

# On how not to fear death

## Fear of death is irrational

There's nothing we fear more than our own death. Yet this fear is irrational, say the Stoics, nothing but rumors from the living.

## Nothing is permanent

Life is change. Things come and go. Nothing is permanent.

Nature has accepted this circle of life.

If we're more aware of this natural circle of new life and death, we might enjoy our precious time, our loved ones, and the wonder of being much more. We don't know how much longer we're given to appreciate these things. And if nothing else, then our own death will end them.

**I am not eternal, but a human being; a part of the whole, as an hour is of the day. Like an hour I must come and, like an hour, pass away.**

Epicetetus, *Discourses* 2.5

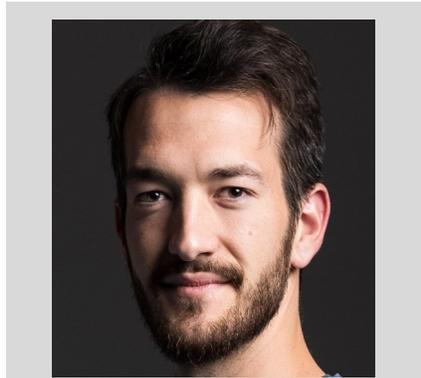
We are not eternal. But because of our fear of death, we don't like to think about it. We instead think pleasant thoughts, right?

However, contemplating our own death could be tremendously valuable.

## Live as if today is your last day

To get the most out of life, the Stoics advise us to live as if today were our last day. We don't know how much longer our heart will keep beating. And it's not up to us to decide. It's only up to us to choose *how* we want to live *right now*.

**Think of yourself as dead. You have lived your life. Now take what's left**



Jonas Salzgeber of [jonas@njlifehacks.com](mailto:jonas@njlifehacks.com) is an author. At the core of his actionable philosophy lies the goal of leading a happy life even—and especially—in the face of adversity. He is the author of *The Little Book of Stoicism*.  
<https://www.njlifehacks.com/the-little-book-of-stoicism/>



and live properly.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 7.56

Living as if it's our last day is *not* about

living a hedonistic lifestyle by seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. It's about periodically reflecting on the fact that you will not live forever, you're mortal, and you might not wake up the next morning. Like an hour, you will pass away.

## Change your mindset

*The goal is not to change your activities necessarily, but your state of mind while doing those activities.* Contemplating your own death won't depress you; no, it will enhance your enjoyment of life. It will turn to your advantage. You won't take things for granted anymore and you will appreciate little matters much more. You will savor each and every moment because you're well aware that all these things have not been given to you indefinitely.

## Stop wasting time on trifles

Thinking of your own death helps you stop making random choices and wasting time on trifles. You're more aware of what you want to spend your time with. It focuses your mind on the truly important—on who you want to be in this world. It helps you live fully, no matter what you've missed to this day. Life is now, and you want to enjoy every beat of the present moment.

## Memento mori

The old Romans had a name for this: *Memento mori*.

Remind yourself that you are mortal in the morning and know what a privilege it is to have woken up freshly to a new day. You'll not only appreciate your life and loved ones more, but you'll also get much more out of your days.