

INTRODUCTION TO INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS (IFS)

A Psychotherapeutic Model developed by Richard Schwartz, PhD.

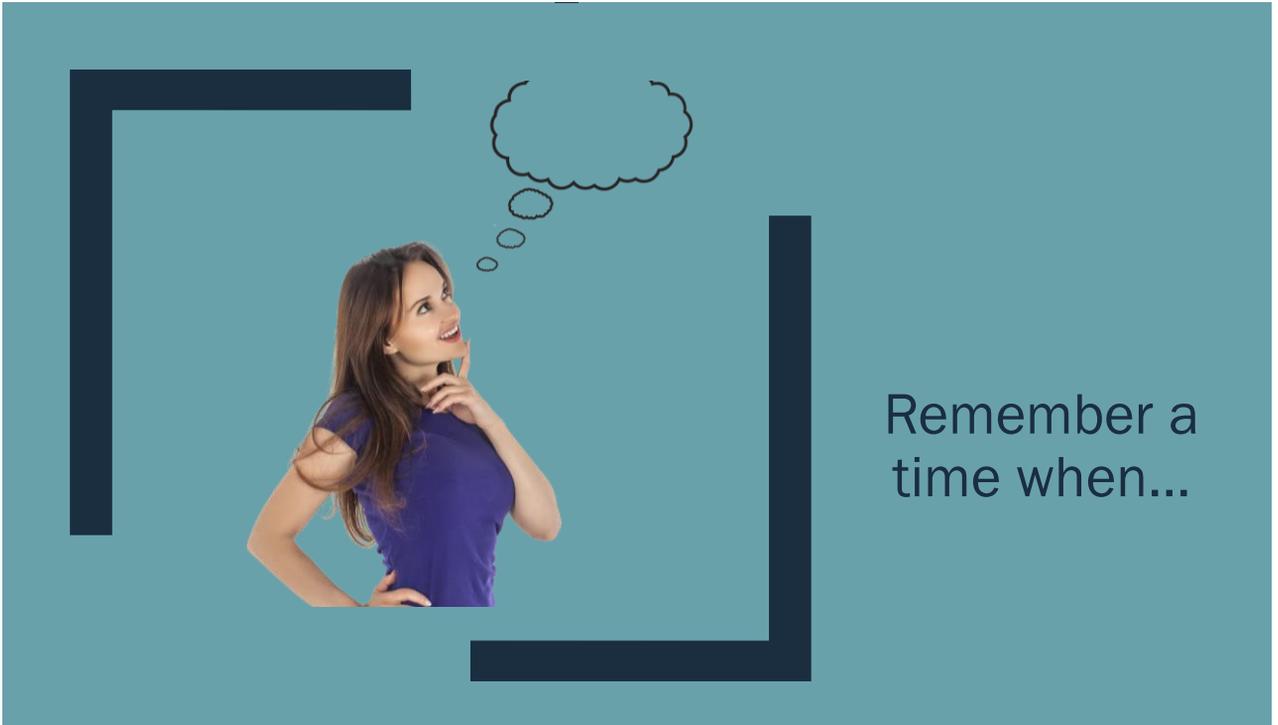
Presented by Leona Dawson

1

Objectives

- Understand overall principles and concepts underpinning IFS as a therapeutic modality.
- Recognise the roles and functions parts play in presenting issues from a non-pathologizing perspective.
- Access your own protective parts through an experiential guided self-exploration process

2



3



Key Paradigms

- **Multiplicity of Mind:** *ego states/sub-personalities*
- **Systems Thinking:** *context & patterns from intergenerational, interpersonal & intrapsychic dynamics*
- **Roles:** *Parts are forced into roles due to trauma & attachment injuries & when released from the burden of this role they can return to their natural qualities*
- **Constraint Releasing:** *Parts become less constrained by their roles & can shift into preferred, more adaptable roles, through witnessing & unburdening*
- **Self-Leadership:** *IFS trusts that every person has, at their core, the positive resources of Self-Energy that can support & guide parts while feeling connected to the web of life.*

4



5

What is a Part?

