

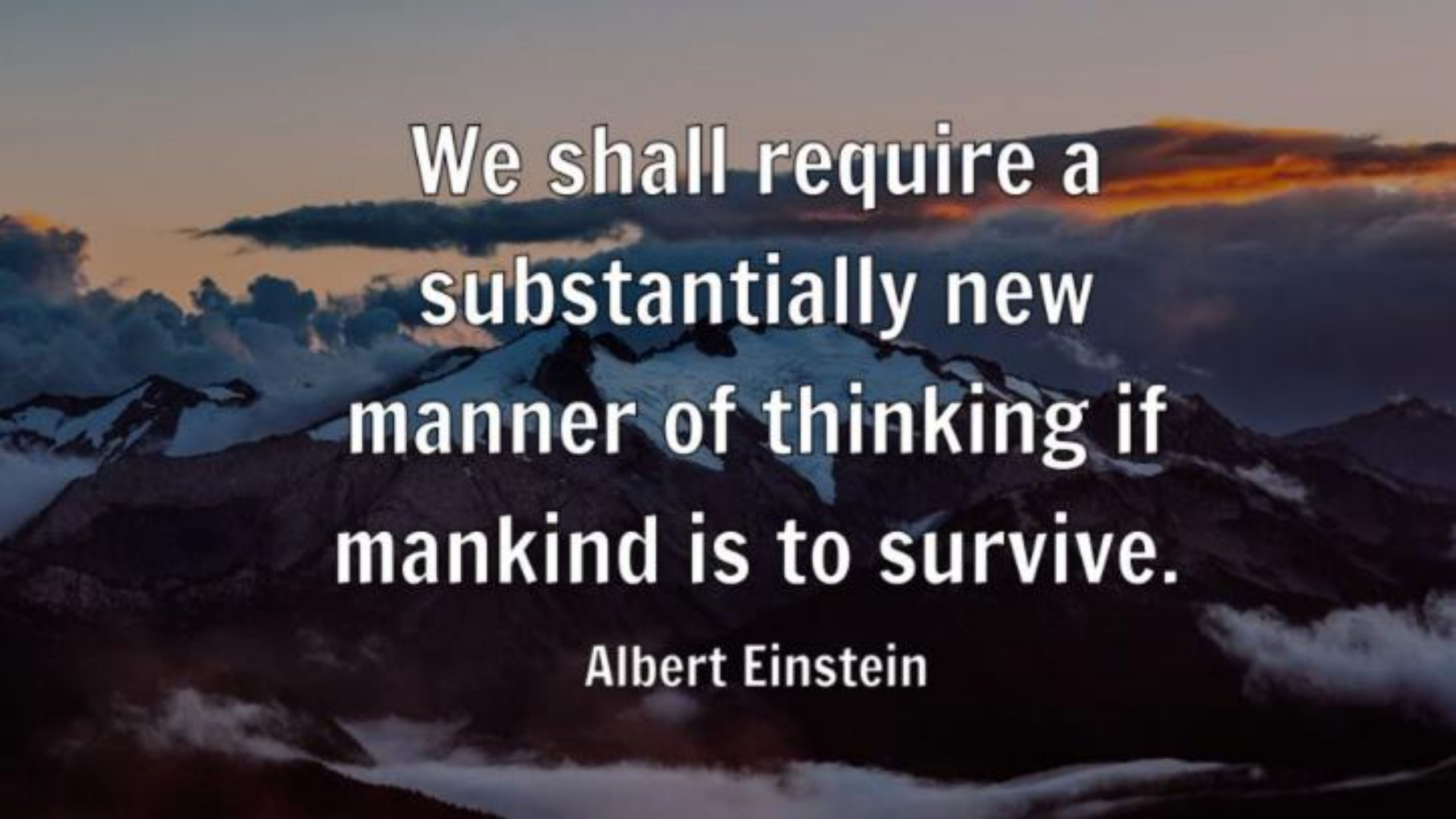


Internal Family Systems (IFS) Therapy

Wholeness is not achieved by cutting off a portion of one's being, but by integration of the contraries.

- C. G. Jung

Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.
Center for Connected Living, LLC



**We shall require a
substantially new
manner of thinking if
mankind is to survive.**

Albert Einstein

Dr. Richard Schwartz

► **Richard Schwartz, PhD** began his career as a family therapist and an academic at the University of Illinois at Chicago. There he discovered that family therapy alone did not achieve full symptom relief and in asking patients why, he learned that they were plagued by what they called “parts.” These patients became his teachers as they described how their parts formed networks of inner relationship that resembled the families he had been working with. He also found that as they focused on and, thereby, separated from their parts, they would shift into a state characterized by qualities like curiosity, calm, confidence and compassion. He called that inner essence the Self and was amazed to find it even in severely diagnosed and traumatized patients. From these explorations the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model was born in the early 1980s.

► IFS is now evidence-based and has become a widely-used form of psychotherapy, particularly with trauma. It provides a non-pathologizing, optimistic, and empowering perspective and a practical and effective set of techniques for working with individuals, couples, families, and more recently, corporations and classrooms.

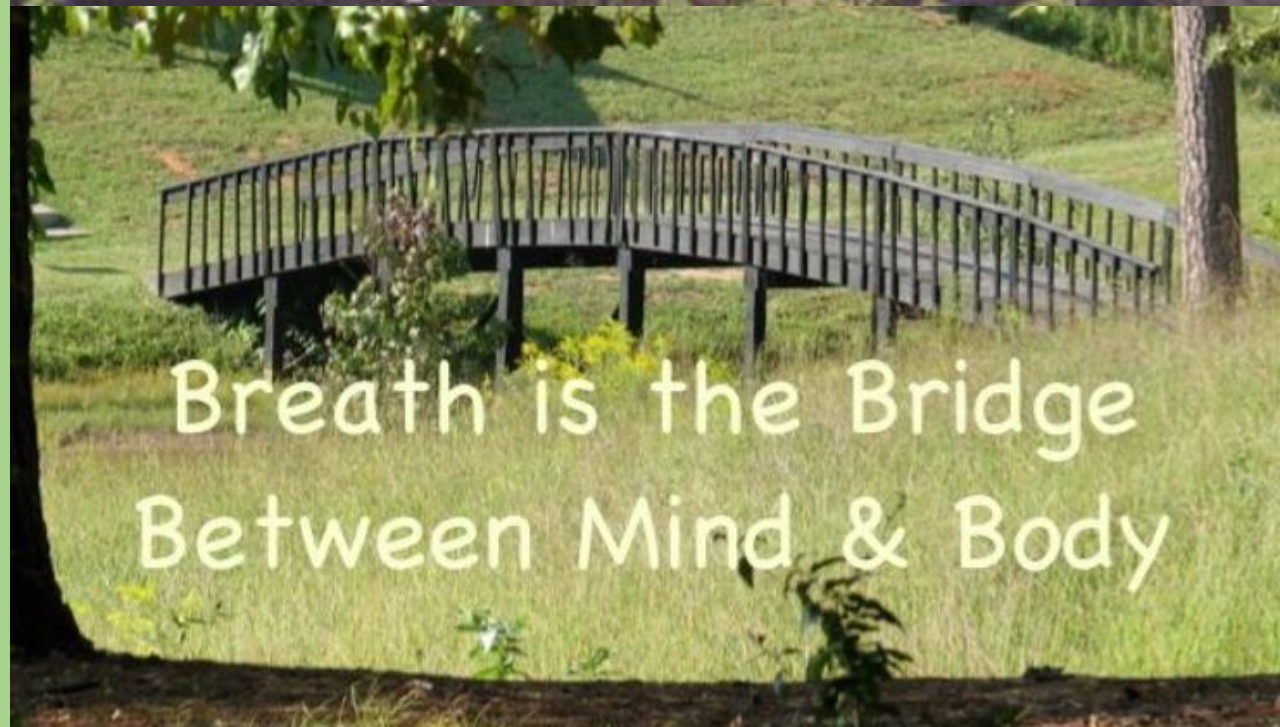
► In 2013 Schwartz left the Chicago area and now lives in Brookline, MA where is on the faculty of the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Click below to listen to an outstanding talk on IFS by Dr. Schwartz

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiCGcVcmzzg&ab_channel=MeantallyFitPro



Admittedly, I am a bit of a neuroscience nerd. As much as I love the neuroscience of the brain, mind, and body as elucidated by Polyvagal Theory, HeartMath, somatic experiencing and the like, there is need for integrating these approaches with the psychology of the mind. IFS is one approach which offers that bridge.



Polyvagal Theory

The chart below adapted by Dr. Rothschild nicely demonstrates the shifting in body sensations, physiological symptoms, and emotions as we move between autonomic states (Rothschild, 2017).

