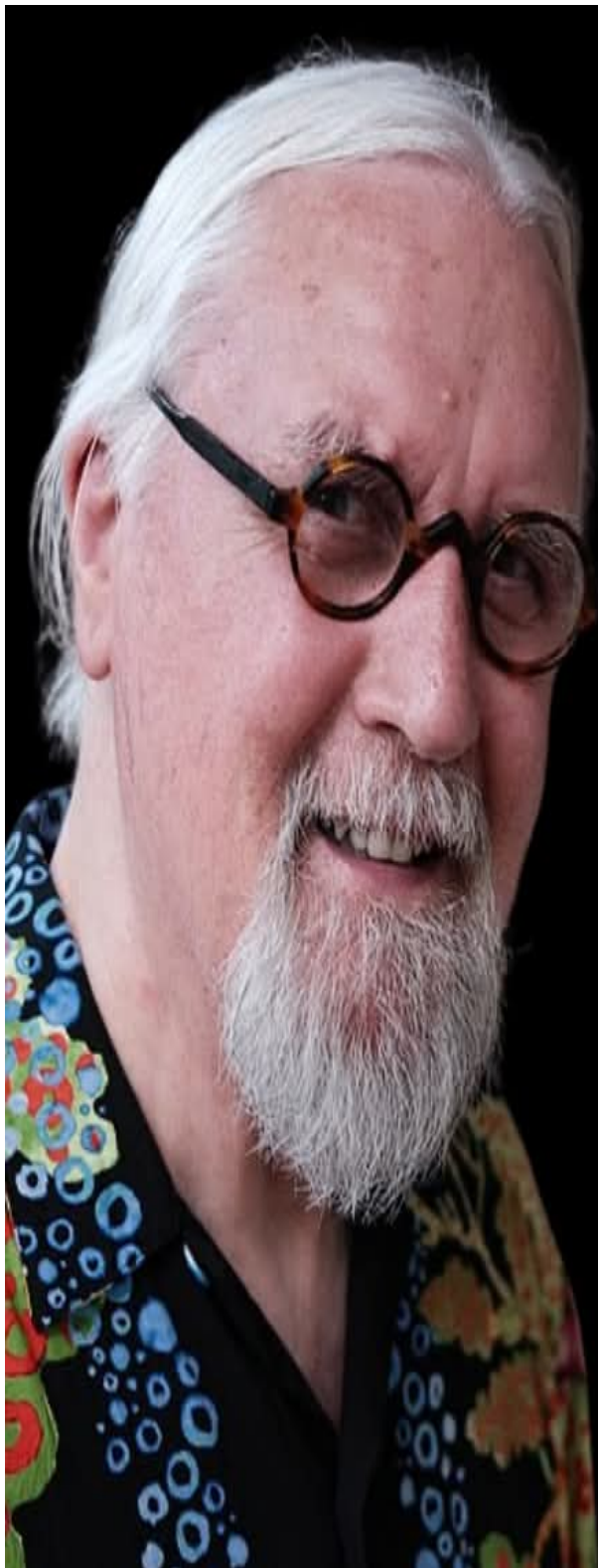


Words of wisdom from Scottish comedian Billy Connolly

Post by “Don” of May 25, 2025 at 8:33 AM



"You know, I think people take death too seriously. We're all going to die, every single one of us. So why be afraid of it? The way I see it, life is for living, not for worrying about what's going to happen at the end of it. I'm more concerned with enjoying the time I have left, doing the things I love, and spending time with the people who matter to me. When death comes, it comes. I'll deal with it then. Until that day, I'll keep laughing, because laughter is the best way to make peace with the inevitable."

-Billy Connolly

I couldn't find the exact source of this quote, so this may be more paraphrase than quote. There's also this article from 2019:

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17949861.billy-connolly-scottish-story/>

Quote

The Scots and the Irish - Connolly is of Irish stock as his surname tells you - have a deep cultural quirk of respecting death, but never taking it too seriously. Connolly will be keeping up that tradition. He's told his wife Pamela Stephenson that when he dies he wants an epitaph in tiny writing so visitors will have to step close to his gravestone to read it. When they can finally see it, they'll discover it says: "You're standing on my b****s".

Post by "Cassius" of May 25, 2025 at 8:44 AM

That's an excellent quote and attitude and in the casual way it's intended it's probably close to perfect.

If we were to debate and discuss subtleties, however, and that's what forums are for, I'd question whether Epicurus's intent was literally "don't take death seriously," or something more like "take death very seriously and realize when you're gone you're done, but at the same time don't let it get you down."

This subject reminds me a little of the debate we sometimes have with those who are confused about why Epicurus' face in the ancient busts is so serious and with such piercing eyes, rather than laughing or smiling.

I do think that Epicurus would agree that laughing is one way to make peace with the inevitable. Would he say that it's "the best" way?

I suspect this may be one of those "[Turn, Turn, Turn](#)" situations.

Post by "Don" of May 25, 2025 at 9:52 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

that's what forums are for



[Quote from Cassius](#)

"don't take death seriously," or something more like "take death very seriously and realize when you're gone you're done, but at the same time don't let it get you down."

I'll point out that Connolly says, "I think people take death too seriously." "Too seriously" to me rings of being obsessive about death or, conversely, obsessively doing everything to not think about it or talk about or acknowledge one's own mortality, to live in denial. We have to take death "seriously," but that seriousness need not be obsessive or morbid and shouldn't be fearful. Look death in the eye, say "Not today," and commit to finding the pleasure available in your life.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I do think that Epicurus would agree that laughing is one way to make peace with the inevitable. Would he say that it's "the best" way?

There is no best way for everyone, but laughing is definitely one available component for everyone. That's why there's such a thing as dark comedy.

Post by “Don” of May 25, 2025 at 11:42 AM

Going off that article I added to the first post, it seems "respecting" death vs "taking death too seriously" are ways of expressing what I'm trying to get at. As Seneca wrote that Epicurus instructed people to "meditare mortem," we can to think or reflect upon, consider, contemplate, ponder, meditate (upon) death without it becoming an obsession, a neurosis, an overbearing fear. Acknowledge, respect it, realize it's omnipresence in our future, but get on with living.

I'm reminded of Gus in *Lonesome Dove*:

“You see, life in San Francisco is still just life. If you want any one thing too badly, it’s likely to turn out to be a disappointment. The only healthy way to live life is to learn to like all the little everyday things – like a sip of good whiskey in the evening, a soft bed, a glass of buttermilk, or a feisty gentleman like myself.”

and *Shawshank Redemption*

"I guess it comes down to a simple choice, really. Get busy living or get busy dying"

That last one encapsulates the sentiment in the letter to Menoikeus.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 25, 2025 at 11:50 AM

Of course there's [VS41](#):

One must laugh and seek wisdom and tend to one's home life and use one's other goods, and always recount the pronouncements of true philosophy.

Post by “Don” of May 25, 2025 at 12:27 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Of course there's [VS41](#):

One must laugh and seek wisdom and tend to one's home life and use one's other goods, and always recount the pronouncements of true philosophy.

That's one of the good translations! Thanks for the reminder, [Godfrey](#) . Being the broken record, I enjoy pointing out that, in the original, the first word is indeed "laugh" γελᾶν not seek wisdom, etc. Laugh is being emphasized as the first word in the text.