



The Story Behind the Butterfly in ...

H.O.P.E.s LOGO

The Butterfly and the Wonder of Metamorphosis

The butterfly became a part of HOPE's logo thanks to Elizabeth Kübler-Ross who told a group, of which I was a part, the story of how she was called to work with end-of-life issues. In 1945, she was practicing child psychiatry in her native Switzerland when she was called with other professionals to come and help the few survivors of a Nazi death-camp for children. There, the survivors told them that whenever a child was taken to the last building in each of the two rows of barracks, they were never seen again.

With their hearts in their mouths, the visitors opened the doors to these two buildings and were stunned by all absence of fear... there were drawings of butterflies everywhere... drawn in the rough pine surfaces with the only instrument the children had—their fingernails! The children had left behind an extraordinarily powerful symbol of hope that had to have come from an ancient memory—caterpillars becoming butterflies.

What did they know about this transformation called “metamorphosis”—shape-changing? They knew in their souls what a caterpillar “knows” when it turns its skin into a hard plastic shell within which it dissolves itself, becoming a chemical “stew” that, in turn, will become a complete butterfly. A wonder in this is that during the whole process the central nervous system of the caterpillar remains intact—an old structure on which to build their new form! A second wonder lies in the clusters of cells laid down in the caterpillar that resist the digestion which created this stew, and when the chemistry is right, these clusters unfold and start turning this stew into butterfly cells! In the case of the Monarch butterfly, that wonder is knowing the way to its winter home in Mexico from its summer home birthplace in Maine, never having been there before!

The ancient Greeks understood this beautifully... their word for butterfly is the same as their word for Soul... *Psyche!*

The children's message tugs at the heart strings. Its profoundly powerful, mystical qualities boggle the mind. Thousands of children came together to share that message for all humankind. It is not just a story about caterpillars and butterflies; it is a story about human spiritual potential.

What the children knew sixty years ago we are coming to know better today because people everywhere are discovering the powerful value of struggle... “what doesn’t kill me makes me stronger (Nietzsche)”. It is essentially the same struggle that gets the butterfly out of its chrysalis (and if anyone helps it, the butterfly dies)... the struggle is necessary to give it the strength to live... and to fly to Mexico!

We find this strength in HOPE group meetings. We find it when souls struggle against medication that numbs and paralyzes the brain, inhibiting body, mind, soul, and spirit. We find it when people discover the healing power of compassion and forgiveness that let the soul blossom. We sense the presence of a growing need for HOPE’s support that nurtures and encourages the emergence of Psyche, the soul... our butterfly.