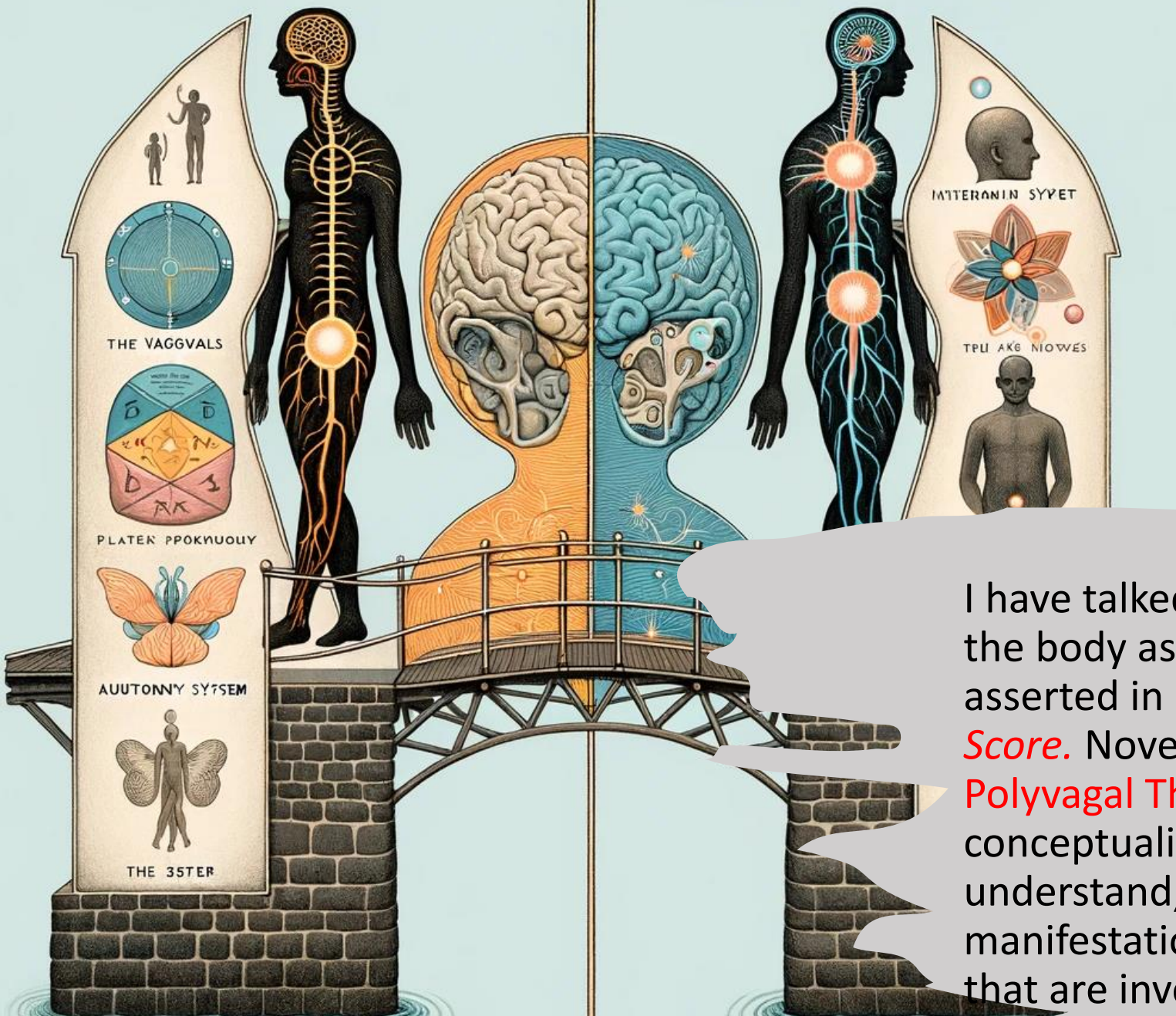
AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM: PRECISION REGULATION

** WHAT TO LOOK FOR **

	LETHARGIC Parasympathetic I (PNS I)	CALM Parasympathetic II (PNS II) <i>Ventral Vagus</i>	ACTIVE/ALERT Sympathetic I (SNS I)	FLIGHT/FIGHT Sympathetic II (SNS II)	HYPER FREEZE Sympathetic III (SNS III)	HYPQ FREEZE Parasympathetic III (PNS III) <i>Dorsal Vagus Collapse</i>
		◀ "Normal" Life ▶			◀ Threat to Life ▶	
PRIMARY STATE	Apathy, Depression	Safe, Clear Thinking, Social Engagement	Alert, Ready to Act	React to Danger	Await Opportunity to Escape	Prepare for Death
AROUSAL	Too Low	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme Overload	Excessive Overwhelm Induces Hypoarousal
MUSCLES	Slack	Relaxed/toned	Toned	Tense	Rigid (deer in the headlights)	Flaccid
RESPIRATION	Shallow	Easy, often into belly	Increasing rate	Fast, often in upper chest	Hyperventilation	Hypo-ventilation
HEART RATE	Slow	Resting	Quicker or more forceful	Quick and/or forceful	Tachycardia (very fast)	Bradycardia (very slow)
BLOOD PRESSURE	Likely low	Normal	On the rise	Elevated	Significantly high	Significantly low
PUPILS, EYES, EYE LIDS	Pupils smaller, lids may be heavy	Pupils smaller, eyes moist, eye lids relaxed	Pupils widening, eyes less moist, eye lids toned	Pupils very dilated, eyes dry, eye lids tensed/raised	Pupils very small or dilated, eyes very dry, lids very tense	Lids drooping, eyes closed or open and fixed
SKIN TONE	Variable	Rosy hue, despite skin color (blood flows to skin)	Less rosy hue, despite skin color (blood flows to skin)	Pale hue, despite skin color (blood flow to muscles)	May be pale and/or flushed	Noticeably pale
HUMIDITY						
	Skin	Dry	Dry	Increased sweat	Increased sweat, may be cold	Cold sweat
	Mouth	Variable	Moist	Less moist	Dry	Dry
HANDS & FEET (TEMPERATURE)	May be warm or cool	Warm	Cool	Cold	Extremes of cold & hot	Cold
DIGESTION	Variable	Increase	Decrease	Stops	Evacuate bowel & bladder	Stopped
EMOTIONS (LIKELY)	Grief, sadness, shame, disgust	Calm, pleasure, love, sexual arousal, "good" grief	Anger, shame, disgust, anxiety, excitement, sexual climax	Rage, fear	Terror, may be dissociation	May be too dissociated to feel anything
CONTACT WITH SELF & OTHERS	Withdrawn	Probable	Possible	Limited	Not likely	Impossible
FRONTAL CORTEX	May or may not be accessible	Should be accessible	Should be accessible	May or may not be accessible	Likely inaccessible	Inaccessible
INTEGRATION	Not likely	Likely	Likely	Not likely	Impossible	Impossible
RECOMMENDED INTERVENTION	Activate, Gently Increase Energy	Continue Therapy Direction	Continue Therapy Direction	Put on Brakes	Slam on Brakes	Medical Emergency CALL PARAMEDICS

THE POLYVAGAL THEORY

INTERNAL FAMILY THEORY



Polyvagal Theory

Now adapted by Dr. Rothschild nicely demonstrates the shifting in body sensations, symptoms, and emotions as we move between autonomic states (Rothschild, 2017).

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM: PRECISION REGULATION
**** WHAT TO LOOK FOR ****

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← "Normal" Life →		← Threat to Life →		
Safe, Clear Thinking, Social Engagement	Alert, Ready to Act	React to Danger	Await Opportunity to Escape	p
Low	Moderate	High	Extreme Overload	Exc
Relaxed/toned	Toned	Tense	Rigid (deer in the headlights)	Flaccid
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Likely	Likely	Not likely	Impossible	inac
Continue Therapy Direction	Continue Therapy Direction	Put on Brakes	Slam on B	

I have talked elsewhere about how trauma stores in the body as the famous **Dr. Bessel van der Kolk** has asserted in his excellent book, *The Body Keeps the Score*. Novel therapies such as **Dr. Stephen Porges, Polyvagal Theory** has given us excellent conceptualizations of this. So, IFS gives us a bridge to understand, appreciate, and treat the psychological manifestation of the underlying biological processes that are involved in trauma and addiction.

Some of the following slides are taken from the work of Dr. Dawn-Elise Snipes

Click to the link below to listen to her superlative lecture:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJHoW_b5-M&ab_channel=DocSnipes

Dr. Dawn-Elise Snipes

INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY



ALLCEUS.COM/IFS

The image is a promotional banner for a lecture. It features a dark blue background with a light blue horizontal band. On the right side, there is a circular inset photo of Dr. Dawn-Elise Snipes, a woman with blonde curly hair and glasses, wearing a purple patterned top. The text 'INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY' is written in large, bold, blue, italicized capital letters across the center. Above the photo, the name 'Dr. Dawn-Elise Snipes' is written in white. Below the photo, the website 'ALLCEUS.COM/IFS' is written in white. The overall design is clean and professional.



Basic Assumptions

- ▶ The mind is subdivided into an indeterminate number of subpersonalities or parts.
- ▶ Everyone has a Self which can lead the individual's internal system.
- ▶ The non-extreme intention of each part (exile, manager and firefighter) is something positive for the individual.
- ▶ There are no "bad" parts
- ▶ The goal of therapy is not to eliminate parts but instead to help them find their non-extreme roles.
- ▶ As we develop, our parts develop and form a complex system of interactions among themselves
- ▶ When the system is reorganized, parts can change rapidly.
- ▶ Changes in the internal system will affect changes in the external system and vice versa.

