

Burnout, Time Management, and Searching for an Epicurean Approach

Post by “A_Gardner” of May 4, 2020 at 5:29 PM

Hello all,

The past couple of weeks have been an absolute roller-coaster for me, so much so have only recently started to use social media and forums again. I'm sure it has been a difficult time for all during this pandemic, and I wish for the good health of all here. Unfortunately, about a week and a half back I started to suffer from severe burnout and fatigue from work and had to distance myself from many online communities I was engaged in, as well as having to cease any and all extraneous projects of passion and curiosity (one being a document me and [Charles](#) had planned to work on, as well as an Epicurean focused Instagram project) so that I could dedicate what little free time and energy I had to university coursework.

I finally hit that edge and took a two weeks leave from work after seeing the symptoms of a breakdown creeping upon me along with falling behind in studies and concerned for my health in general, and took about one week of just being with myself and taking a break from just about any external stimulus to clear my mind and get back in touch with myself again.

I make this post in hopes of having some discussion regarding Epicurean approaches to these very modern day issues such as mental and physical fatigue from the workplace, and perhaps some remedies towards them? Life continues on and I will be returning to work within the next week, and though the leave has been somewhat restorative, I know that the stresses will always be there, and considering all that is going on, jumping ship from work completely is a bit too risky as of now. Time management is something of a factor as well, because I want to (even if slowly) begin to work on these projects once more.

Warm regards,

A Gardner

Post by “Cassius” of May 4, 2020 at 5:57 PM

Thanks for posting A Gardner! I know these last weeks have been tough for most of us - including me!

I know in my case it has been most helpful to my sanity to remain in touch with my friends here on the internet. It would have been much more helpful to have more such friends "in real life" but this has been for me the best substitute.

Specifically, I've continued to stay in touch with some of our core people here at least weekly as we have worked on the Lucretius Today podcast.

I wonder if we should not try to schedule something more in the way of "open discussion" via Skype or Zoom as well, so that is something we might talk about in this thread too.

Also, I suspect that [Elayne](#) would have specific commentary about how the regular pursuit of favorite pleasures, even if seemingly small, is helpful. I know both Elayne and [Charles](#) have been doing some hiking during this period.

I hope we can get some discussion going here and I will highlight this on the front page.

Post by “A_Gardner” of May 4, 2020 at 6:33 PM

Thank you for the suggestions and ideas! It also sounds like you have been able to avoid the virus as well and maintain physical health. [Cassius](#)

Although I am more biased towards discord, a group discussion would be something to most definitely consider. I do recall though that some members in the past have had technical issues with discord, so Skype is a good alternative as well. I'll be upfront and say I personally wouldn't use Zoom however. Too many privacy issues with the application.

As a more introverted individual, my initial go-to pleasures to aid me were things such as extended solitary walks in nature, foods I enjoy, and some moderate exercise to just get back in touch with my physicality. I also maintained a daily meditation habit, as well as pursuing some journal sessions using Tarot cards.

Now for those who may be of the opinion that meditation and Tarot fall under "woo", I approach them as a framework for personal psychology and reflection. This could very well be a topic in itself however, and to avoid debate about them in this thread, I respect that such approaches to meditation may not be one's cup of tea.

Now that I have had time to recharge, I have found myself wanting to once again reach out more, especially as I had stepped away from online communities and projects. So I am very thankful that we live in such a time where forums and social media can be of use if mindful of them.

I think this is where time management will now become a bigger factor, because returning soon to work, I'll have to find ways to fit in these restorative activities within the confines of a strict work schedule, and that's where it gets a bit tricky I think. These activities and pleasures are things that help to make the pains of work more tolerable, and yet this pain is not only a large part of a day (8 waking hours of ones schedule) but as of now a necessity so that I may be able pursue these simple pleasures without anxieties of basic material needs.

I'd hate to leave this post on a somewhat negative note, but this is the difficulty I am currently coming across.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 4, 2020 at 7:26 PM

Learning from my mistakes from a decade or so of overwhelm, I'm finding that connecting restorative activities (ideally all activities, but sometimes that just isn't feasible) to what brings me meaning provides the most bang for my buck. Sometimes things get to where it's hard to even recognize what's personally meaningful: the best solution for me is to get to a place where my mind just free-associates. Sometimes a walk, sometimes a nap, sometimes lying awake at night. Basically letting go enough and opening up enough to become aware of what my sensations, embodied cognition, and feelings are telling me. Oftentimes that is surprising and challenging.

Post by “Cassius” of May 4, 2020 at 7:51 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

sometimes lying awake at night

i have been doing WAY too much of that lately 😊

I hear that trouble sleeping has been a big problem with all the stress people are under wondering if their world is about to totally fall apart.

Any experiences on that here?

Post by “Godfrey” of May 4, 2020 at 9:07 PM

Mine was from chocolate cake 😋

Post by “A_Gardner” of May 5, 2020 at 1:04 PM

Journaling during this time has been tremendously helpful. I find not only reflecting on the day to be helpful, but I add a little space for both pleasures to look forward to, pleasures from the past for reflection and to savor, and pleasure i can actively seek or create for the day.

