

# April Theme

## Emergence: The Practice of Transformation

### FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

#### Books & Articles

- *Homo Deus*, by Yuval Noah Harari
- '7 Signs You're Experiencing a Major Spiritual Transformation (and emerging into something new)' by Natasha Che [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/natasha-che/7-signs-youre-experiencing-a-major-spiritual-transformation\\_b\\_7958282.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/natasha-che/7-signs-youre-experiencing-a-major-spiritual-transformation_b_7958282.html)

#### Music

- **Black as Night** by *Nahko and Medicine for the People* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkGBLLjAXEA&list=RDM3rLLALWYyk&index=9>
- **Stay Alive** by *José González* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NucJk8TxyRg&index=3&list=RDRknUh1LapJs>
- **Feeling Good** by *Nina Simone* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5Y11hwjMNs>
- Check out the Spotify play list for more: <https://www.soulmatterssharingcircle.com/spotify-lists.html>

#### Children's Books/Stories

- *Chicken Sunday* by Patricia Polacco
- *The Treasure* by Uri Shulevitz
- *Angel Monster* by Veronica Bennett
- *We* by Alice Schertle, ill. by Kenneth Addison
- *Cool Melons – Turn to Frogs! The Life & Poems of Issa*, story & Haiku translations by Matthew Gollub, ill. by Kazuko G. Stone

### QUOTES FOR CONTEMPLATION

**I Know. I Try To Avoid It Too** ~ *Amy Lloyd*  
 Have you sat with grief?  
 Have you let it wring you dry?  
 Leave you swollen and exhausted  
 in its wake?  
 Allowed the pain from the inner depths of hell,  
 deeper than you knew existed,  
 to ooze out,  
 bubble up into your heart,  
 so that your tears could begin to wash you clean?  
 Have you asked yourself the questions with no answers?  
 then allow them to just co-exist with you?  
 Have you walked, and talked, with death and your losses?  
 The innocence murdered  
 Precious time stolen  
 Hearts trampled?  
 Are you familiar with vulnerability?  
 With allowing your deepest feelings,  
 painful feelings,  
 raw feeling,  
 real feelings,  
 to come out of the grave where you try to hide them?  
 I know how hard it is,  
 I know.  
 I try to avoid it too.  
 I also know the truth.  
 It must be done.  
 It is the broken road to healing.  
 To life!  
 The more we feel,

the more we can feel.  
 Go deep, my friend  
 Open wide.  
 Sit a spell and let it bubble.  
 Feel it all.  
 It will feel rotten for a while,  
 then comes the morning...

Always be a work in progress. ~ *Emily Lillian*

If you live in the dark a long time and the sun comes out, you do not cross into it whistling. There is an initial uprush of relief at first, then— for me, anyway—a profound dislocation. My old assumptions about how the world works are buried, yet my new ones aren't operational. There's been a death of sorts, but without a few days in hell, no resurrection is possible. ~ *Mary Karr*

Maybe you went through it so it would awaken you. ~ *Lalah Delia*

When you're finished changing, you're finished. ~ *Benjamin Franklin*

It is never too late to be what you might have been. ~ *George Eliot*

You cannot go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad. ~ *C.S. Lewis*

Yearning for a new way will not produce it. Only ending the old way can do that. ~ *Richard Rohr*

Let difficulty transform you. And it will. In my experience, we just need help learning how not to run away. ~ *Pema Chodron*

Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly. ~ *Proverb*

A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself...It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental Supernature than can effect this evolutionary miracle. ~ *Sri Aurobindo*



## What Does It Mean to Be a People of Emergence?

*Let mystery have its place in you; do not be always turning up your whole soil with the plowshare of self-examination, but leave a little fallow corner in your heart ready for any seed the winds may bring, and reserve a nook of shadow for the passing bird; keep a place in your heart for the unexpected guests, an altar for an unknown God.*

- Henri-Frederic Ariel

*We've been entrusted with the wisdom that emergence is most often about breathing rather than becoming better, patience not perfection, depth not dominance; acceptance not striving, attention not constant improvement.*

Make a bit of room. Leave a little space. Keep a lookout for the unexpected. These directions may not sound like anything radical or revolutionary. But it turns out that these are often Life's favorite ways to help us emerge into something new.