The IFS Parts and Assumptions



- ▶ Subpersonalities are aspects of our personality that interact internally in sequences and styles that are similar to the ways in which people interact. (exile and the manager or the firefighter and the Self)
- ▶ Parts may be experienced in any number of ways -- thoughts, feelings, sensations, images, and more.
- ▶ All parts want something positive for the individual and will use a variety of strategies to gain influence within the internal system.
- ▶ Parts that become extreme are carrying "burdens" -- energies that are not helpful, such as extreme beliefs, emotions, or fantasies.
- ▶ Parts can be helped to "unburden" or recognize their role and return to their natural balance.
 - ▶ Firefighter might trigger the urge to drink to protect against pain at all costs
- ▶ Parts that have lost trust in the leadership of the Self will "blend" with or take over the Self.

Overview of IFS

- ▶ IFS was developed in the 1990s by family therapist Richard Schwartz, Ph.D.,
- ▶ It is based on the concept that a core Self is the essence of who you are, and identifies three different types of sub-personalities or “families” that reside within each person, in addition to the Self.
 - ▶ Wounded and suppressed parts called exiles (lost child)
 - ▶ Managers, that keep the exiled parts suppressed (enabler)
 - ▶ Firefighters, that distract the Self from the pain of exiled parts. (hero/mascot/scapegoat)
- ▶ The Internal Family Systems Center for Self-Leadership conducts training programs



These parts are encoded in implicit or procedural memory and become rather reflexive or procedural much like riding a bike or shooting an arrow.



Three Categories = System

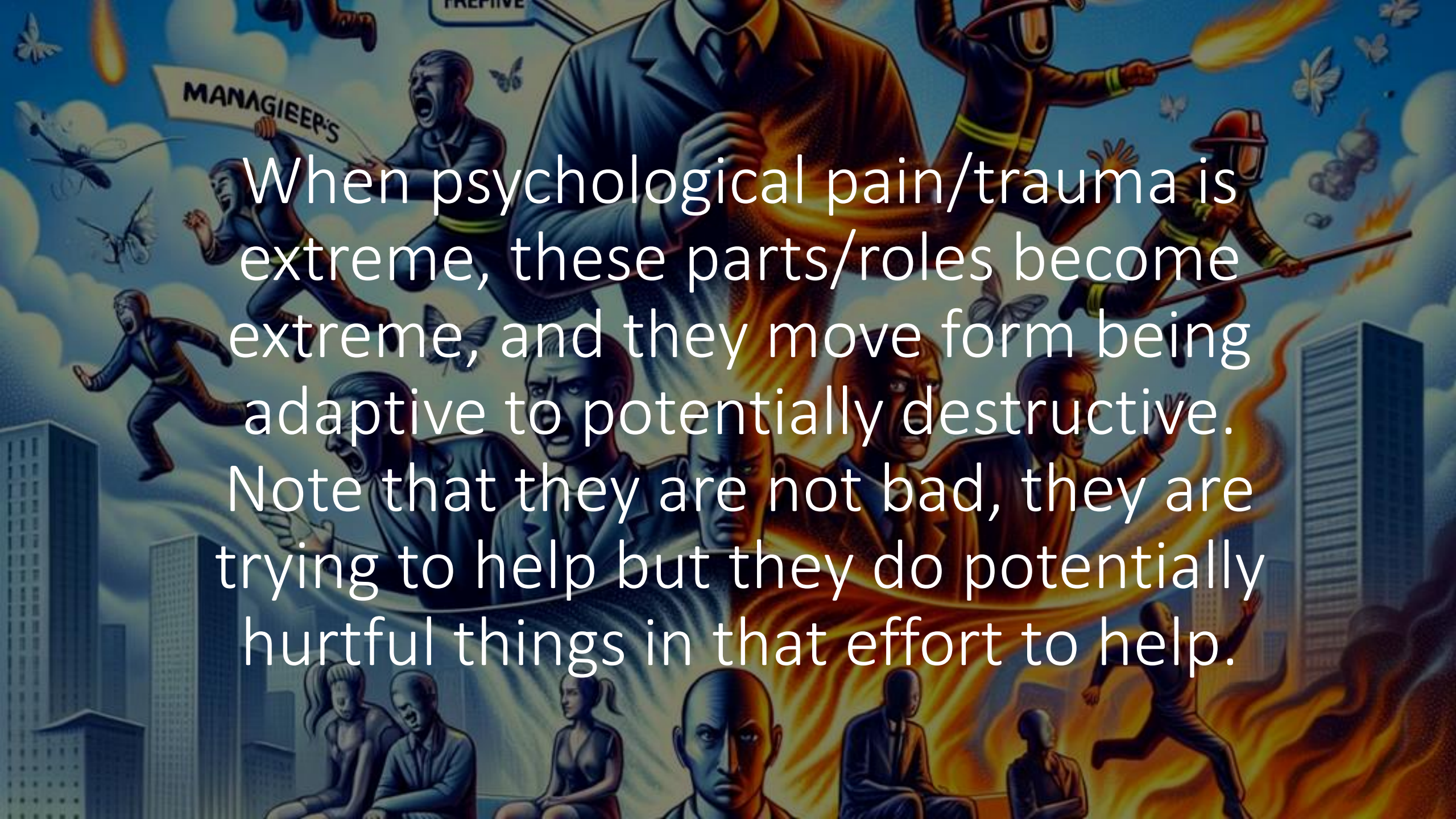
- Managers – Two active roles:
 - Create **stability**; Ensure basic needs met via task completion and personal effort;
 - Strive to **improve** and grow
- Firefighters/Soothers – Two active roles:
 - Balance manager energy; **shift gears for rest, relaxation, comfort, pleasure, fun, novelty**
 - Soothe, distract or escape emotional pain
- Exiles – Embody our vulnerability; sensitive, trusting, open-hearted, carefree; contain memories of pain, abandonment, shame; **our shared humanity**

©cecesykeslcsw



IFS therapist, Cese Sykes LCSW, describes the IFS as three categories which comprise a system.

If not in extreme roles they serve us well.



When psychological pain/trauma is extreme, these parts/roles become extreme, and they move from being adaptive to potentially destructive. Note that they are not bad, they are trying to help but they do potentially hurtful things in that effort to help.



Treating a System, Not a Symptom

Managers

- Stabilize/Improve
- Future-oriented
- Proactive
- Over-identified

Firefighters Distracters

- Avoid/Soothe
- Present-oriented
- Reactive
- Reject/Concealed

SELF

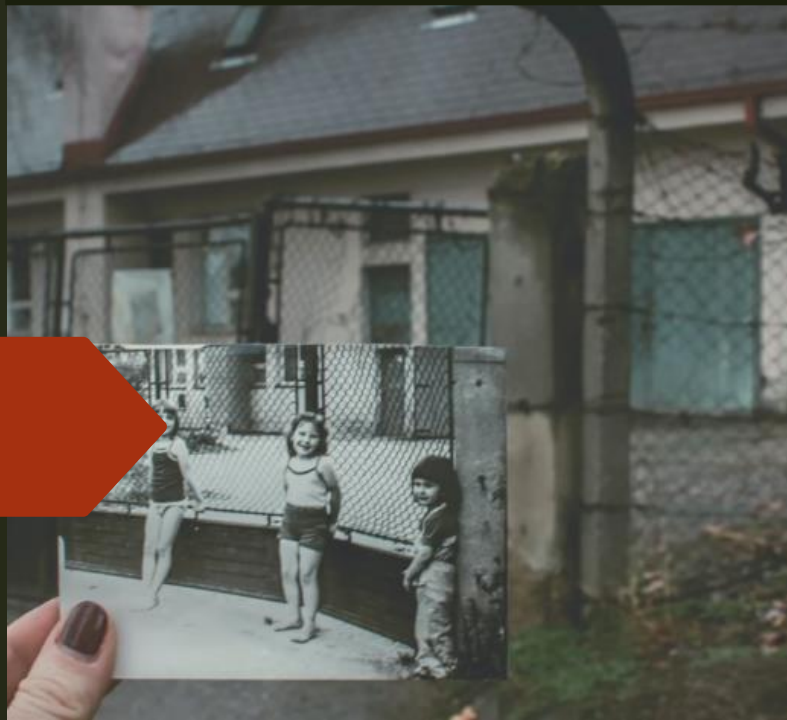
Exiles

- Absorb Energy
- Past-oriented
- Overwhelming
- Repress/Ignore

Cesare Sykes notes that in IFS, we treat a **system**, not a **symptom**.

Exiles

Early pain encodes deeply within us in implicit memory and becomes exiled from our "Self"





Exiles

- ▶ Parts that have experienced trauma and become isolated or suppressed in an effort to protect the individual from feeling the pain, terror, fear, and so on, of these parts
- ▶ Exiles are often young parts holding extreme feelings and/or beliefs that become isolated from the rest of the system (such as “I’m worthless,” “I must be successful to be lovable,” “I am a failure”)
- ▶ Exiles become increasingly extreme and desperate as they look for opportunities to emerge and tell their stories
- ▶ Want to be cared for and loved and constantly seek someone to rescue and redeem them
- ▶ Can leave the individual feeling fragile and vulnerable

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IFS Exiles



IFS Exiles

Exiles hold deep emotional **pain and trauma**.

