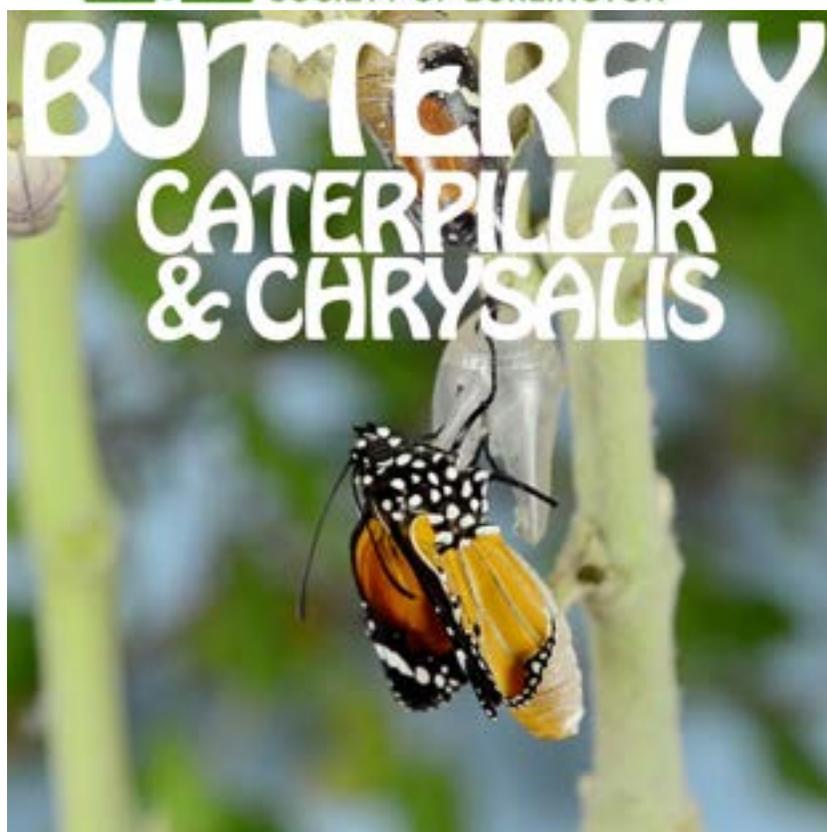


Earth Teacher

UU FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON



JOURNALING PROMPTS

- **Wisdom:** What wisdom (caution or inspiration) does this Earth Teacher have to share with me? What do I need to do to be receptive?

- **Resilience:** What does this Earth Teacher have to offer to help me deepen my personal resilience? My community's collective resilience?

QUOTES

For a caterpillar to become a butterfly, it has to go into a cocoon (or pupa, or chrysalis) and become complete "goop". The caterpillar is compelled to create and go into the cocoon, but the resulting butterfly shares no DNA with the caterpillar it once was. That is transformation. ~ adrienne maree brown

The butterfly counts not months but moments, and has time enough. ~ Rabindranath Tagore

The chrysalises had taken on the shape of the butterflies inside, and some rocked as though stirred by a faint breeze, though the adjacent chrysalises were still. Four butterflies emerged while I watched, and seven more when I returned another day.

They came out with their wings packed down like furled parachutes, like crumpled letters,. Even as they emerged it seemed incredible that their wide wings had once fit in so slender a space. As they emerged, their bodies were visible as they would never quite be again, once the wings expanded and came to dominate the creature, and during those moments they looked like bugs, like insects, instead of what they would be when they were all brilliantly colored wing like some sentient cousin of flowers.

Their bodies were still plump with the fluid they had to pump into those wings in the first minutes of their emergence to make them the straight sheets with which they flew. Each clung to its chrysalis while its wings unfolded by almost imperceptible stages. Some did not get quite free, and their wings never fully straightened. One butterfly sat still with an orange wing curled into the chrysalis. One seemed permanently stuck halfway out, its yellow and black wings like buds that would not flower. One flailed frantically, trying to drag itself out by crawling onto adjacent unopened chrysalis until they too began to thrash, a contagious panic. That one finally dropped free, though it may have been too late for its wings to straighten.

The process of transformation consists mostly of decay and then of this crisis when emergence from what came before must be total and abrupt.

~ Rebecca Solnit

On Earth, everyone loved the butterflies. But I trusted the caterpillars more. I trusted the ones who knew they were not done growing. ~ Andrea Gibson

Most all of us have undergone initiations of one sort or another, from the death of a parent to the birth of a child. Many have experienced initiation in the form of a crisis or trial by fire. Those of us who have gone through more deliberate, ritualized forms of initiation can state unequivocally: the process is not fun, comfortable or predictable. You may well feel like you're going nuts. You may not know who you are anymore. You don't get to choose which parts of you die, or even to know ahead of time. One of the overriding feelings is of *uncertainty*: you don't know where you're going, only that there's no going back. And there's no way of knowing how long the transformation will take. It can help to remember that the initiatory chrysalis phase is a sacred time, set apart from normal life. That it has its own demands and its own logic. That it cannot be rushed, only surrendered to. That it may be painful, but also, ultimately, healing.