Henri-Frederic Ariel's reminder about leaving room and letting some things be is especially important as we move into the season of spring. During this time of year, it's not just farmers but us all who turn to the work of "tilling and turning up our whole soil." All around us, the culture shouts its heroic talk about striving and perfecting. Struggle is the dominant metaphor of the day. We talk of "fighting" to become all we can be. Images of sprouts breaking through concrete start showing up everywhere. Yet, we need to be careful because, more often than not, emergence and transformation is a much subtler art. It's about stillness, listening and waiting to be led, not conquering, struggle, and taking charge.

In other words, when it comes to emerging into something new, the message of spirituality is "Be careful with what you've been taught and told because much of it takes us in exactly the wrong direction." As a people of emergence, we are called to take a different tack. We've been entrusted with the wisdom that emergence is most often about breathing rather than becoming better, patience not perfection, depth not dominance; acceptance not striving, attention not constant improvement.

That part about attention instead of improvement is especially important. It's so easy to get transformation mixed up with fixing. And fixing is emergence's biggest foe. Trying to perfect or prove ourselves is the surest way to stay stuck. The pursuit of constant improvement and perfection focuses us on our inadequacy and inferiority, causing us to overlook those unexpected guests that Henri-Frederic speaks of.

And, friends, we don't want to miss those unexpected guests! Those seeds brought by the wind and those passing birds are the partners that make emergence possible. They help us notice new paths. They invite us to walk with a new step. They awaken in us new songs. They remind us that new life is not something we do alone. They assure us that transformation doesn't have to be a long and lonely struggle, but instead can be more like learning a new dance with a new friend. All we have to do is trust, take the hand of that "unknown God" and follow its lead.

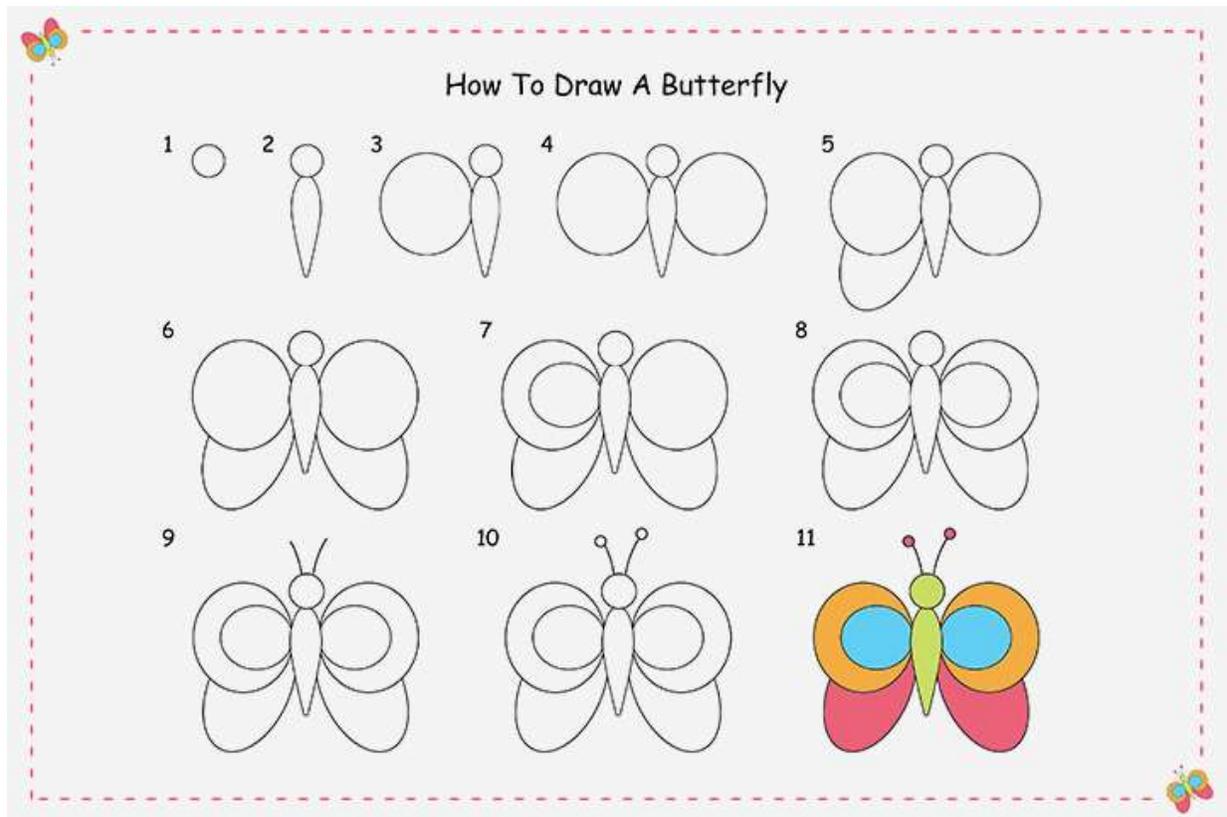
So, this month, leave some room on that dance floor of yours. Keep your eyes peeled. And when that unexpected guest reaches out its hand, make sure you're ready to take hold.



