

INTRODUCTION TO INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS THERAPY

PRESENTED BY FRANK ANDERSON, MD | MARCH 23, 2023
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ISSUE IMPORTANCE

Internal Family Systems (IFS, sometimes nicknamed "Parts Work") is an evidence-based model of psychotherapy that acknowledges that the mind naturally contains multiple parts with different purposes, needs, and stories. When our inner parts feel safe and have their concerns addressed, our core Self knows how to heal, allowing us to become integrated and whole. Today, IFS has a legacy of effectiveness in the treatment of trauma and in addressing a variety of mental health concerns.



KEY COMPONENTS

IFS IS AN EXPERIENTIAL TREATMENT:

- Emotions and the body are central.
- Relationships are a core component.
- Separation from a traumatic event is necessary (not re-experiencing). Other experiential treatments include:
 - AEDP (Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy)
 - EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)
 - SE (Somatic Experiencing)

IFS ROOTS & CORE ASSUMPTIONS:

- Multiplicity of the mind:
 - We all have multiple parts.
- ALL parts are welcome.
 - They ALL have good intentions.
 - Some develop due to pain/trauma.
- Look at intent not effect of parts.
 - Parts can carry burdens or take on protective roles.
- We all have Self energy.
 - It doesn't need to be cultivated or created; we are born with it.



TYPES OF PARTS THAT DEVELOP FROM BEING HURT

EXILES

parts that carry wounding

Examples: shame, unmet needs, lack of connection, being alone

MANAGERS

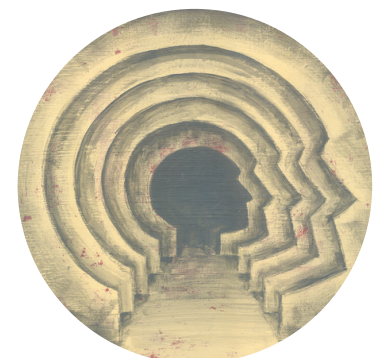
protective parts that prevent wounds from getting triggered

Examples: perfectionism, being in control, people-pleasing, wanting to be good or liked, caretaking, avoiding conflict, obsessing

FIREFIGHTERS

parts that stop pain

Examples: bingeing, purging, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, numbing out, dissociating





DIFFERENTIATING PARTS

how parts might show up in an individual's life:

EXILES:

- often young (not always), vulnerable
- carrying pain, hurt, trauma, and betrayal
- containing memories, sensations, emotions, beliefs, or flashbacks
- stuck in the past part
- vs. wound: "unlovable" is a wound & the part is an aspect forced to take on the pain

MANAGERS:

- hard-working, heroic, ever-present, and overworked
- tending to run our day-to-day life exhausted,
- may love taking medications Managers
- often think they ARE the Self afraid of
- reactive parts, may feel like a failure when reactive parts show up

FIREFIGHTERS:

- reacting only when the wound has been triggered
- trying to put out the fire culture
- and society are often not a fan of these parts or their actions
- focus on intent
- (not effect)

SELF:

- different from parts!
- containing inherent healing capacity
- a calm power, trust, "it will all work out"
- soul, core wisdom
- spiritual space for some or many **The 8 Cs**: Curious, Calm, Confident, Compassion, Courage, Creative, Connected, Clarity



WORKING WITH PROTECTIVE PARTS

"The goal of working with protective parts is to help them separate from the Self, to learn their job and fear, and to get their permission to access the wound."

After progressing with **the 6 Fs** (see right), the therapist then helps to **address the protective part's fears** and deal with overwhelm. Then—and only then—do they offer an invitation to the part and **get its permission to heal the underlying wound**.

Most protective parts fear things like...

- Overwhelm (The pain is too much.)
- The secret will be out.
- They will lose their job.
- Other parts will be triggered. They will be judged.
- They can't handle the change.

The 6 Fs of Working with Protective Parts

1. **Find** the part (identify it)
2. **Focus** on it
3. **Flesh** it out
4. **Feel** toward it (unblend from Self)
 - a. Connect to Self & ask how the Self feels toward this part.
 - b. Parts are capable of stepping back for Self to emerge.
5. **BeFriend** It
 - a. Foster internal relationship between Self & protective part
 - b. Have the part share what it is holding.
 - c. What is its job? Learn about its positive intention.
6. **Fear** - What is fear?
 - a. What would happen if the part didn't do this job anymore?
 - b. Fear reveals the wound or a polarization (conflict).



[More information is available on the IFS Institute website.](#)

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