



## Healing Trauma through the Butterfly Effect

By: Dr. Michelle Kukla



Edward Lorenz was a mathematician and meteorologist in 1961, who discovered the Butterfly Effect. He determined that something as small as a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can produce a tornado in Texas months later. This phenomenon illustrated that the tiniest changes in a complex system can later create dramatic change and cause large effects in other areas of the system in the future. Consequently, the Butterfly Effect can be observed as a metaphor for how one tiny, small change can have an enormous ripple effect and how that one small change can have a huge impact on your life in the future. Every small change we make impacts the world and our own personal growth. Therefore, the smallest of changes you are making towards your personal growth and healing need to be recognized because they are providing significant changes and a ripple effect in your life.

It is so easy during the recovery process from trauma to find yourself feeling like you are not moving forward. Some trauma survivors may feel like they will never get beyond the trauma. Well, the Butterfly Effect is a huge reminder that this is not true. Every time you make a change it is making a difference and pulling you through your trauma towards healing!

The Butterfly Effect exercise: Below you will see a big picture of a butterfly. On the butterfly's left wing write down the small changes that you are making in your healing process (e.g., practicing your breathing retraining, using a grounding technique when dealing with a flashback, shutting down your flight-or-flight response when triggered, etc.). On the butterfly's right wing write down the big results you are searching for to demonstrate your resiliency, recovery, and thriving after trauma (one week with no flashbacks, a month without any nightmares, two weeks without any panic attacks in response to triggers). Small changes give you huge results and help catapult you into being a thriver in the wake of sexual violence!