They are **protected by managers and firefighters to avoid pain**.

Healing exiles is a goal for reintegration and relief.

Represent **vulnerability and sensitivity**.

Need **acknowledgment and compassion** for healing.

Healing transforms their **roles for positive contributions**.

Facilitates leadership by the Self, promoting **calm and clarity**.

Crucial for overall mental health improvement.

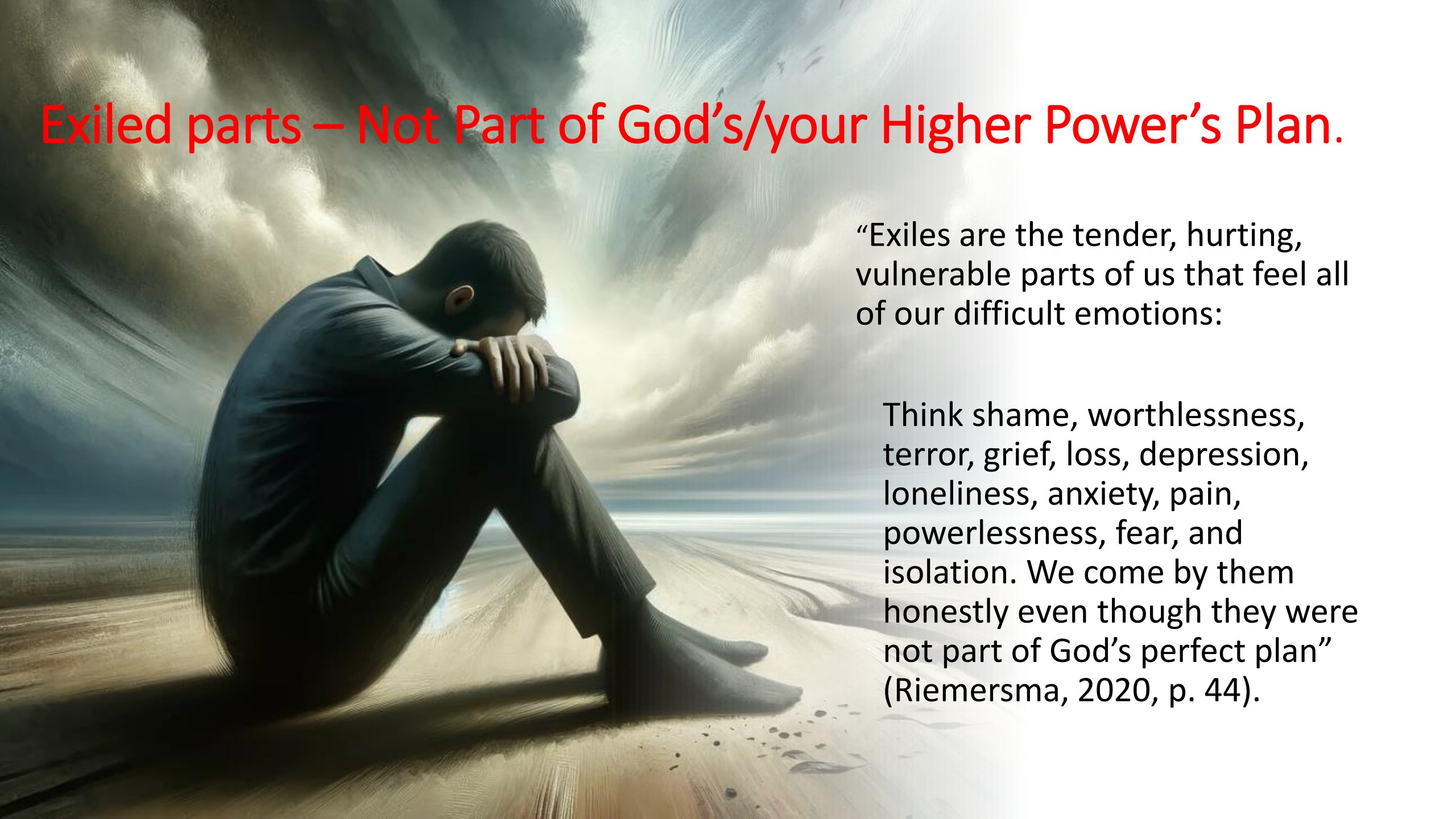


Poor exiles essentially get locked up

Exiled parts – Not Part of God's/your Higher Power's Plan.

“Exiles are the tender, hurting, vulnerable parts of us that feel all of our difficult emotions:

Think shame, worthlessness, terror, grief, loss, depression, loneliness, anxiety, pain, powerlessness, fear, and isolation. We come by them honestly even though they were not part of God's perfect plan” (Riemersma, 2020, p. 44).





Managers

- ▶ **Managers** are *proactive* and try to avoid interactions or situations that might activate an exile's attempts to break out or leak feelings, sensations, or memories into consciousness.
- ▶ Different managers adopt different strategies controlling, perfectionism, co-dependency
- ▶ The primary function of all managers is to keep the exiles exiled....
- ▶ Common managerial behaviors: controlling, perfectionism, high criticism, narcissism, people pleasing, avoiding risks, being pessimistic, constantly striving to achieve
 - ▶ Ask...What would trigger the exiles and how can that be prevented?
- ▶ Common managerial symptoms: Emotional detachment, panic attacks, somatic complaints, depressive episodes, hypervigilance

IFS Managers

- **Role:** Managers are parts that handle the day-to-day life of the individual.
- **Protection:** They work to keep the person safe from harm and psychological pain.
- **Preventive:** Managers are proactive; they aim to avoid situations that could trigger a person's Exiles (vulnerable parts).
- **Strategies:** They use strategies like planning, judging, caretaking, controlling, and striving for perfection.
- **Functioning:** Managers help the person function effectively in their daily life.
- **Maintenance:** They maintain a person's stability and self-esteem.
- **Order:** Managers are concerned with keeping the internal system and external life

IFS Firefighters



Have the same goals as managers (to keep exiles under control and handle the pain) but different strategies

- ▶ Managers want you to look good and be approved of, FFs only care about distracting from the pain so they are often in conflict. (Shoulds)

Are *reactive* and automatically activated when an exiled part is activated (rejection, isolation, failure, traumatic memories...)

Their function is to eliminate the dysphoric feelings, thoughts, sensations and memories without regard for the consequences. (Autopilot/reactive/emotional mind)

- ▶ Can do this in any number of ways, including drug or alcohol use, self-mutilation (cutting), binge-eating, compulsive sexuality

IFS Firefighters

Intervention: Firefighters act quickly to extinguish emotional pain or discomfort from exiled parts.

Distraction: They often employ distracting behaviors to pull attention away from distress.

Impulsivity: Firefighter responses can be impulsive and may include behaviors like substance abuse, binge-eating, or overworking.

Intensity: Their actions are usually more extreme and can be disruptive to everyday functioning.

Short-term relief: The focus is on immediate relief rather than long-term solutions.

Protection: Their primary goal is to protect the psyche from feeling the pain of wounded exiled parts.

Conflict: Firefighters can be in conflict with Managers, as their strategies often oppose the Managers' approaches to control and order.





Firefighters
taking charge of
the pain by
reactively acting
out

IFS Self

- ▶ The self is the “moderator” that the parts are talking to, that likes or dislikes, listens to, or shuts out various parts
- ▶ When differentiated, the Self is competent, secure, self-assured, relaxed, and able to listen and respond to feedback.
- ▶ The Self can and should lead the internal system.
- ▶ Various levels of experience of the Self:
 - ▶ When completely differentiated from all parts (Self alone), people describe a feeling of being “centered.”
 - ▶ When the individual is “in Self” or when the Self is in the lead while interacting with others (day-to-day experience), the Self is experienced along with the non-extreme aspects of the parts.
- ▶ An empowering aspect of the model is that everyone has a Self.





The 8 Cs in IFS

Calmness: The ability to maintain a sense of inner peace and tranquility.

Curiosity: A non-judgmental interest in understanding one's internal experiences and parts.

Clarity: The ability to see situations and internal parts with clearness and understanding.

