

Episode 292 - TD22 - Is Virtue Or Pleasure The Key To Overcoming Grief?

Post by “Cassius” of July 26, 2025 at 7:01 AM

Welcome to Episode 292 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world.

Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at [EpicureanFriends.com](https://www.epicureanfriends.com), where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.

This week we continue our series covering Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations" from an Epicurean viewpoint.

Today we continue in Part 3, which addresses anger, pity, envy, and other strong emotions. Today we'll continue into [Section XVI](#), where we compare Epicurus' views on dealing with grief to those of other schools.

[media]<https://www.speaker.com/episode/67191014/media>

Post by “Cassius” of July 30, 2025 at 12:35 PM

Episode 292 of the Lucretius Today Podcast is now available. Today our episode is entitled: "Is Virtue Or Pleasure The Key To Overcoming Grief?"

[media]<https://www.speaker.com/episode/67191014/media>

Post by “Bryan” of July 30, 2025 at 6:12 PM

To further support Joshua's argument that starts at 16:00, I wanted to share these two quotes:

Plutarch, Non Posse, 28, p. 1105D: "If then '*The memory of a friend that has died is pleasant from every standpoint*' as Epicurus said, indeed already it is possible to understand how much they deprive themselves of joy: believing they [*passively*] receive and [*actively*] pursue appearances and films of dead companions - in which neither mind exists, nor sensation - while they are not expecting to be truly united again with them (and to see their beloved father, and beloved mother, and even their helpful wife)."

Seneca, Letters to Lucilius, 63.7 (apparently quoting Epicurus): "*For me, the thought of departed friends is sweet and pleasant: for I had them as though I would lose them - and I have lost them as though I still have them.*"

Brilliant juxtaposition about prudence at 37:00! That needed to happen and you did a great job!

Post by "Don" of July 30, 2025 at 11:20 PM

Agreed. Very solid episode. Thanks for everything y'all do week in week out. 👍

Post by "Cassius" of August 5, 2025 at 4:28 PM

I found these two sections from Plutarch's "That That Epicurus Actually Makes A Pleasant Life Impossible" that are relevant to the ongoing discussion in this series of episodes about management of grief. This is from the Loeb Edition (Einarson - De Lacy 1967) with the 109 and 125 references to page numbers. The reference in 109 to "they" is to the Epicureans:

109 - (1101) They disagree with those who would do away with grief and tears and lamentation at the death of friends, and say that an absence of grief that renders us totally insensible stems from another greater evil: hardness or a passion for notoriety so inordinate as to be insane. Hence they say that it is better to be moved somewhat and to grieve and to melt into tears and so with all the maudlin sentiment they feel and put on paper, getting themselves the name of being soft-hearted and affectionate characters. For this is what Epicurus has said not only in

many other passages, but in his letter on the death of Hegesianax to Sositheis the father and Pyrson the brother of the deceased. You see I recently happened to run through his letters.

125 - For this is the Epicurean argument in perilous disease and excruciating pain : ' You hope for some kind treatment from the gods for all your piety? You are deluded; "what is blessed and imperishable is prey neither to feelings of wrath nor of favour." You conceive of something after this life better than what you found in it? You are deceived, " for what is dissipated has no sensation, and what has no sensation is nothing to us. " Then why, you knave, do you tell me to eat and rejoice ?"' Why else but because for you, who are labouring in the storm, shipwreck is imminent, for surpassing pain leads straight to death. Yet a voyager cast away when his vessel breaks up is kept from sinking by some hope of getting his person to land and swimming safely through; but in these men's philosophy the soul can find no egress from the hoary sea since she is at once annihilated and scattered, perishing before the body. Consequently she is overjoyed at receiving this most sapient and godlike doctrine that the end of her troubles is to be destroyed and perish and be nothing.

Post by "Godfrey" of August 5, 2025 at 6:07 PM

A sidebar on grief, and its many layers...

One aspect to consider, which I think can only follow after the wailing war widow phase, is to parse out what exactly you are grieving. Is it for your loved one's experience of being no more? Are you grieving for yourself, as you live in loneliness? Is it the fear of moving on, and in doing so losing your memories of your loved one? Is it grief for what the deceased will never have a chance to do?

Then there's the practical aspect of moving forward and continuing to pursue your most fulfilling life. You're in a place that you never expected to be. You might be older and more vulnerable than in the past, realizing that you need to be open to life and new possibilities, and that you have to learn new ways of doing so.

Obviously there's much more. But Epicurus has provided a framework, if not a path, to continue to pursue your best life. His opponents, in their glib talk of manliness and strength. Have completely missed the point.

Post by "Patrikios" of August 6, 2025 at 1:20 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

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[Godfrey](#)

You make a good point how [#grief](#) of a loved one can put us in unfamiliar territory. There's a profound parallel between your observation about unexpected places in grief and the story about being in Oz.

When Dorothy landed in Oz, everything was unfamiliar - the landscape, the rules, even the very nature of reality had shifted. I think this is similar to the disorienting experience of grief of a close loved one. Grief is perhaps the ultimate Oz experience. You wake up in an emotional landscape you never chose to visit, where all the old certainties are gone.

As you said, we have to be "open to life and new possibilities." Through studies of the Epicurean framework, those experiencing grief can discover inner resources and support systems they hadn't recognized before.