~ Jonathan Hadas Edwards & Julia Hartsell

POETRY

I am Found by Kim Wildszewski

I dreamt I woke with butterfly wings
Kaleidoscope of light.
Felt my body stretching wide
Fell upward toward new life.

Some days I wish to shed my skin
To inch out toward my life.
A shell to better fit within
To make the future right.

I've been broken down.

But patient and slow
I open to growth.
I've been changed.
I am new.
I am found.

These wings were made, sweet days and nights
From loss and grieving too.
There is no letting go what was
Each piece is carried through.
I'm learning now the sacred part
This birth is not an end.
Still not perfect nor complete
In time I'll change again.

I've been broken down.
But patient and slow
I open to growth.
I've been changed.
I am new.
I am found.

Monarch by James Crews

The butterfly does not break free triumphant.
Once it claws through the chrysalis,
it stands there shivering, new wings aching
as they slowly fill with blood. It must keep
its tiny eyes shut tight at first against
the brightness and shimmer of a world
it has never seen before--not like this.
It must listen until a deeper voice whispers:
The flowers are waiting. Leave the skin
of the old life far behind. Open your eyes
and give in to the blue air that will carry you
everywhere you need to go.

To Emerge as What? We Cannot Know by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Beside the river
we knelt in rocks
to watch the chrysalis—

unmoving hardened skin
attached to a slender
willow spike, black bits

of excrement scattered below—
and though the metamorphosis
is slow, certainly not

something done by dinnertime,
for ten minutes we crouched around
the crusty case and wondered

at the fuse, the force,
the miracle happening inside.
Was whatever was in there

even alive? I could not help
but think of how our bodies
look from day to day the same,

but inside our skin, soft as it is,
we're being slowly, miraculously,
even now rearranged.

Still Learning by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Tonight when I see a photo
of myself from almost thirty years ago,
I stare at the woman in white lace
the way a butterfly might stare
at that strange nibbling larva—
curious. It doesn't occur to me
to tell her about what will happen.
I flit by as she stays on the wall.
She'll learn soon enough. I breathe
into my wings. She'll learn.

Butterfly wings and grizzly bear jaws

are both successful pathways to survival.

There is no single, best way to thrive.

~ Jarod K. Anderson

The Butterfly Effect by Julián Jamaica Soto

I wish the knowledge
were easier to come by,
that individualism is
just a scam, that
you are always
the butterfly wings.
You are always a flap of
the storm.

Edward Lorenz,
a weather scientist
from MIT, is
sometimes misquoted
on this, as the premise
that the
butterfly wing
can cause
a hurricane in a
different part
of the world.
Shorthand that isn't
all that close to a representation
of the math-turned
weather scientist's work.

He proposed that,
Should we make
even a tiny alteration
to nature,
we will never know what
would have happened
if we had not disturbed it,
since subsequent changes
are too complex
and entangled
to restore
a previous state.

Which is to say
that you have an
immeasurable effect
on the system.
It will change and you
will shape its DNA.

You must not believe
the lying lie that
you do not matter,
that whatever change
you can organize is
so insufficient as to
not be worth
your time,
your energy,
your life force.

You must be willing
to dream a dream
that carries forward
your community.
This is how we rise.
This day is polluted
with a mistrust of truth,
fertile and warm medium
for unchecked cruelty and
power. You must choose
to scream the truth
until every leaf and stone
bears unrepentant witness
to what happens when
you try to cage and smash,
to pin and frame a butterfly
and their thousands and thousands
of fabulous, flamboyant friend



Love the Mud by James Crews

I don't want to read another book
or listen to another podcast promising
a better life, the road to happiness.
I just want to love my life as it is—
the cobwebbed corners and rumped bed,
my sweaty yoga mat still unrolled
across the floor, the color rubbed off
where I rest my head each morning.
Let me love the orderly *and* the messy—
my unwashed and salt-stained car,
the cracked planter left out in the cold,
the regret that still fills me years after
my mother's passing because I wasn't
there at her bedside when she died, because
I didn't do more to save her. Let me
be like the butterflies, sipping from mud,
dung, and carrion, drawing nutrients
from actual blood, sweat, and tears—
a different kind of nectar. Let me stay
in love with my sorrow today, with anger
and fatigue and every fruit fly rising up
from the sweet and rotting compost
I forgot to take out.

A solid blue horizontal banner with the word "MUSIC" written in large, bold, orange, sans-serif capital letters.

[Butterfly](#) by Mariah Carey

[Love is Like a Butterfly](#) by Dolly Parton

MEDITATION

[Children's Butterfly Meditation](#) (video - 6 minutes)

[Guided Relaxation: Peaceful Butterfly Meditation](#)

IMAGES FOR CONTEMPLATION