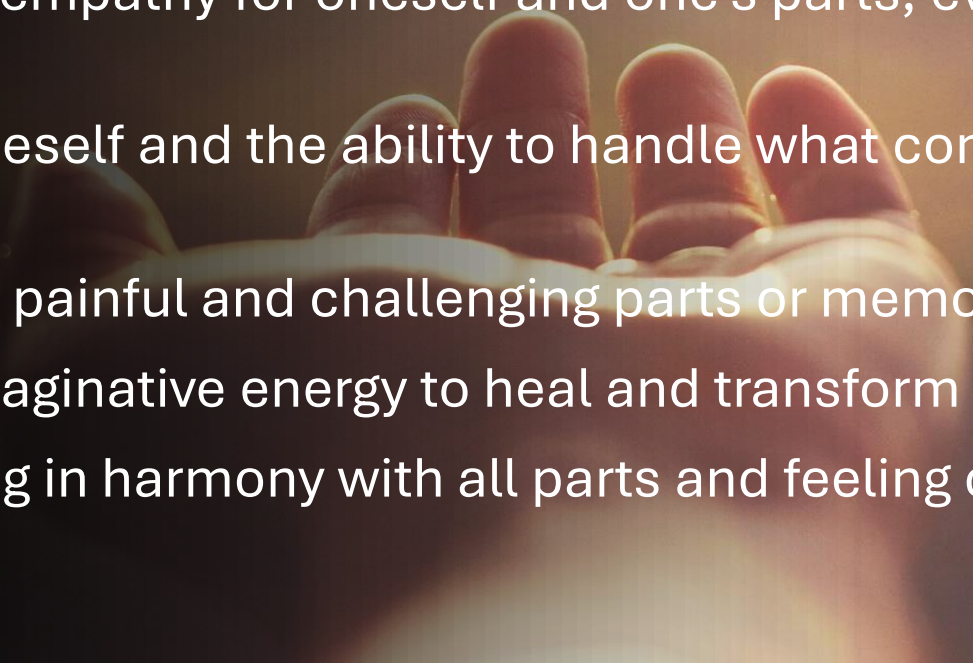
Compassion: A deep caring and empathy for oneself and one's parts, even those in pain or causing problems.

Confidence: A strong belief in oneself and the ability to handle what comes up inside.

Courage: The bravery to confront painful and challenging parts or memories.

Creativity: The innovative and imaginative energy to heal and transform one's parts.

Connectedness: A sense of being in harmony with all parts and feeling connected to others.

A hand is shown from the bottom, holding a glowing, golden orb. The background is a soft, warm light with a lens flare effect, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The hand is positioned in the lower center of the frame, with the fingers slightly curled around the orb. The overall mood is hopeful and uplifting.

Manager
Exile
Firefighter



IFS Parts Summary – Courtesy of my rockstar student, Alayna Collins, M.A., and Psychology Doctoral Candidate

EXILES	MANAGERS	FIREFIGHTERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Parts that have experienced trauma and become isolated or suppressed in an effort to protect the individual from feeling the pain, terror, fear, and so on.➤ Exiles are often young parts holding extreme feelings or beliefs that become isolated from the rest of the system ("I'm worthless," "I must be successful to be lovable," "I am a failure.")➤ Exiles become increasingly extreme and desperate as they look for opportunities to emerge and tell their stories.➤ Want to be cared for and loved and constantly seek someone to rescue and redeem them.➤ Can leave the individual feeling fragile and vulnerable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Managers are proactive and try to avoid interactions or situations that might activate an exile's attempts to break out or leak feelings, sensations, or memories into consciousness.➤ The primary function of all managers is to keep the exiles exiled.➤ Common managerial behaviors: controlling, perfectionism, high criticism, co-dependency, narcissism, people pleasing, avoiding risks, being pessimistic, constantly striving to achieve, anxiety.➤ Managers will strive to prevent the exile from being triggered.➤ Common symptoms: Emotional detachment, panic attacks, somatic complaints, depressive episodes, hypervigilance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Have the same goal as managers: keep exiles under control and handle the pain. BUT firefighters have different strategies.➤ Managers want you to look good and be approved of, but firefighters only care about distracting from the pain, so they are often in conflict.➤ Firefighters are highly reactive and automatically activate when an exiled part is triggered (rejection, isolation, failure, traumatic memories, criticism).➤ The function of a firefighter is to eliminate painful feelings, thoughts, sensations, and memories without regard for the consequences.➤ Common symptoms: drug/alcohol use, self-mutilation, binge-eating, compulsive sexuality, media addictions

For some faith-oriented people,
IFS's 8 Correspond nicely to Galatians 5:22-23

Internal Family



Fruits of the Spirit:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Forbearance
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-control





The integrated “Self” leads to inner peace, happiness, and the ability to connect healthily to others we care about and love



The Inner Critic

Parts that act as **“Inner Critics”** (using IFS language), appear to be a somewhat universal experience. In their milder manifestation, parts that criticize can be beneficial for you when they allow for the acknowledgment of mistakes and errors or the cultivation of positive change and humility.

Like all parts in IFS, **“Inner Critics”** have **value and a positive intention**. It’s when an **“Inner Critic”** moves into an **extreme role**, they can start to impede the individual’s ability to thrive, and the possible benefits of self-criticism may be overshadowed by possible harm to one’s well-being through internal turmoil.



Types of Inner Critics

Sean Cuthbert, 2022
Australian Clinical
Psychologist.

Please click the link below to watch his excellent talk

<https://www.seancuthbert.com/post/types-of-inner-critic-in-internal-family-systems-ifs-therapy>

The Perfectionist. This is one of the most common types of Inner Critic and its positive intent is usually something around trying to get you to do things perfectly to protect you from the judgement of others. Often these perfectionistic parts will have great difficulty in finishing something or putting it out into the world, believing that some added tinkering will make it better in the service of increasing your protection from negative feedback.

The Inner Controller. This critic is usually one that tries to control addictive impulses such as eating, drinking, drugs, sexual activity. It usually is polarized with a Firefighter (reactive) who it fears will take the person over and wreak havoc at any moment.

The Taskmaster. This type of critic pushes you to work hard to become successful in society. It is often polarized with a Procrastinator part that wants to give you a break so takes them off into distracting activities (like a You tube rabbit hole). This Taskmaster often acts undetected as its outcomes are often heavily rewarded by society. It ultimately holds extreme fears that you may be pretty lazy and will be judged as a failure if it does not push you to keep going.

The Underminer. This critic often will try and undermine your efforts and drain your self-esteem so that you won't take any risks. This part may make brutal attacks on you with the positive intent of keeping you small and not take chances where you may experience negative feedback or failure, thereby avoiding the potential pain of this.

Types of Inner Critics – cont.

Sean Cuthbert, 2022 Australian Clinical Psychologist.

<https://www.seancuthbert.com/post/types-of-inner-critic-in-internal-family-systems-ifs-therapy>



The Destroyer. This may be one of the most destructive critics as it makes continued pervasive attacks on your self-worth, showering you with shame and making you feel inherently flawed. My experience of clients where The Destroyer is very active, they will compulsively apologize for themselves (and their very existence) or their posture will be slumped to avoid eye contact. They often have histories of extreme trauma (physical, sexual, emotional) and their Destroyer parts hold beliefs around it being safer or more preferable to not exist.



The Guilt-Tripper. This critic can take various forms. On the one hand it may hold you accountable for hurting others by making sure that behaviour/action is often front of mind in the service of that behaviour not being repeated. It may also hold fears about you being outcast as it holds you to standards of behaviour set by your family, community, or cultural group.



The Conformist. I see this critic as closely related, and often working with The Guilt-Tripper. The Conformist wants you to be part of a group and seeks to get you to be liked/admired as a way to protect against abandonment. This critic will often be polarized with parts that rebel or seek to act outside group norms, fearing that you'll be rejected or abandoned. This may be particularly true in families where being your true self has been discouraged or actively punished.

Inner Critic – cont.

- ▶ As you go through these descriptions of types of “Inner Critics”, you may like to check in and notice what’s happening inside as you read. You may notice parts of you right now that are judging or criticizing these “Inner Critics”.
- ▶ A common phenomena in working with critics in IFS is that these critics will often get a lot of hate from other parts of the internal system, or these parts have their own critic parts that criticize them.
- ▶ Think of it like a line of people, each yelling at the one in front of them! This may seem overly complex (and it is, because everyone’s neurobiology is complex), but usually all you need to do is work with the first critic and/or the one that criticizes it to start to create space for the internal relationships to be different (Sean Cuthbert, 2022 Australian Clinical Psychologist).

<https://www.seancuthbert.com/post/types-of-inner-critic-in-internal-family-systems-ifs-therapy>).



Goals of IFS Therapy

The goal of IFS is to help clients access Self so that they can heal wounded parts and bring their minds into balance.

