Thinking about therapeutic messaging through the lens of the life cycle of a caterpillar/butterfly

Butterfly

The final process of leaving the cocoon takes time. If someone were to help open a cocoon, it could mean that the butterfly might never fly, because their wing development depends upon coming out in a special way.

Therapeutic Message: Those around a child can influence change as caring companions, but they cannot affect direct change. A child will come to know themself as transformed when they have experienced what they need to experience. There are no short-cuts.

After Hatching

The caterpillar is an eating machine. It is very hungry from the start. Many caterpillars grow so fast they need to shed their skin because they need more space for further growth.

Therapeutic Message: Children grow through relational nourishment provided by those around them. They take in relational messages and internalise them. They hold these messages within themselves and take shape as they continue to grow inside of their own expanding skins.

Inside Changes

When a caterpillar transforms in its cocoon it doesn't just grow wings to adorn its caterpillar body, it breaks down into a jelly like substance before it re-organizes into a butterfly.

Therapeutic Message: We all need to let our shields down and be vulnerable as we engage in transformative processes. As we soften, it is easier to re-form and take on a new shape.

Cocooning

Most caterpillars/butterflies stay inside of their cocoons for between 5 to 21 days. If they are in places like deserts, some will stay in there for up to three years waiting for supportive conditions outside.

Therapeutic Message: Children's therapeutic transformations will take as long as they need to take and that is ok. When the environment around the child is ready, children will become prepared to engage with it in transformed ways.





appropriate. Please exercise your clinical judgement around this. This activity is a reflective, This is a therapeutic

Written on Their Wings

An Activity for Children and Carers as Therapeutic Engagement draws to a close

for Carers - Your child is like a butterfly who is ready to stretch their wings and fly. As they unfurl you can see that written on them is all the beauty and qualities that they have inside ready to be seen by others.

Some reflective questions for consideration

- · What beauty have you always known is inside your child?
- · What have you learned about your child's unfurling wings throughout this sharing process?
- Is there anything you appreciate now about your child that you might not have been as aware of at the beginning of our involvement?

Activity

Note down some of your child's qualities on the butterfly wings template. You might use words and/or pictures. (Tell them to the worker and get the worker to note them down if you aren't in a position to note them down yourself). You could use the following prompts for ideas:

What strengths does your child have?

What do you love about your child? I love that you...

What makes your child special? You are special because...

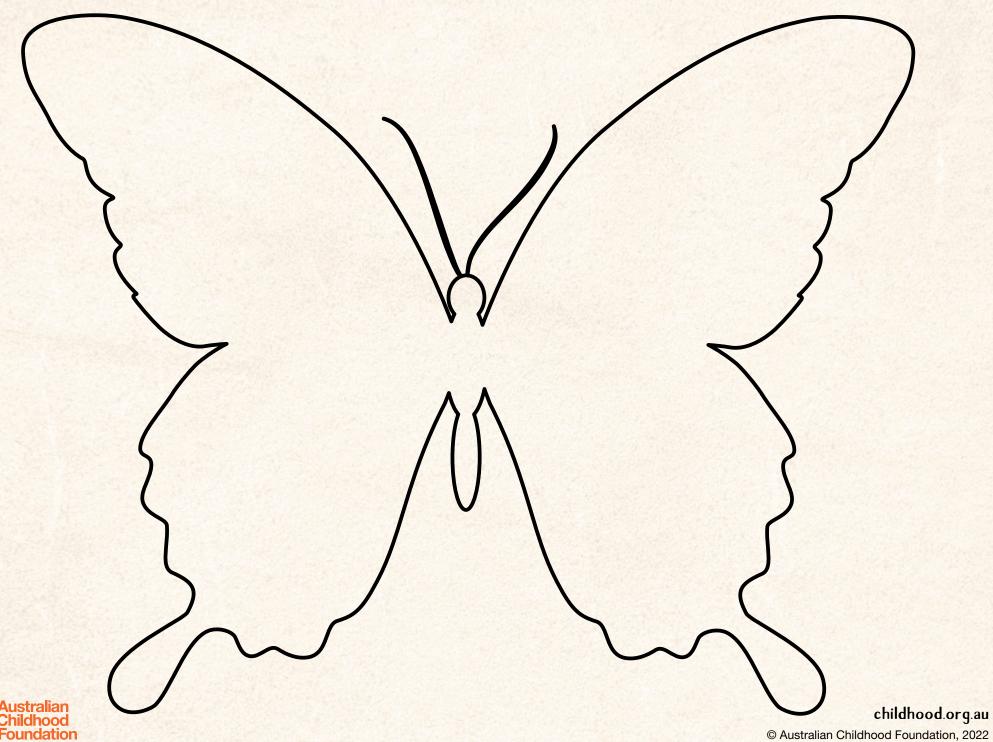
What qualities do you admire in your child? Ladmire...

Your child might like to bring colour to their wings as things are discussed and written down. Your child might like to also draw or paint in a background for their butterfly.





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