



Would You Enter the Cocoon?

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Change can be disturbing. It is often seen as an invasion, attack, or inconvenience; something that we like to put off for as long as we can. Let's face it! We love our comfort zones; like the pillow and mattress that have just the right creases in them for the perfect position while we sleep; we love our comfort zones.

I'm sure most women are familiar with the following analogy. Change is like becoming comfortable with or breaking in a pair of new shoes; getting them to feel just how you want them to feel. These are the shoes that you wear from the house to the car and from the car to an event before you change at the car into the beautifully designed wear-only-twice-a-year shoes. These comfortable shoes are the shoes that you wear to the grocery store or for a long day of errands. These shoes *feel just right on your pinky toe!* One day you notice that somehow, they've begun to look a little worn and scraped and weathered. You've cooked and served dinners at the church in them and barbequed in the back yard in them. You've taken long walks with the dog in them and played in the park with your children in them. You've even, in the early years, wore them to work. Now they no longer look good even with a nice casual outfit. *But they feel so good on your pinky toe.* You wish you had bought two pair of them when you bought them. Now you can't find anything quite like them. You don't want to get rid of them because they feel so good.

There are times when change can be daunting, uncomfortable, oh...the uncertainty of it all; way more trouble than we feel it is worth. But without change there is no growth. There is no progress without change. There is no increase without change. No renewal and repositioning without change.

Consider the caterpillar. Not an especially beautiful or even useful creature; in fact, kind of creepy looking. From birth, all she does is crawl and eat. She doesn't think she really serves any particular purpose other than to satisfy self; to creep and crawl from branch to branch, from tree to tree and eat. In fact, she eats so much and grows so profusely that she grows out of her skin several times during her existence; each time not really learning from her mistake of overeating, not really coming to a full understanding of her true purpose in life. So she once again starts eating, plunging deeper into a self-serving existence.

Finally one day, not really comprehending why, into a cocoon, into a dark period, a state of wonder, a state of struggle, of confusion, perplexity, uncertainty, and bewilderment she goes. In other words, life happens – the death of a close loved one, a serious illness, the loss of a job, or even the quest for the meaning of life. How many of us have found ourselves in these situations – these are the times that try our souls?

When forced into the cocoon of life you either go with the flow of change or you kick against it. The caterpillar has the **courage** to go with the flow. While in the cocoon her total molecular structure is broken down, reformed, and then rebuilt. She must undergo a metamorphosis, an alteration, a transmutation, a transformation, a transmogrification. The cocoon is where the caterpillar risks it all, enters total chaos, undergoes a total rebuilding and restructuring, and is reborn to a new way of living. Only by taking the risk of entering the cocoon can the caterpillar go from that ugly, fuzzy, yucky-colored, creepy, greedy, ground-and-tree-dwelling creature to a beautifully colored, free being that can soar to heights unknown.

Would you do it? If you knew that you were no longer going to be what you are today, would you choose to enter the cocoon? Would you take the chance? If you knew you were going to have to be more patient, have more empathy, have more understanding, be more caring, be more loving, be less angry, be more giving, receive less and give more, improve your people skills and relationships, think first before you speak or act, not have the last word, hold your tongue and not have anything to say at all...if you knew that you would have to think differently, behave differently, have a different attitude, be more persistent, endure more, withstand more, push harder, run faster, run when you're tired, run when you're sick, run when you think you can't any longer...if you knew you'd have to face a challenge today, and another one tomorrow, and another one next week, and start it all over again next month...would you have the courage to change?

The caterpillar does this by nature. By predestination she enters her cocoon, her season of change. While enveloped in her change catacomb the caterpillar ceases to be. She ceases to be that that she knows. Although the cocoon looks lifeless, hanging from a single thread, there's a lot going on inside as the caterpillar is literally liquefied and then reassembled. The caterpillar's structures are broken down chemically and the butterfly's new structures are formed. The solids of the caterpillar completely dissolve and then form the new solid structures of the butterfly.

It hurts, it's tough, it's the hardest thing she's ever had to do, but she will emerge a beautiful being with many colors and an alluring wing design; most of all with the ability to fly, to soar to great heights. Would you do it? Would you find the courage to change?

So this is the process that I began just a few years ago after over 20 years of abiding in the comfort of nice jobs and nice companies and very nice paycheck. I actually started the process several years before, but fought against it only to sink further into an abyss. I

finally began to realize that there was more meaning to life than developing websites☺. I chose to leave it all behind and start from scratch. I chose the uncertainty of entrepreneurship; not knowing when my next paycheck would come; but knowing for sure that another problem would need to be solved today, another crisis would arise tomorrow. I chose to change; change careers, change attitudes, change behaviors. As an entrepreneur, I am my company; **Atteuq Potential Unlimited, Inc.** – *a training and development company dedicated to helping businesses and individuals achieve and sustain high performance; helping people get to where they desire to be.* If I don't sell I don't get paid. That's a major change. And speaking of change; how about selling, influencing to buy, cold calling, networking, filling the sales funnel, following up, calling again, hearing the "no", hanging up the phone and calling the next person without the bat of an eye; motivating self, renewing self, reinventing self, loving self, lifting up self, changing self.

Twenty-four years ago, I graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. My degree from Rensselaer has opened so many doors for me over the years. My education has been important to my success. So it was a very easy decision for me to make to reenter school when I changed careers. Like my time at Rensselaer, my time at St. John Fisher College has prepared me for greatness. It has caused me to understand what I will need to do to master my craft of facilitating learning. The Human Resource Development program at St. John Fisher College has helped me understand the competencies and skills I needed to develop to be awesome at what I do. While everyone else is being ordinary and mediocre, why not strive to be extraordinary, excellent? Why not strive to be phenomenal? Why not soar? And then I decided to do it again. I'm back at St. John Fisher College for studying for my doctorate in Executive Leadership. Education allows the questioning of old assumptions, beliefs, and paradigms; formulation of new thoughts and ideas; and the development of new behaviors and attitudes. Education is the basis of change.

While I know there's comfort in staying where you are, in continuing to do things the way you've always done them, consider the story of a young girl sitting in the kitchen one Wednesday night watching her mom make Thanksgiving dinner. Her mother cut both ends of the 20 pound ham, placed it in the roaster, and began to dress it. The little girl asked why the two ends of the ham were cut off. Mom replied, "That was the way grandma always did it." Grandma was in the living room enjoying a rest after baking all day. So the little girl ran to ask grandma why the two ends of the ham were cut off. Grandma laughingly replied, "I've always done it because the pan was too small."

Do you have the courage, the stamina, but most of all, the **audacity** to change into what you need to be to find purpose? If not, consider what you lose when you don't change. Consider the caterpillar, constantly shedding skin and seemingly becoming new, but not really 'cause some of that old stuff is left buried. Then consider the alternative of the cocoon and the emergence of the butterfly and finally **find the courage to change!**