

Chronic Butterflies

Now here's an inspired explanation! 😊

Imagine that you've wandered out to do a bit of light gardening — tend to the flowers, pick strawberries, check for ripe fruit swinging from the trees, whatever.

A few butterflies flutter across your field of view, adding some bright colour & gentle activity. Nice, isn't it?

OK, now let's change one detail of this scene. Instead of, say... three butterflies, let's imagine that you're joined by... well, $\pi,000$ (pi thousand; 3142) of them.

They get in your hair, you can't see anything worth mentioning, the gentle tickle of hundreds of little legs (as they walk on you) gets distracting, you can't breathe in without also inhaling one, they sit on whatever you try to pick up, & you'd be treading on them with each step... messy... they're everywhere... you've got chronic butterflies.

Not so nice, is it? So with many otherwise good things in life.

Butterflies in real situations

Say that you have several children to look after. Bright, cheerful, talkative (asking interesting — sometimes terrifying — questions from time to time), playful etc. But you're the only one there to look after them.

Turn your back, & things go missing... or get destroyed (seldom, thankfully, the children themselves)... or get dirtied... or get hungry... or get wet... or worse...

Individually, each little problem is trivial to solve.

However, you have lots of problems to solve, which tend to arrive in bunches & build up. There's no time to solve them in, there are more arriving every minute, & you have to share your attention between these problems & whatever else you might happen to be doing.

After a couple of hours of this, you can easily see how the most patient, angelic, peaceful parents can get a bit nippy, or hasty, or grumpy, or whatever very quickly whilst managing the most wonderful children (even wonderful enough that bystanders occasionally offer to adopt them).

The difference is that term “chronic.”

The chronic difference

There is no rest, no breaks, no golden fairy-ladies waving shimmering wands, naught to give you time to put aside enough issues to get ahead, stay ahead — ghasp, maybe even find time for yourself!

When you wind up jammed in this situation, there is always the assurance that no matter how fantastic, no matter how competent, no matter how resourceful they may be, others have been brought down as low as you (probably lower) facing the same, chronic, situations.

So... you ain't a special loser, you just happen to be the person sitting here. 😊

Solutions - the “golden bullet”

So... what can be done?

It varies, of course, from situation to situation. Some people look for (& a very rare few find) “golden bullet” solutions – where doing one relatively small thing, making one relatively small change, works amazing improvements in the situation. Relying on this, however, is generally not going to be a winner.

Solutions - diluting the impact

Where possible, find friends (open friends, not interfering, bossy, fussy “friends” who simply end up ruining things in a different way) or find stronger groups of people who are able to take away just a little of the constant burden here & there, to let you step back, take a breath, find a more constructive way of approaching some aspect of the situation.

As you’re able to do this, you’re able to steadily erode the “irresistible” force of the overwhelming behaviours, which in turns brings you more power when it comes to dealing with further aspects.

Think of a balloon. There might be a very small difference in pressure between what makes its skin taut, & what is enough to make it say “*Bang!*” The aim here is to keep your own pressure far enough away from “*Bang!*” to give you plenty of mental room for properly facing & dealing with the individual causes – which in turn reduces the pressure still further.

Repeat these steps, & the gentle breath eventually becomes a more complete victory.

Solutions - choosing assistants

The ideal assistant in this process...

- ...has no vested interest in maintaining any of the pattern you’re fighting; &
- ...has a wider view of the situation than you do; &
- ...is able to reach outside the problem’s domain for strength & resources to apply, solving it.

That sounds like a struggle for perfection – & maybe it is, but to get around this roadblock in your life, you don’t really need a huge burst of perfection. Just enough to do the job, to break you out of the trap & set you back on your mental feet. Now that is something which can be found! That is a **living** possibility! 😊

Alternative Butterflies

[courtesy of Jill] Butterflies taught me how to love.

When I was a child I **loved** butterflies. I was obsessed with them. So whenever I saw one in the back yard I’d usually try to catch it. When I did I often killed it by grasping too hard, or if it lived long enough to make it to my terrarium, it would usually starve in captivity.

I cried & fell **apart** every time, completely devastated, till I learned that the only way to really love a butterfly is with an open hand, to let it fly when it wants to. I learned to feel lucky if they chose to land on me for a while, to watch & enjoy them, & let them fly free when they decided to move on.

I found I have to love people the same way. When I love too hard I suffocate & trap them. I have to love with an open hand. I keep pictures of butterflies everywhere, as they remind me how to love.