A part is one member of the internal family

Other therapeutic modalities have referred to parts as; subpersonalities, archetypes, internal objects, ego states etc

We are born with parts and we develop parts throughout our life.

Parts experience a full range of emotions, an angry part can also be sad or playful

Form complex systems of interactions with each other and the world:

Give up preferred roles to protect other more vulnerable parts



6

The System – Protectors and exiles



7

The System – Protectors and exiles



8

Managers

Proactive parts run the daily life of the person and work to keep the exiles at bay by:

- *Controlling events, others, the body*
- *Striving, achieving, pleasing, perfectionism*
- *Caretaking*
- *Critical and judgmental (of self and others)*
- *Anxiety, worry, apathy, passivity, pessimism*
- *Managers often think they are you.*
- *Managers desire control and stability and deserve appreciation and compassion.*



9

Firefighters/Distractors



Reactive parts attempting to distract, dissociate or extinguish unwelcome feelings

- Drinking, drugs, eating, and all addictive behaviors
 - *Self-harm, suicidal ideation, suicide*
 - *Rage, violence, impulsivity*
 - *Dissociation*
 - *Binge TV*
 - *Shopping*

10

Exiles



Usually young and sensitive. Often feel

- lonely, isolated & abandoned
- hopeless, helpless and powerless
- sad, hurt
- fragile, empty
- unseen, unnoticed
- angry

Carry burdens/beliefs about themselves and the world

Hold unprocessed memories

Are often frozen in time



Exiles may also hold much of our pleasure, wonder, exuberance, innocence, creativity, sensitivity and the joyful, tender qualities of childhood.

11

Protectors

Believe they keep you functioning and do their best to keep pain and harm at bay by working hard, being vigilant & doing what they know best.

They don't trust that the exiles won't overwhelm the system.

They don't always trust that Self can take care of the system.

Can't be eliminated, can be transformed



Our lives can be **constrained** by the burdens our parts carry.

Meet one of your protectors – guided meditation.

12

Self as blue sky – ever present



13

Parts can work:



On their own



In clusters / groups or alliances



In a hierarchy (can pull rank on each other)



Against each other

polarized with each other – creating inner conflict
criticizing another part – Inner Critic



Not knowing some other parts exist

14

Parts we can meet
day-to-day...

these are the *strategies*
they use to *protect* you...

& there is more to them
than that if they are not
stuck in their *roles*

- **Inner Critics** – our continuous improvement committee
- **Outer Critics** – externalize blame e.g. prejudices
- **Compliant** – people pleasing, caretaking
- **Anxious** – worry, over-planning, panic
- **Angry** – rageful, vengeful, irritated,
- **Dissociative** – foggy, numb, self-medicate, drink/eat
- **Food** – overeat, restrict, binge/purge, ++diet focus
- **Somatising** – migraines, nausea, hypersensitive to smells, sensitivities/allergies, chest pain, inflammatory responses
- **Mood Altering** - drink/smoke/take drugs
- **Intellectual** – analyzing, reviewing
- **Funny** – joker, humorous, playful
- **Believers/belongers** – religious, political, organizational
- **Perfectionists**
- **Procrastinators**

15



INNER CRITICS can...

- Evaluate and judge your feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and even your sense of identity.
- Tell you what you should and shouldn't do, feel and think.
- Criticize you for not meeting expectations.
- Shame you for who you are.
- Guilt you about things you have done.

16

7 Common Inner Critics

TASKMASTER - pushes you to keep going and fears if you stop, you will become lazy or other people will judge you as a failure

INNER CONTROLLER - tries to control your impulses around things like eating, drinking, spending and sex - often resorting to harsh tactics to do so

GUILT-TRIPPER - criticizes you for past wrong-doings & lives by the standards set by your family, community or culture

CONFORMER/PEOPLE PLEASER - tries to get you to fit a certain shape or standard set by your family, community or culture, and fears showing your true self will lead to rejection and abandonment

PERFECTIONIST - sets high, usually unobtainable, standards & struggles to call things completed or finished

DESTROYER - attacks your self-worth, says you are inherently flawed and undeserving of basic respect and understanding

