

# What Is Happiness? How Does Our Conception of It Derive From Eudaemonia and Felicitas? Should Happiness Be The Goal of Life?

Post by “Cassius” of December 22, 2025 at 8:09 AM

From Jefferson's outline of Epicurus in [1819 letter to William Short](#), referencing both happiness and felicity:

## Syllabus of the doctrines of Epicurus

Physical The Universe eternal.

Its parts, great and small, interchangeable

Matter and Void alone.

Motion inherent in matter, which is weighty & declining  
eternal circulation of the elements of bodies.

Gods, an order of beings next superior to man.

enjoying in their sphere their own felicities,  
but not meddling with the concerns of the scale of beings below  
them

Moral Happiness the aim of life

Virtue the foundation of happiness

Utility the test of virtue.

Pleasure active and in-dolent.

In-dolence is the absence of pain, the true felicity

Active, consists in agreeable motion

it is not happiness, but the means to produce it.

thus the absence of hunger is an article of felicity; eating the  
means to produce it.

The summum bonum is to be not pained in body, nor troubled in mind

i.e. In-dolence of body, tranquility of mind.

to procure tranquility of mind we must avoid desire & fear, the  
two

principal diseases of the mind.

Man is a free agent.

Virtue consists in: 1. Prudence 2. Temperance 3. Fortitude 4. Justice

to which are opposed: 1. Folly 2. Desire 3. Fear 4. Deceit