To achieve balance and harmony within the internal system

To differentiate and elevate the Self so it can be an effective leader in the system

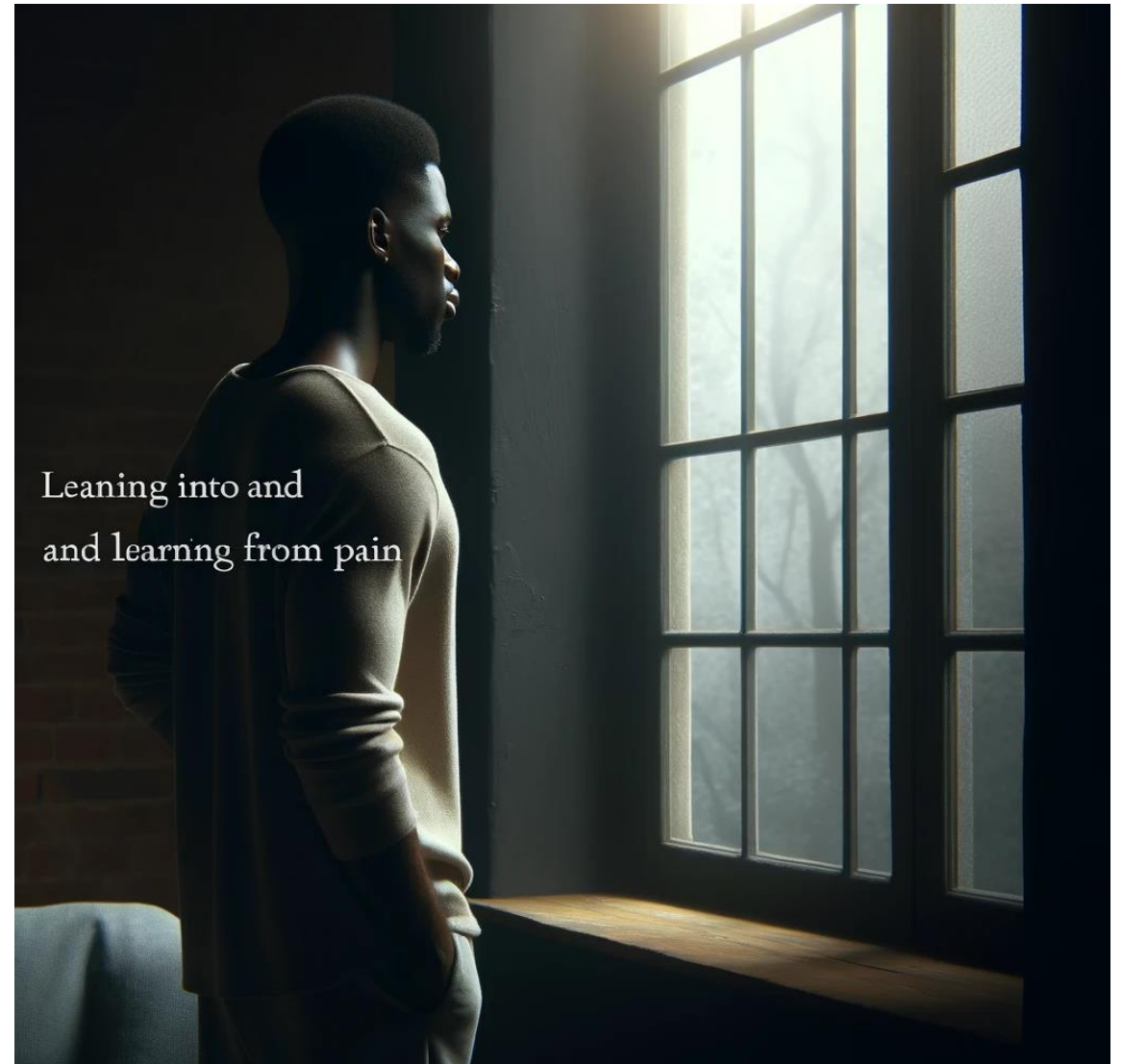
When the Self is in the lead, the parts will provide input to the Self but will respect the leadership and ultimate decision making of the Self.

All parts will exist and lend talents that reflect their non-extreme intentions.



In IFS, we learn to listen to the pain

- I need to listen to my **anger** to know that I have been violated.
- I need to listen to my **anxiety** to know that I have unresolved trauma that needs to be healed.
- I need to listen to my **depression** to know that I need to care for my heart's deepest wounds
- I need to listen to my **fear** to know that I may need to create safety.
- I need to listen to my **stress and irritability** to know that I'm out of balance and need rest or reprioritization (Riemersma, 2020, p 42).



Leaning into and
and learning from pain

1. Find: "Finding is the first step of the first stage of the therapy process. This stage is all about learning which part or parts need attention. During this stage it is best to just sit with the feelings and see what rises to the surface. Parts might make themselves known through images, emotions, or body sensations. This is not a stage for analysis, just a time to notice what's coming up. Sometimes it's good to talk through this stage, but it can also be a good moment to just sit quietly and see what parts make their presence known."

2. Focus: Once you've found the part, focus on it. Give it space to perform whatever its attention-seeking behaviors are, and give it space to exist. In this moment, it's important to just let the part be there, to reassure it that it has your attention. Often parts are activated because their needs are not being acknowledged or met, and letting the part feel seen will make it easier for it to express itself authentically.

3. Flesh out: Now that it's been given attention, the part collects into a set of bodily sensations and emotions that can be fleshed out into a self-contained entity. At this point, the part may start communicating and sending messages. You can give it space to tell you things, or to share the memories that are triggering it.



3. FLEISH ONHE PART

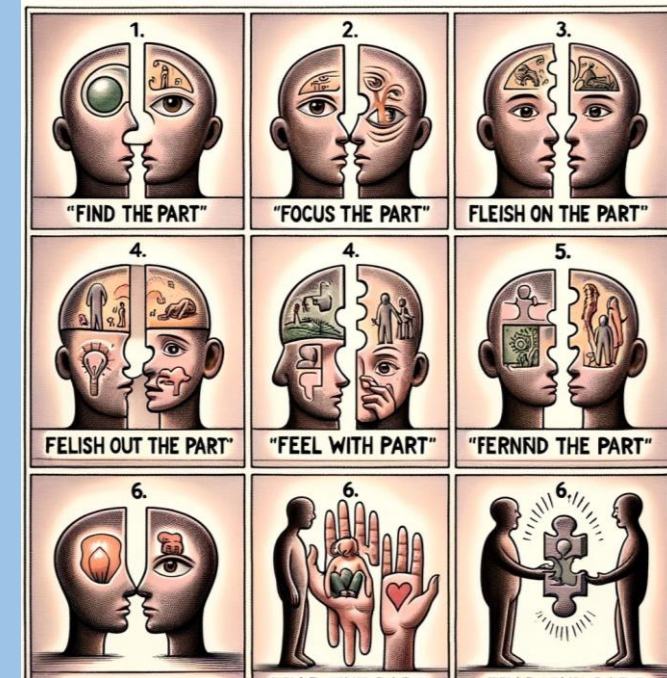


BERDIEND THE PART




The Six Fs – cont.

- **4. Feel:** This is the second stage. Now it's important to see how other parts feel about this part's presence. They might be upset that this specific part is getting attention or be alarmed that it will further imbalance the system. You must judge if you have enough core Self energy to move forward. If you don't, you may have to do some work with other parts that are in the way before you can proceed.
- Self-energy is measured with the 8 C's: calm, compassion, curiosity, clarity, confidence, courage, creativity, and connection. If any of the 8 C's are present when dealing with the part, it means Self is present and able to care for it. If more negative or extreme feelings like anger or anxiety are present it means that another protector part has stepped in to deal with the part you are trying to target.
- **5. Befriend:** This is the start of stage 3. In the previous steps we created separation between the parts and Self and worked on creating active communication. This step is then about actually forming a relationship between this target part and Self. Work happens much more smoothly when the part trusts Self, so this is a good place to start forming that relationship. Ask the part about its function, what it's trying to accomplish, and how it's trying to help. Let it know that it is valued for its function, and that you respect how it's keeping the system safe. Fear: What is this part protecting you from?
- **6. Fear:** The final step for dealing with protector parts does not feel like a resolution. In this step, we ask the part what it's afraid of. What does it think will happen if it stops being a protector? Here is often where we see the major signs of the exiled parts, those things we keep buried down deep so that they can't overwhelm us. If the rest of the steps have been fully realized, Self will be able to have the part step aside so it can access whichever exile the protector was caring for. This stage opens a door for further exploration that is specific to working with exiled parts. There will be an article on this stage of IFS soon (ISSA Counseling <https://issacounseling.com/contact-us/>).



