

## “Metamorphosis”

When I think of a hopeful symbol of transformation, I think of metamorphosis—a term usually associated with insects as they drastically change from one form to another. The butterfly is widely noted as an exquisite example of this process. I traced a butterfly and overlaid it on an image of adipose tissue, generously captured by Dr. Nathan Shelman in the Pathology Department at UK. The fat cells of adipose tissue have a lot of meaning to me in this piece. For one, I teach anatomy, and histology is microanatomy, so it represents a part of my passion for the human body and all of its wonderfully made intricacies. Secondly, adipose tissue represents a lens through which we are measured in this world—how much or how little we have, seemingly a constant thread of dialogue centered around it. “You carry your weight well” “You have such a pretty face” “You should lose weight before you start your professional career”. These comments surface from time to time, like an unwelcome echo from times past.



The butterfly print overlaid on the adipose tissue reminds me of a metamorphosis of my mind. In the top image, notice the scattered shadows of healthy and unhealthy foods that lie outside the butterfly—an apple, a donut, bananas, a hamburger, to name a few. I used Chartpak™ markers to transfer these stylized images to individual fat cells. This assortment of pictures outside the butterfly represents food choices we make --often presented as a dichotomy—good versus bad, eat this, not that. To be sure, there is a healthy way to consume this variety. I have learned the answer is not found on the extremes. The food inside the fat cells also symbolizes how we literally embody what we eat. Yes, we carry these elements in our cells, but more deeply, we carry them in our being. We are more, though, than what we eat. I transferred images of the organ systems *inside* the butterfly to represent a more holistic way to view our bodies. These vital organs are concentrated in the butterfly to show a coveted transformation of how we see ourselves. The result of this internalized, complete view of ourselves is depicted in the bottom picture. The butterfly is shaded in black with the cellular boundaries emphasized in pink. It’s a bold and beautiful depiction of a transformed soul.

Can we imagine more than one specific way to health? It is a unique journey of the body, mind, and soul.

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