

DEVELOP THE GIFT OF DETACHMENT

By Ellen Harris, LMHC, CEAP

Have you heard the story about the man who helped a cocoon make its transition into a butterfly?

He saw a small opening in the cocoon and watched as the butterfly *struggled* for hours, attempting to force its body through a small hole. Then all progress seemed to stop! It appeared the butterfly had gotten as far as it could. The man, out of kindness, decided to help by taking a pair of scissors and snipping off the remaining bit of cocoon.

The butterfly emerged easily, but its body was swollen and undeveloped. The wings were small and shriveled. The man watched - expecting the wings to expand and support the body. But, this never happened. The butterfly spent its whole life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It was never able to fly

What the man, in kindness and haste, did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required to get through the tiny opening were Nature's way of strengthening the body of the butterfly and its wings so that it would be ready for flight.

This simple story illustrates the law of detachment. When our loved ones are suffering, our initial response is to rescue them and ease their pain.

It's important to use discernment. There are certainly occasions when it's appropriate to do all we can to ease the burdens of those we love- when our help is both needed and appreciated. At other times, experiencing life's struggles may be necessary tasks in order to develop good judgment and inner strength.

Emotionally healthy people develop the gift of detachment. They understand when to lend a hand, and when to stay back and allow others to learn from their experiences.

An often misunderstood concept, detachment means having the ability to maintain love and concern without acting on desires to rescue, enable, fix or control. It means having the discernment to know when our assistance is helpful and when our well meant kindnesses can actually have an inhibiting effect.

If you have questions about detachment, call Ellen Harris 239-404-0862.