IFS 5 P's

therapy process
variables

- Patience
 - Perspective
 - Presence
 - Playfulness
 - Persistence
- 

5P's summarized by Good Woman Therapies

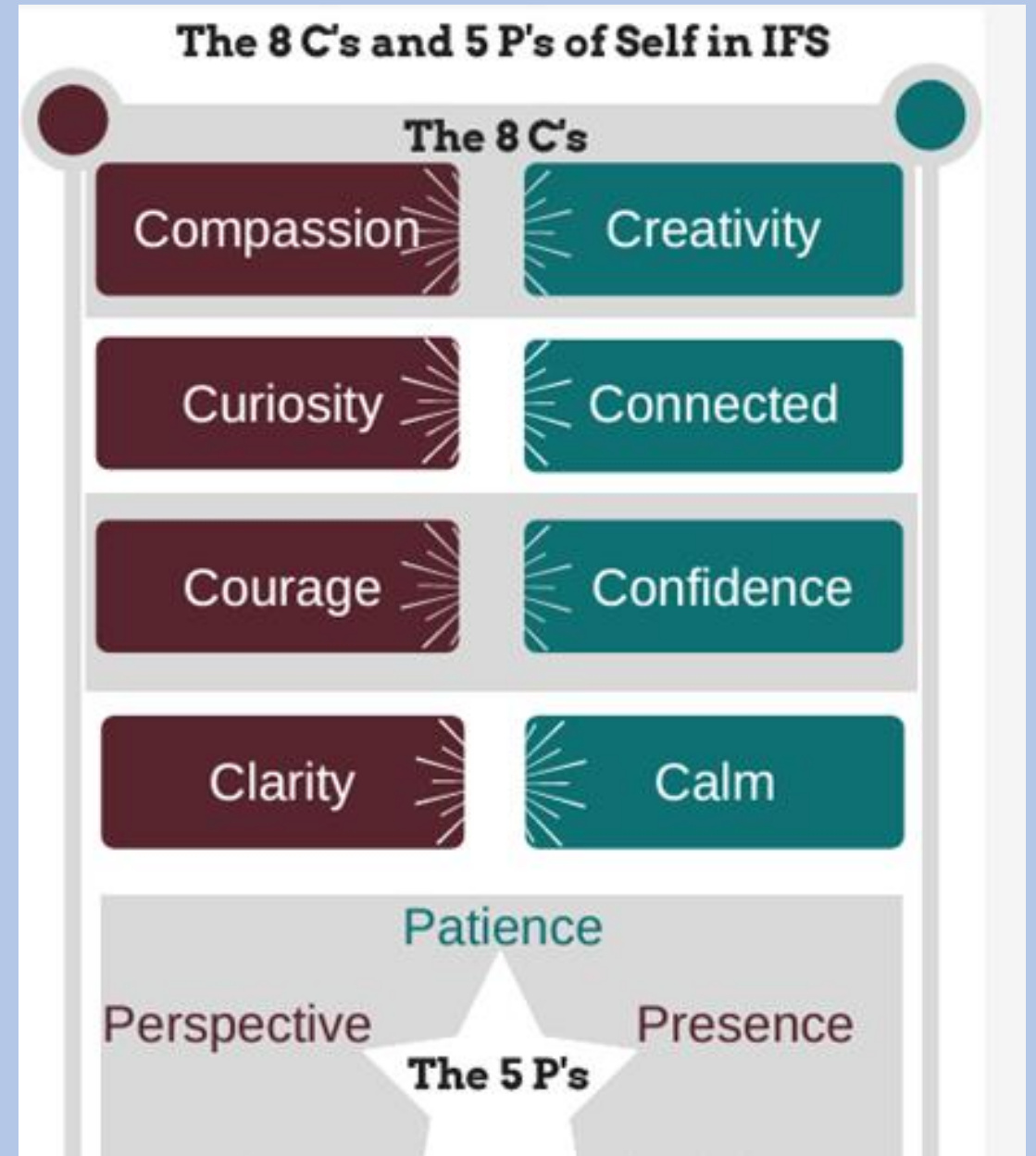



5 P's within Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy are essential qualities that prove to be pivotal in navigating the inner world: **playfulness infuses levity** and spontaneity to the work, nurturing a safe space where parts can express themselves freely. **Patience** becomes an experiential gift by never pressuring anyone to hurry through their journey.

Presence anchors the therapeutic environment, embracing moments with intention, and fostering a deep connection through trust. It's about truly listening and offering an attentive ear to every part. **Persistence** is about showing up and embracing the journey - even when it feels challenging. It's often the difference between staying stuck and finally moving forward.

And finally, **perspective** broadens internal horizons, facilitating a holistic understanding beyond the immediate issues or symptoms. An IFS Counselor will approach each session by creating space for exploration without tunnel vision

The P's are process variables in helping us reach the true self – the 8 C's. They are at the foundation.





Jenna Riemersma – a leader in integrating IFS with Christian-Based thought

Anyone struggling with addictions knows the feeling of internal warfare. Parts of us hate the addiction while other parts of us keep pursuing it.

Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a therapy model that identifies these "parts" in us and how they wage war with each other. As these parts fight it out, our unwanted behavior rages and wreaks havoc in our lives.

In this video, IFS practitioner and therapist Jenna Riemersma talks about how IFS can help us battle our addictions and truly see how to welcome all parts of ourselves to the table.

Please click the link to watch her excellent interview on the Pure Desire Podcast:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0C2dLNWgPA&ab_channel=PureDesireMinistries

ALTOGETHER

YOU

Experiencing personal and spiritual transformation with Internal Family Systems therapy

JENNA RIEMERSMA, LPC

"A groundbreaking and courageous book."
DR. RICHARD SCHWARTZ
Founder of Internal Family Systems

Lean into pain and ask three questions:

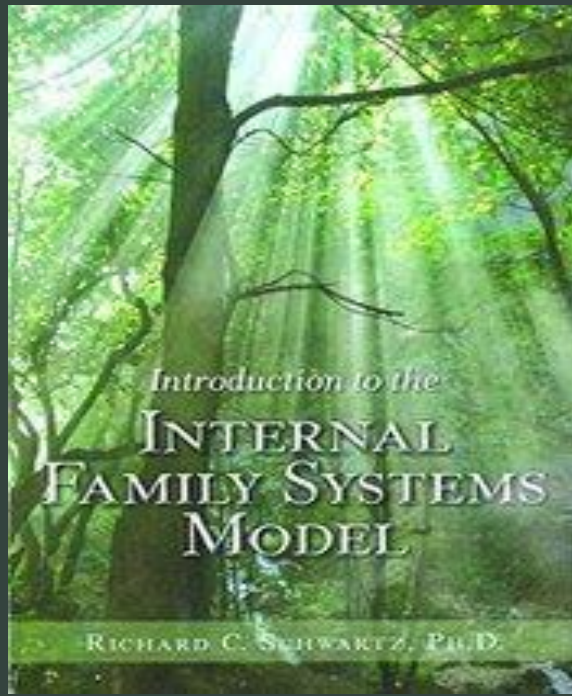
Much of medicine and even psychotherapy teaches us the wrong thing, namely, to avoid or mitigate pain which keeps us stuck. IFS teaches us the contrary, that instead we must move toward the pain and listen to its valuable messages

1. What body or **physical sensations** do I **notice** and where do I feel them?
2. What does this **pain or emotion** want me to **know**?
3. What does this pain or emotion **need** me to **do**?

Click the link below for a wonderful guide on how to do this by Jenna (start at 48:20):

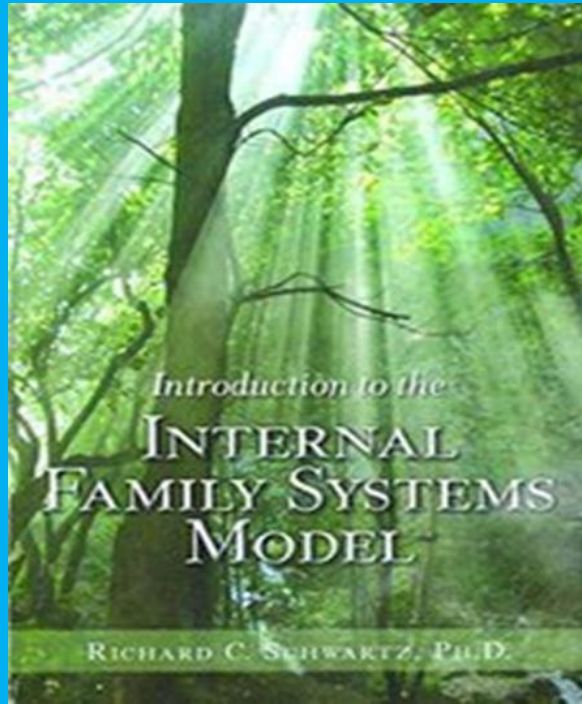
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOC2dLNWgPA&ab_channel=PureDesireMinistries





Beginning to use the model

- ▶ Assess client's parts and sequences around the problem.
- ▶ Check for individual's awareness of parts -- ask how he or she experiences the part: Thoughts, feelings, sensations, images, and so on.
 - ▶ When the manager is in control
 - ▶ When the firefighter is desperately trying to suppress the pain
 - ▶ When the exile is hurting and starting to emerge (crisis)
- ▶ Look for polarizations
 - ▶ Anorexia: Extreme Manager
 - ▶ Substance Abuse: Extreme Firefighter
 - ▶ Clinical Depression or Anxiety or PTSD: Extreme Exile



- ▶ When working with families, check for the family's awareness of parts in self and others.
- ▶ Make a decision about how to begin using the model: language, direct access, imagery, and so on.
- ▶ Assess the fears of the Managers. Value their roles and explain how the therapy can work without the manager's feared outcomes happening (loss of control).
- ▶ Inventory dangerous firefighter behaviors (NSSI); work with Managers' fears about triggering firefighters as therapy begins to explore issues.
- ▶ Assess client's external context and constraints to doing this work.