Photo by Max Oh on Unsplash

## KIDS' CORNER

Butterflies are an excellent example of emergence and transformation. They start as a caterpillar and turn into a pupa hanging from a branch while they transform so they can emerge as a butterfly. Emergence means to come out to be seen after being hidden, like the pupa hiding in the chrysalis. Transformation means to go through a big change – like from a caterpillar to a beautiful butterfly! Practice drawing a butterfly.



## A REMINDER TO RE-BALANCE

*"We suffer more often in imagination than in reality."* - Seneca

When it comes to the tombs that keep us trapped, worry tops the list for many of us. The tragedy is that, as Seneca points out, many of those worries are imagined. In other words, we are the creators of worry, not just victims of it. And to the degree we contribute, we can also escape and free ourselves.

If worry and anxiety is what you are wrestling with, then here's your exercise this month:

**Identify your imagined worry**

**&**

**Work with one strategy to address it**

Spend some significant time this month engaging and meditating on the below list of resources. Take a day and dive deeply into them all or spread them out and tackle one at a time as your daily meditation practice. Use them not just to better understand worry and anxiety, but to figure out the one particular worry that exists more inside **your** head and heart than out there in the world. Just naming that imagined worry might be enough for the month. But if you can, also consider using the resources to identify a strategy to begin separating yourself from that worry.



## PERSONAL REFLECTION

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of emergence means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

1. Is that broken thing you keep trying to put back together keeping you from the beautiful thing that is waiting to be built? How might you shift your focus?
2. Is your armor in your way? How have you constructed your armor, and what could you do to slowly chip it away?
3. Have you been sitting and simmering in stress for so long that it now feels normal? Is it time for you, like the proverbial frog in boiling water, to notice that a boiling pot is no place to live? What small steps can you do to extricate yourself from the pot?
4. Has worry become your tomb? What can you let go of in order to let some light into your tomb?
5. It's said that we don't fear change, but the loss and letting go that comes with change. You do know what you need to let go of, right? But do you know why you are holding on so tight?
6. Are you moving on or running away? If running away, what from?
7. They say we heal only to the degree we look at our role in the pain of our past. Are your wounds still open because you continue to turn a blind eye about your part in things?
8. Are you the one who needs to be more gentle with yourself? Is it time to forgive yourself for the mistakes that were made in the past?
9. Is it possible that emergence from pain requires you figuring out its gift? Is it possible that instead of asking, "How do I escape?" you need to first ask "What is Life trying to get me to see?"
10. Is regret over what could have been preventing you from fully leaning into what's being offered?
11. What if we become beautiful only by helping others find their beauty? What if we become free only by helping others find their freedom?
12. Who is behind your mask, longing to come out and be seen?
13. What if Life isn't trying to get us to transform into something new or better? What if it simply wants us to emerge into the awareness that we are already enough?
14. Ralph Waldo Emerson said we need to be careful about what we worship because 'what we are worshipping we are becoming'. When was the last time you asked, 'What am I really worshipping?'
15. Are you in the way of someone's emergence?
16. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

*All contents adapted from the Soul Matters Sharing Circle resource materials for April 2018.*

## JUSTICE CORNER

With Earth Day this month, here are a few events you can attend to help to advocate for climate justice.

### **Air Pollution and Climate Change Symposium**

Saturday, April 7th, 7am-2pm  
UCSF Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research Auditorium  
155 N. Fresno Street. Register at: <http://www.fresno.ucsf.edu/conferences/air2018/registration/>

### **Earth Day Fresno**

Saturday, April 14th, 10am-4pm  
Radio Park, 2233 N First St, Fresno, CA 93703

### **March for Science**

Same day, starting at 3pm from Radio Park.

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559.322.6146