

# Practicing Epicureanism

**Post by "JAWS" of August 2, 2018 at 8:59 AM**

How do you "practice" Epicureanism on a daily basis? I ask because I recently got really busy and haven't spent any time reading Epicurus. It feels refreshing to finally have some time to get back to it, but I would like ideas for things I can do so that in the future I can keep it in the front of my mind even if I don't have time to spend with it.

Thanks, everybody!

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**Post by "Cassius" of August 2, 2018 at 10:11 AM**

Hi JAWS and good to hear from you. This is a good general question that people can give input on over time, and what I am about to say may be too specific to me (as a "blogger") and time-limited, but it's on my mind:

(1) In general, I keep up my reading by regularly going back over some of the core material, such as Lucretius and the Diogenes Laertius biography. I don't like to get too focused on the commentaries because I want to make up my own mind about what it means. Continuing to re-read the original texts reminds me that these were real people who lived this and not just professional pundits like we have today.

(2) Another thing that keeps all this real to me is to stay in touch with others on the internet. This is the department where I am not happy with the current situation. I don't think Facebook is really productive, but we don't have enough "critical mass" here on this forum yet - hopefully that will change but frequency of people posting isn't nearly as much as I would like to see. I doubt that will change until there is more "live" activity through audio interaction -- that can be saved and videos added to youtube and that will generate more interest over time, but we're not there yet.

(3) Those first two comments may not seem to address "practicing" Epicurean philosophy but in my case I do see it that way. Studying and discussing the philosophy is enjoyable in itself, and it's not necessary just to see Epicureanism as justification for a life of fishing and surfboarding (for example). For me, the activity or working together with people to promote the Epicurean outlook is just about all the reward I need.

(4) You probably saw we've had several recent threads about "politics." I do think that "practicing" Epicurean philosophy means applying it to real life, and I think an important part of that is working together with other people, not just reading about it and using it personally to relieve personal anxieties and assist in personal planning. I see those as very important, but I also think that the way events have evolved (over the long term of centuries, I mean) people who think in Epicurean terms have been marginalized to the fringes of society, and I think it's time to "push back" 😊 I intend to continue to explore ways to do that both online and in "local" ways, and frankly I expect that study and effort to be among the most rewarding ways to "practice" Epicurean philosophy.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of August 2, 2018 at 10:14 AM**

To continue that last thought, my concern is that we are sort of "spread too thin" in our current internet efforts, or maybe worse, my concern is that Epicurean philosophy has been so intellectualized due to prevailing Stoic/Platonic attitudes that we don't even understand anymore what has been lost. The idea that spending all our time intellectualizing and debating fine points of the philosophy without actually taking any realistic steps to apply it is probably something Epicurus would find appalling, and would see as the victory of his main opponents.

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### **Post by “Martin” of August 2, 2018 at 11:51 AM**

Examples how to “practice” Epicureanism on a daily basis are:

- Consciously apply hedonic calculus in decisions what spare time activities to do and what to buy, eat or drink
- Unless you are already overwhelmed with invitations from friends, ask friends to meet
- Try making friends with people who you regularly encounter and avoid making enemies
- Pay attention when you get increasingly angry about somebody or something, analyze the reasons and do not foster that anger further. Instead, just acknowledge that you got angry and get over it by focusing on something else, e.g. work, activities toward pleasure or recalling good memories. (If the rationale that anger is usually detrimental to pleasure is not enough and you find it difficult to wind down upcoming anger early, Buddhist wisdom traditions provide good techniques which are compatible with Epicurus' philosophy if you just apply the techniques and

ignore the false metaphysics and other dead ends of Buddhism like killing off desire with some imaginary state of selflessness.)

- Focus on enjoying what you have already and do not let your desire for what you not (yet) have spoil that joy

- Do not take meals for granted as a subconscious side activity but consciously indulge in the pleasure which comes with eating. (Paradoxically, this may help limiting the food intake to a healthy amount).

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### **Post by “Hiram” of August 2, 2018 at 12:24 PM**

In my book [Tending the Epicurean Garden](#) I discuss many ideas on planning and developing your hedonic regimen. These include laughter therapy, exercise, love-making, cooking and eating. I also delve into research on contemplation and meditation. I may expand that if there's ever a new edition, adding elements of the Nordic hygge lifestyle.

The Cyrenaics had a practice known as "[presentism](#)" which was zen-like and involved being fully present for the pleasures made available by nature in the moment. But Epicurus expanded this. The sanctioned practices in our sources include reminiscing about past pleasures and anticipating future ones.

The Epicureans also engaged in memorization / repetition of key teachings so that they would "become strong" in the psyche, and had other therapeutic practices (in the scroll [on anger](#), Philodemus discusses "seeing before your eyes", for instance).

Also, hanging out with friends and enjoying friendship and familiarity with others is one of the most important and easiest sources of pleasure.

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### **Post by “Martin” of August 3, 2018 at 9:09 AM**

Hiram's book is indeed a good resource for how to practice Epicureanism on a daily basis.

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### **Post by “JAWS” of August 3, 2018 at 9:49 AM**

These are all excellent! Thank you!