Beginning to use the model



- ▶ Important to assess protective parts (Managers and Firefighters) and work with them first to create safety
 - ▶ Develop a direct relationship with the part.
 - ▶ May need to negotiate pace of work -- give the part an opportunity to talk about concerns.
 - ▶ Manager: Resistance
 - ▶ Firefighter: Addiction/Relapse
 - ▶ Work out a system for the part to let you know when things are moving too fast.
 - ▶ Respect the concerns of the part.
- ▶ Eventually, identify the Exiles and start helping them tell their story and become empowered and integrated

Working with individuals



▶ Non-imaging techniques

▶ Assessing internal dialogue

- ▶ Location/sense of a part in the body
- ▶ Diagrams -- relationships among parts



Working with individuals

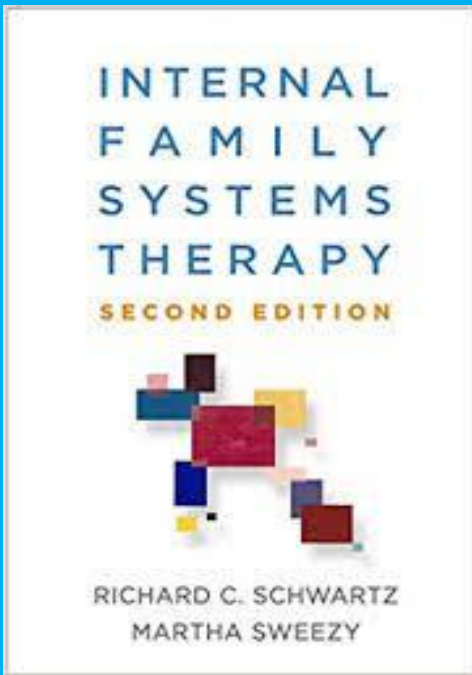


▶ Non-imaging techniques

▶ Assessing internal dialogue

- ▶ Journaling: What is the exile/manager/firefighter/self saying or wanting to do about this situation?
- ▶ Direct access:
 - ▶ Therapist to parts: Let me talk to the manager for a moment.
 - ▶ Self to parts: What are the parts saying and what is the Self's reaction
 - ▶ Part to part: What is the manager saying to the exile?

Working with individuals



- ▶ Going back in time with a part, then “unburden”
 - ▶ Exile: What do you wish would have happened?
 - ▶ Manager: What do you think you “should” have done to protect the Self?
- ▶ Bringing parts into the present - “retrieval”
 - ▶ What is different about you now?
- ▶ Future imaging
 - ▶ Exile: What do you want to happen
 - ▶ Manager: How can you deal more effectively with situations like that in the future

Working with individuals

Psychological Definitions: Addictive Process

- A **chronic polarity** between two sets of extreme parts: critical, controlling(M) and avoidant, soothing(FF/D); both try to protect exposure of buried (E) emotional pain. (Cece Sykes '06/'16)
- **Pain medication-coping** with complex trauma (Gabor Mate`)
- Addiction shouldn't be called "addiction". It should be called "ritualized compulsive comfort-seeking." D. Sumrok MD ; Center for Addiction Sciences, University of TN
- **Dependence** on or commitment to a practice, habit or substance to the extent that *cessation causes trauma*. (Kemerman Webster's)
- Anything we lie about. (Anne Wilson Schaef)



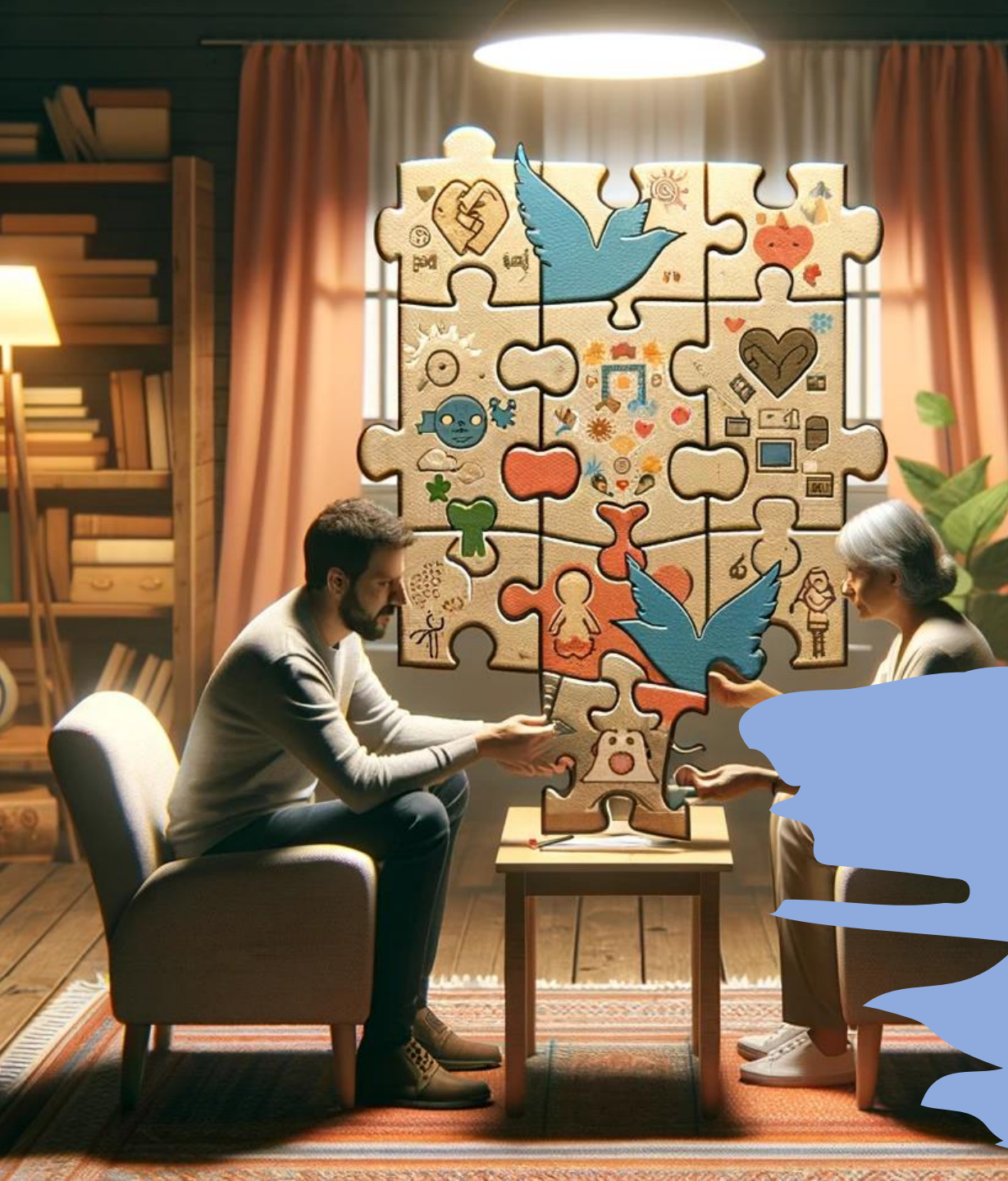
IFS and Addiction

Different “psychological definitions” of the addictive process as noted b Cece Sykes, LCSW

Judgment or Compassion in treating addiction?



- Gabor Mate`-Not, why the addiction
-Why the Pain??
- IFS – Not, Why are you hurting yourself?
.....How is that part trying to help you??
- IFS – Not, Why are you checked out?
.....What are you afraid would happen if you were more aware?
- Never an Excuse
.....Always a Reason



Paradigm Shift: We are in this Together

"I am not here to take this away from you."

- Creating a contract or vision: what do you want for yourself out of coming here? Not in charge of your sobriety plan..."
- "It seems most parts of you want this to be different. I am here to support you in sustaining those changes (vs. quick fix)
- Can you sense parts nervous, not ready, not committed, not on board yet?
- Parts that want a manager in charge??
- What do you know about your stress, biggest hurdles...?
- Ask abt less risky FF/D that help soothe, ie screen time, work, music, exercise, food; sports
- **Choice: "The Ninth C"- What if you had a choice**

©ceesykeslcsw

In IFS treatment we focus on being in this together which is a nice paradigm shift.

Get in Relationship, Not in Control

Traditional addiction therapy-fights or tries to control FF/S/Using parts

- IFS goal is create self-to-part with Using parts:

“I just want to get to know you.”

“I am not here to change you.”

“Other parts have tried to shame you, but I am not those parts.”


“There is more to you than meets the eye – you’re more complex than you seem.”

©cecesykeslcsw



In treating addiction, IFS helps the person “get in relationship” and not in “control.”

Help the client deal with common polarities – words and perspective matter.

- 
- Never Use vs Must Use
 - Control vs Out of control, chaos
 - Work hard vs Indulge
 - Do for other other vs Do for me
 - Approval Seeking vs Rebelling
 - Tell the truth vs Hide the truth
 - Compliance vs Autonomy
 - Organize vs Chaos



- ▶ Focuses on strengths: The undamaged core of the Self, the ability of parts to shift into positive roles
- ▶ IFS language provides a way to look at oneself and others differently.
 - ▶ Instead of seeing someone as being self-destructive, we may see their Firefighter being triggered and trying to protect the Exile
- ▶ There is no such thing as a bad part, just a part that has become extreme
- ▶ Language encourages self-disclosure and taking responsibility for behavior.
- ▶ Ecological understanding of entire therapy system, including therapist
- ▶ Respect for individual's experience of the problem
 - ▶ Clients provide the material -- the therapist doesn't have to have all the ideas.
 - ▶ Therapist looks at client's Self as "co-therapist" and trusts the wisdom of the internal system.

Strengths of the IFS Model

A few of my favorite speakers on IFS. Please take a listen.



Jenna Riersmesma – Faith and IFS

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deqxDq9Xw6g&ab_channel=geoffreyholsclaw



Dr. Tori Olds

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNA5qTTxFFA&ab_channel=Dr.ToriOlds



Kenny Dennis – IFS for Kids

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ji7bk3JfEmk&ab_channel=KennyDennis

