

# Sparks (Conversation Starters)

## For Epicurus and Epicureanism

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**Suggestions for use** ▪ Use the following Sparks to start a conversation with a friend or group. Or journal with them, using them to get to “know yourself” — an imperative straight from the ancient Greeks.

### Spark 1 ▪ How to Preserve What Is Present

#### Spark 1 Quotation

*Epicurus says, “You must not ruin what is present by a longing for what is absent; rather, keep in mind that these things were what you previously desired.”*

#### Spark 1 Questions

1. Have you ever ruined what is present by longing for what is absent? If so, what was present and what was absent?
2. Are you typically satisfied with what is present? How so?
3. What present things (right now) are you particularly satisfied with? What things were you satisfied with a month ago? A year ago? A decade ago? What do you guess you might be satisfied with in a month or year or even longer?

### Spark 2 ▪ Practicing Happiness

#### Spark 2 Quotation

*Epicurus says, “We must practice those things that produce happiness since if happiness is present, we possess everything, and if it is not, we do everything to acquire it.”*

#### Spark 2 Questions

1. What is happiness? Is being happy the same thing as having happiness? Explain.

2. What does Epicurus mean when he claims that “if happiness is present, we possess everything”? Do you agree with his claim? Explain.

3. Identify two or three ways you can “practice those things that produce happiness.” What can you do to practice happiness daily? Weekly? Monthly? Be specific, concrete, realistic.

### Spark 3 ▪ Friendship

#### Spark 3 Quotation

*Epicurus says, “Of all the means that are procured by wisdom to ensure blessed happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friendship.”*

#### Spark 3 Questions

1. What is friendship? Name its two or three most significant aspects.
2. Is friendship essential to happiness? How so? How might friendship impede happiness? If possible, give examples from your own experience.
3. How can you acquire a friend? How can you practice friendship? How can you be a good friend? Identify two or three ways you can both acquire a friend and practice friendship. Does the acquisition of friends and the practice of friendship depend on how old a person is or a person’s stage of life? If it does, how does friendship (getting friends and being a friend) change over time?

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“O Epicurus! You who were first able to raise so bright a light from so great a darkness, shedding light on the blessings of life! . . . For as soon as your system of philosophy that arose in your divine intellect begins to proclaim aloud the nature of things, the terrors of the mind disperse and the walls of the world open wide. . . . You placed human existence from amid great waves of trouble and great darkness of the mind into a condition of tranquility and a clear light. . . . I follow you, the glory of the Greeks!” —Titus Lucretius Carus

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