UNDERMINER - undermines self-confidence and abilities so you stay small and don't take risks

17



Polarizations

When two parts are opposed to each other

Each has their point of view and preferred strategies

Each part becomes more extreme to counter the efforts of others

“When an event knocks a system off-balance, its members will try to restore balance, often by opposing each other... even parts who share the same overarching goal of warding off emotional pain often choose opposite strategies.” Richard C Schwartz & Martha Sweezy, *Internal Family Systems* (2nd Ed), 2020, p147

18

IFS IS NON-PATHOLOGISING

DSM

We think symptoms & diagnoses or pathological processes:

1. depression
2. PTSD
3. bipolar disorder
4. anxiety
5. eating disorder
6. substance abuse

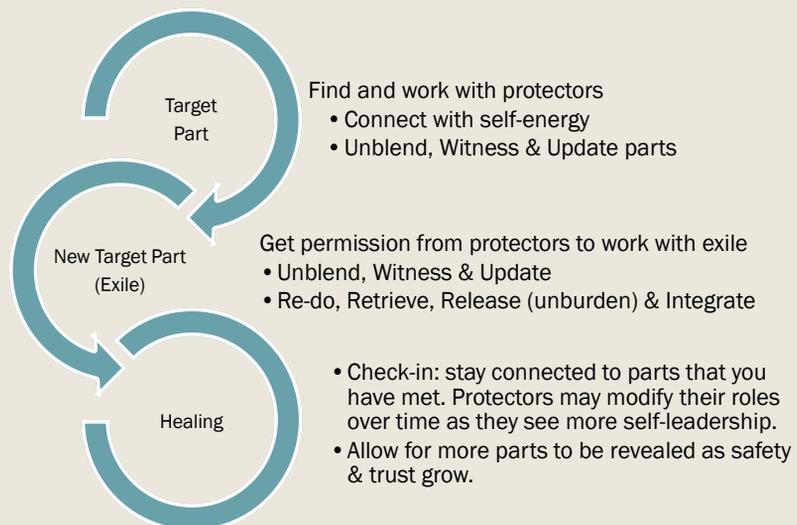
IFS

We think of Parts and their function

1. the depressed part
2. the part that holds the trauma
3. the part that is up and the part that is down
4. the part that worries
5. the part that restricts/binges
6. the part that drinks

19

The IFS protocol



20

IFS is Respectful

- Respects that the system is resourceful ensuring the client's survival
- Respects the client as having the capacity to heal themselves.
- Respects all Parts by listening to their concerns.
- Respects protectors' role by not contacting the exile without permission from all protectors

The IFS therapist's job

- You stay in Self, by asking any of your parts that arise to step aside/relax back/give you space to work.
- By being in self the therapist held the client to access self
- You guide the client's IFS process and detect when the client isn't in Self and help them return to Self.
- Trust the process & hold hope for the client

21

Review IFS Underpinning Principles

- Multiplicity of mind (for example schemas/sub-personalities).
- In IFS all parts are welcome and can be healed.
- Our parts are in relationship both intra-personally and interpersonally.
- Our Protectors have positive intentions even if their strategies aren't working out so well. Parts can use strategies that other members of the internal family can find challenging.
- Self-Leadership is possible when we can be present and attend to parts rather than *blend* with them.



22

Who is
here
now....?



23



Coming up on PDP calendar

- *Introduction to IFS*
- *Working with Inner Critics*
- *Working with Inner Conflict & Polarized Parts*

24

Resources

- **Podcasts:** IFS Talks | The One Inside | Therapy Spot |
- **Youtube:** [Derek Scott](#)
- **Witnessed IFS sessions** (audios): www.everettconsidine.com
- **Website:** www.ifs-institute.com
- **Books**
 - *2019 Internal Family Systems Therapy 2nd Ed.* (R Schwartz & M Sweezy)
 - *2017 Skills Training Manual* (F Anderson, M Sweezy & D Schwartz)
 - *2020 Internal Family Systems Level 1 Training Manual* (M Pastor & J Gauvin)
 - *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model*, R Schwartz, 2021