

Should the Study of Modern Psychology and Positive Psychology be Encouraged?

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 15, 2026 at 8:38 AM

In a recent Zoom meeting we presented this question for discussion:

"Do you think that the study of modern psychology should play a role in the lives of those who study Epicurean philosophy? Why or why not?" ...I would reframe and give more detail: "Should someone who studies Epicurean philosophy also include the study of modern psychology and implement evidence based "self-help" and positive psychology"?

Anyone with thoughts on this?

I will soon post more, but in the meantime please add your thoughts, thanks! 😊

Post by “Pacatus” of May 15, 2026 at 1:13 PM

Haris Demitriadis discusses a range of modern psychology in his book *Epicurus and the Pleasant Life: A Philosophy of Nature* – from Freud to existential psychology to cognitive psychology – to the positive psychology of, especially, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Chapter 7: “The Psychological Approaches to Happiness”). On “positive psychology,” he comments: “Positive psychology focuses on the achievement of a pleasurable life, rather than on treating mental illnesses.”

In his Preface he says: "This book seeks to reintroduce pleasure as our innate guide to living a healthy and happy life. A simple yet powerful assertion based on empirical data, which stands up to the strictest scrutiny." (He also has an early chapter on the biology and chemistry of brain function and consciousness.)

I wouldn't say “should” (or “shoudn't”). For some it might be helpful.

Post by “Godfrey” of May 15, 2026 at 4:59 PM

[Pacatus](#) ' concluding sentence sounds right to me.

I would add that my somewhat vague understanding of positive psychology is that it is originally based on Aristotelian concepts, so this might compromise it's application to EP. I would also add that, for me, gaining a layman's understanding of basic neuroscience is perhaps more in line with the natural philosophy approach that Epicurus applied.

Post by “Don” of May 15, 2026 at 9:24 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

"Should someone who studies Epicurean philosophy also include the study of modern psychology and implement evidence based "self-help" and positive psychology"?

I agree that there's not an ultimatum to or prohibition against the study as [Pacatus](#) 's last sentence states.

However, [Kalosyni](#) , I think you've hit the nail on the head by using "evidence based." If a technique or practice is shown to increase happiness or enhance gratitude in keeping with Epicurus' philosophy, I certainly see no reason to not take advantage of it if it resonates with someone.

Post by “Don” of May 16, 2026 at 6:09 AM

I was curious to check what I've thought in the past on this topic. Here are some selections:

Post

[Positive psychology article of the science of gratitude](#)

<https://positivepsychology.com/neuroscience-of-gratitude/>

See also

<https://www.mindful.org/what-the-brain...bout-gratitude/>



<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/5087-should-the-study-of-modern-psychology-and-positive-psychology-be-encouraged/>

Don

November 27, 2024 at 8:27 PM

Post

[Ologies episode on Eudemonology](#)

<https://www.alieward.com/ologies/eudemonology>

Ologies is a fun, informal, eclectic podcast that I listen to when the topics interest me. I was aware of Dr. Laurie Santos, director of the Happiness Lab at Yale, instructor of the Happiness course in Coursera, and currently the go-to expert on research on happiness and positive psychology. I don't always find her compelling but feel it's important to keep up with the research to see where it parallels or echoes Epicurean philosophy. I also found...



Don

September 10, 2021 at 7:48 AM

Post

[RE: Episode One Hundred Thirty-Nine - The Letter to Menoecus 06 - Pleasure Part Two](#)

[...]

I'm curious if you're "for" the idea of flow being connected somehow to katastematic pleasure or "against" the idea 😊 I'm legitimately unsure from the way you worded that.

I also think there's some connection between mindfulness and ataraxia/aponia. [This excerpt from this article](#) makes me go "Hmmm?"...

[...]

I do think ataraxia happens here and now, a calm abiding in the present moment. I'm especially intrigued by that "flow happens during pleasant experiences."

For those unfamiliar with flow,...



Don

September 14, 2022 at 7:20 PM

Post

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/5087-should-the-study-of-modern-psychology-and-positive-psychology-be-encouraged/>

[RE: Why Does Stoicism Seem to Be More Popular Than Epicureanism, Especially In England?](#)

I put this in the wrong thread at first. Mea culpa!
Copied from the other thread:

I found some notes of mine in my Google Drive relating to positive psychology. PLEASE note, these were not for public consumption, but I thought the raw notes would give an idea where my head was at at the time:

[...]

And in looking at this again, I think that some Positive Psychology research may be of interest and use from an Epicurean perspective. That specific article that I linked to just struck me the wrong way.



Don

October 3, 2020 at 6:54 PM

That last whole thread looks interesting in light of the current thread. I find it interesting to go back and look at what I've said in the forum in the past on any given topic. I don't know if it's positive or negative but overall I seem to have remained surprisingly consistent (I think) even with longer and deeper study and appreciation of the philosophy. Or maybe I'm just obstinate



Post by “Patrikios” of May 22, 2026 at 5:51 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

Haris Demitriadis discusses a range of modern psychology in his book *Epicurus and the Pleasant Life: A Philosophy of Nature* – from Freud to existential psychology to cognitive psychology – to the positive psychology of, especially, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Chapter 7: “The Psychological Approaches to Happiness”). On “positive psychology,” he comments: “Positive psychology focuses on the achievement of a pleasurable life, rather than on treating mental illnesses.”

Thank you [Pacatus](#) for referencing the Demitriadis book (2nd edition). I am currently reading his book, and I find his references helpful in how “positive psychology” research reinforces the

basic Epicurean principles.

[Kalosyni](#) ,

Thanks for your question. As was mentioned, I too feel that would be optional. For me I find it very helpful to read some of the practical ways “positive psychology” advises on actions to reduce mental stress, based on recent research data.