have power over our ability to *choose to try* to be chill.

So, I *do* actually flip around the Tetrpharmakos in my mind, along with a few memorable sayings.

They also really come in handy for discussions. Epíkouros provides us with some really great quips that immediately address a handful of very popular, very intellectually-lazy beliefs that are rearing their heads in the maze of a society consumed with media and technology. The bubbles of some of these ideas can be easily popped by posing things in an Epicurean light. For example:

- "You saw a *ghost*"? Tell me, what exactly does a "*bodiless body*" look like?
- "The world isn't *real*?" How exactly are you walking on "*immaterial material*"?
- "You *don't believe your eyes*?" What *sense* can you have without your *senses*?

Anyway, memorizing lines, propositions, and key points, like mantras, is a large part of the practice. In this group, I'd include anything related to capturing a higher resolution picture of the philosophy through studying ancient history, economics, or anything that helps advance your personal study.

(2) Then there are the gatherings. Like you mentioned, Eikas is the unifying one, but there are also holidays. As it turns out, celebrating one's birthday was not a common practice in ancient Greece, but was, at least, for a period, seen as a Persian import. Epíkouros prescribed the celebration of his own birthday, and observed celebrations for each of his family members, and his best friends, so the notion of having personal celebrations (which we commonly do as "Birthdays"), is categorically Epicurean. It's sort of a "*gimme*" in our culture, because of the coherence, but it *is* also on point.

We recognize major life events with feasts and celebrations, just like any other tradition. Weddings and funerals are universal, and we each co-opt them with our preferred spiritual flavor. There isn't, necessarily, a prescribed "New Human in the Community" ritual for Epicureans, though I'm not opposed to it (I mean something like a *secular baptism*). We don't have any specific

(3) Any kind of liberatory practice (like offering libations at the beginning of Eikas to the *kathegemones*) falls in this category. Maybe this comes in the form of setting aside a personal tithe, or donating. We support medical research efforts that will contribute to providing future cures for illnesses that affected our loved ones, and all of this is contextualized in a belief that reality is knowable, science if advanceable, cures are discoverable, and the **one** life each generation receives can be improved, so long as we all agree to abandon superstition and magical thinking.

Those are fairly ubiquitous practices that aren't specific to Epicureans, but, even if the currents of our culture shifted directions, I would still abide by these behaviors, to some degree.

(4) Ancient Epicureans made art and jewelry in the name of the tradition, and many of us here (check out [Bryan](#)'s latest post for a perfect example) follow suit. I don't usually wear rings and necklaces, but I own a few t-shirts with the Hegemon's head, magnets, and other decor. That's a little more on the peripheral side of the art, and less to do with spiritual practice, but it still comes from a place of reflection and devotion and, I believe, let's us have our own historical expression to demonstrate the sort of experience we are having with the tradition in this period.

I've also got a few Epicurean tattoos. Just another example in the category of *spiritual devotion*.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

everything you do is folded into the master plan of living happily according to Epicurus' worldview

I think [Cassius](#) really nails the main point, which is that everything we do, as a result of these deeply-help philosophical positions, is affected, guided, and directed by those beliefs. Otherwise, our lifestyles are all essentially the same. Most of us are paying too much for eggs, and burning more petroleum than we thought we would, and spending our days replacing tires and tying trash bags. It's usually only when it comes to Death, or something heavy, that the rest of the "religious crowd" properly invokes their religious identity. Otherwise, we're trying to find new places to put our plastic, convincing ourselves we're eating right, and consuming entertainment.