Granted I've had more time for journaling since taking leave from work, but I've always found ways to write in some shape or form and this style I've currently been able work with has been very conducive to my nature, and hopefully someone else may find it in agreement with theirs as well.

Post by “Cassius” of May 5, 2020 at 1:17 PM

I agree! I don't know what i would do if I didn't have outlets such as this, and other occasions for writing, to try to organize and make sense of my thoughts and feelings.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 5, 2020 at 3:19 PM

I've never been able to get any traction with journaling, but drawing has long been a go-to for me. In the darkest days I found composing haiku (or something more or less resembling it) to be a great release valve. Sort of mini-journaling. 😊

A great pleasure I've had recently is scanning old family photos (dating back to the 1870s) that have been stored in a closet for-seemingly-ever. There's a small Kondo-esque joy to it but the real pleasure has been discovering my ancestors and a bit of the lives they led. Pictures of my parents and grandparents as children, my parents in college, a "mommy and me" class picture from 1915 (who knew). That's just the beginning. And now that they're digitized they're as close

as my phone and available to share with the rest of the family. The pleasure of connection.

Post by “Cassius” of May 5, 2020 at 3:54 PM

I have done much the same thing with my family photos, Godfrey, and I have had the same experience of pleasure in it. I haven't been quite as successful getting into genealogy but to some degree there is similar experience. Pictures are hard to beat for interest.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 5, 2020 at 4:29 PM

Some relatives put together genealogies back in the 80s and those were really helpful in figuring out who is who. There are still a couple of mysteries, but far fewer than I expected.

Post by “Cassius” of May 5, 2020 at 4:35 PM

It's really sobering to realize that you have these pictures that maybe a few years ago you could have asked older relatives who these people were, but when they have since died you realize that the question will now forever go unanswered 😞

Post by “Godfrey” of May 5, 2020 at 4:40 PM

Laurie Anderson has a lyric to the effect that when her father died, it was if a whole library burned down.

Post by “Don” of May 5, 2020 at 7:21 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1545-burnout-time-management-and-searching-for-an-epicurean-approach/>

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Laurie Anderson has a lyric to the effect that when her father died, it was if a whole library burned down.

That is so poignant, and I know exactly what you/she are talking about. I've also worked on my family history and been grateful (Isn't showing gratitude an Epicurean trait?) for the work of others. I have an unbroken chain of photos back in one line 7 generations starting with my children to my 3rd-great-grandparents born in the 1810s. I often wonder what my ancestors would think of my philosophical leanings. One of my ancestors was the first Lutheran pastor in Pennsylvania. 😊

Post by “Joshua” of May 6, 2020 at 3:45 PM

This has been an interesting conversation!

In some ways I'm feeling very sheltered from all of this. I work outside everyday in the forests and coves and bayous of the Choctawhatchee, with ample sunshine, gentle breezes, and the lapping sound of the waves of the Gulf of Mexico.

My hometown in Iowa is a major hub of meat-packing, and things are really getting bad there. I'm certainly glad I'm not still driving truck during these times.

Perversely, my most intense personal frustration these days is the would-be prophets in my family and social circle who are interpreting the pandemic as an "end-times" event with increasing urgency. By denying these people omniscience, I am earning for myself an assortment of nicknames of a kind common among cranks; I am "programmed", or a "sheep", or I need to "wake up". You know the kind I mean.

This, too, shall pass.

[Here](#) is a poem I shared here a while back. I found it soothing to reread it just now, odd as that might seem.

Post by “Cassius” of May 6, 2020 at 6:34 PM

OMG the "end times" discussions are among the worst and most frustrating, and hard to avoid using expletives. How many darn episodes does humanity have to go through to convince it that this is not "the end" or "the second coming" or whatever!

This is one of many reasons why I think it's necessary to have our own alternate "institutions" -- because monolithic heavily funded organizations like the various churches and religions just perpetuate their poison from generation to generation in a way that no individual or loosely-affiliated sets of individuals can withstand.

I feel sure that Epicurus himself, and no doubt the later Epicureans as Christianity emerged as a force of disruption in the Greco-Roman world had to see this too. Obviously they didn't succeed in building fast enough or thoroughly enough to withstand the tide of their time, but this is one of a thousand reasons why the 'retire to your cave and live as a hermit' model can never work. Which is not at all to fault Epicurus, because his emphasis on "Friends" and on advice such as [PD39](#) holds the key to realizing that the passivist and hermitist interpretation is incorrect.

Post by “Joshua” of May 6, 2020 at 8:25 PM

Yes indeed, Cassius. It's a very thorny subject. But to come to Gardener's problem, I think that making time for self-care is an excellent idea! We—certainly those of us in America, but I'm sure elsewhere as well—we're too *busy*.

My experience with meditation was mostly frustrating, but one thing I do greatly miss from my Buddhist days is the morning tea ritual. I must get a teapot again!

It's about making time for a thing, and enjoying it fully. Like Thoreau said;

Quote

I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance.