

**Compassion for Addictive
Process:
An Internal Family Systems (IFS)
Lens on Trauma & Compulsion**

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Internal Family System (IFS) Psychotherapy Model

- Evidence-based model of psychotherapy based on **systems theory** and **inner focusing**
- Developed in 1980's by Richard Schwartz, Ph.D in Chicago in research study with eating disorders
- **Tracked sequences**; followed inner dialogues; built connections

IFS

Basic Assumptions

Self- Internalized state of calm, clarity, confidence (integration) and compassion; exists in each person; cannot be damaged by experience;

Parts - Sub-personalities: three categories; Managers & Distractors protect the system; Exiles are vulnerable; back burners of consciousness

Self



Multiplicity is Normal



Why IFS?

- **Non-Pathologizing**
- **Embraces Multiplicity**
- **Systemic**
- **User-friendly**
- **Self-Regulating**
- **Assumption of Wholeness**

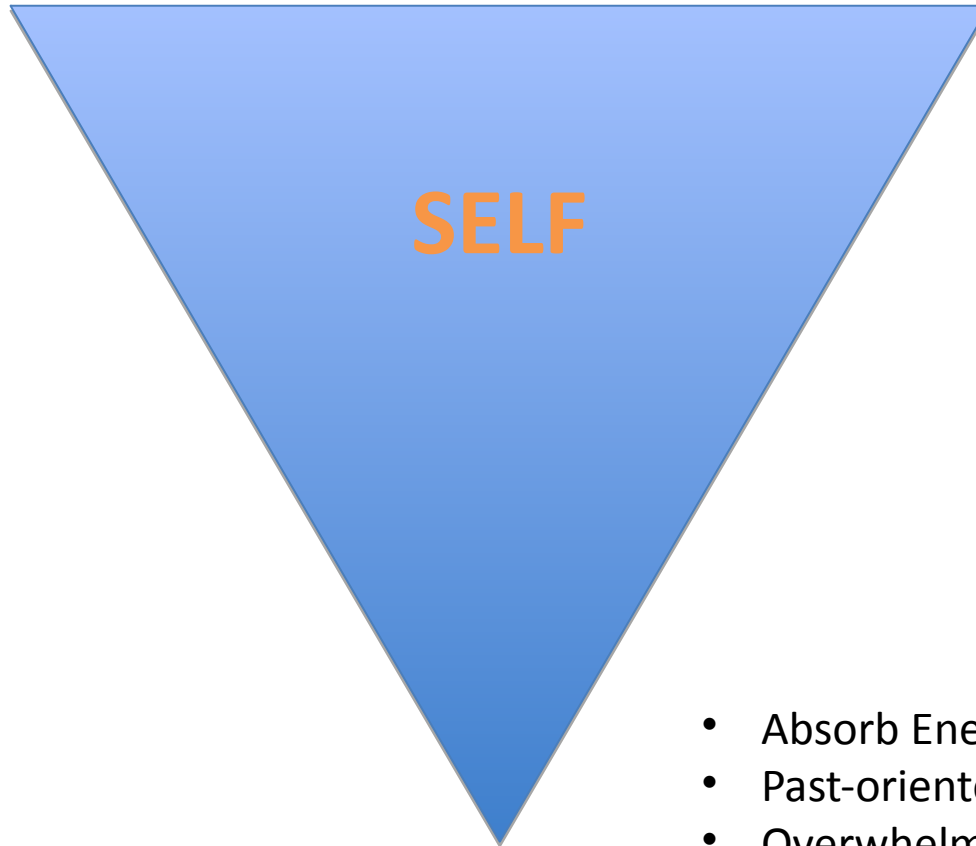
Primary Roles

- **Managers** - Create stability and “forward movement;” ensure basic needs met via task completion and personal effort
- **Distractors** – Shift gears; balance other parts in system by promotion of rest, relaxation, comfort, pleasure, fun and novelty
- **Exiles** – Embody vulnerability; sensitive, trusting, open-hearted, carefree, absorbing

Balancing Act

Managers

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



Distracters

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

Exiles

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

Managers

Help promote-

Functioning and Stability:

responsible, task-master; logical, skeptic, minimizer, analyzer, caretaker

Moving forward & growth:

critic, judge, blamer/shamer, perfectionist, achiever, striver, caretaker, rescuer, director

Task-Master: Busy is Best



Overwhelmed Caretaker



“Super” Perfectionist



Firefighters/Distractors

Positive Intentions: Put out emotional fires; shift gears to balance managers; heroic, take bullet for system; in the present

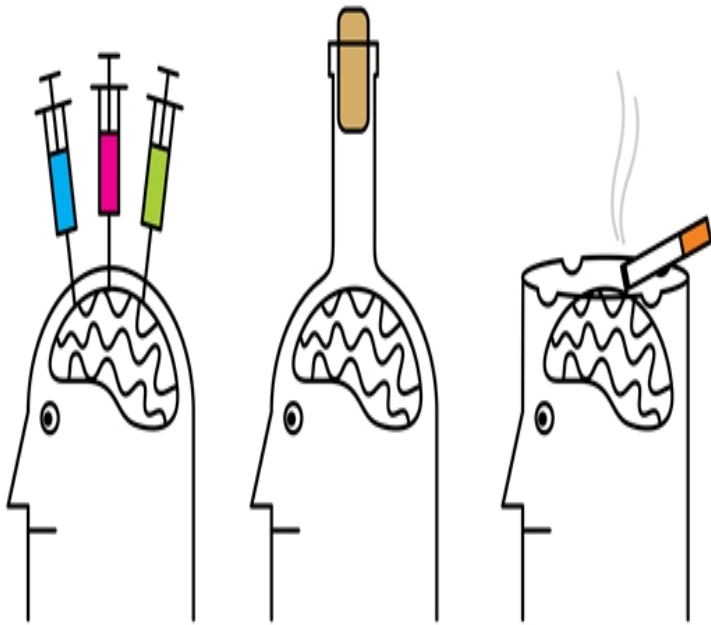
Higher risk -alcohol, drugs, sexual acting out, spending, disordered eating, self-harming

Lower risk-social media, TV, shopping, gaming, sports/exercise; gossip, flirting, sleep

Distractors/ Firefighters



Pain Medication



Never too Old...



Never too Young...

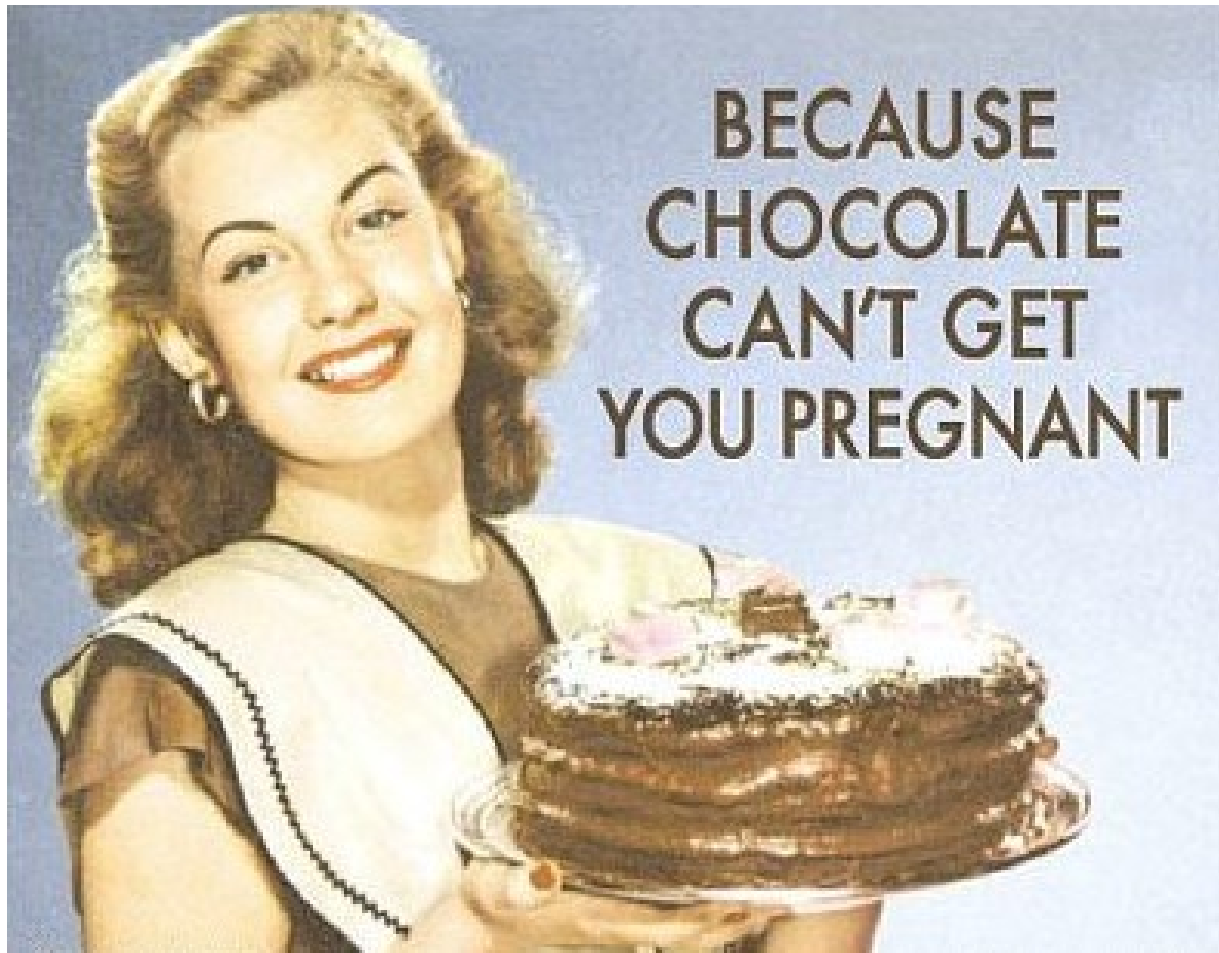


Firefighters/Distracters

Types of Behavior Addictions



**BECAUSE
CHOCOLATE
CAN'T GET
YOU PREGNANT**



Exiles

- Right to be innocent, trusting, carefree, playful, sensitive, open-hearted
- Absorb energies in the field + or -
- Hold memories of un-integrated events
- Burdens are beliefs; feel core or “true”
- Have self energy-know their needs
- Need witnessing, heart, on-going relship

Exiles: Our Vulnerability



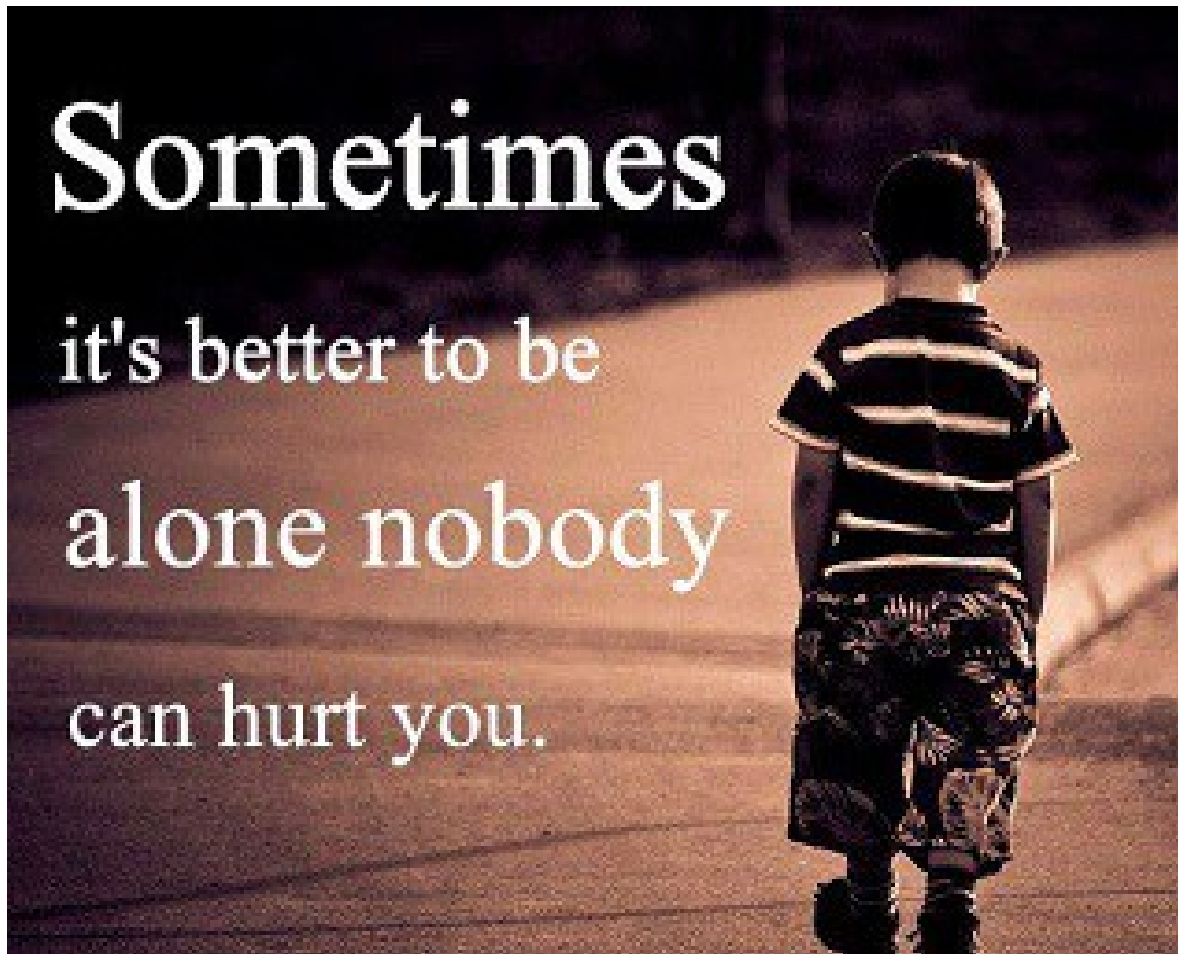
Exiles / Despair



“ Pain in Isolation”



Burdened Core Beliefs



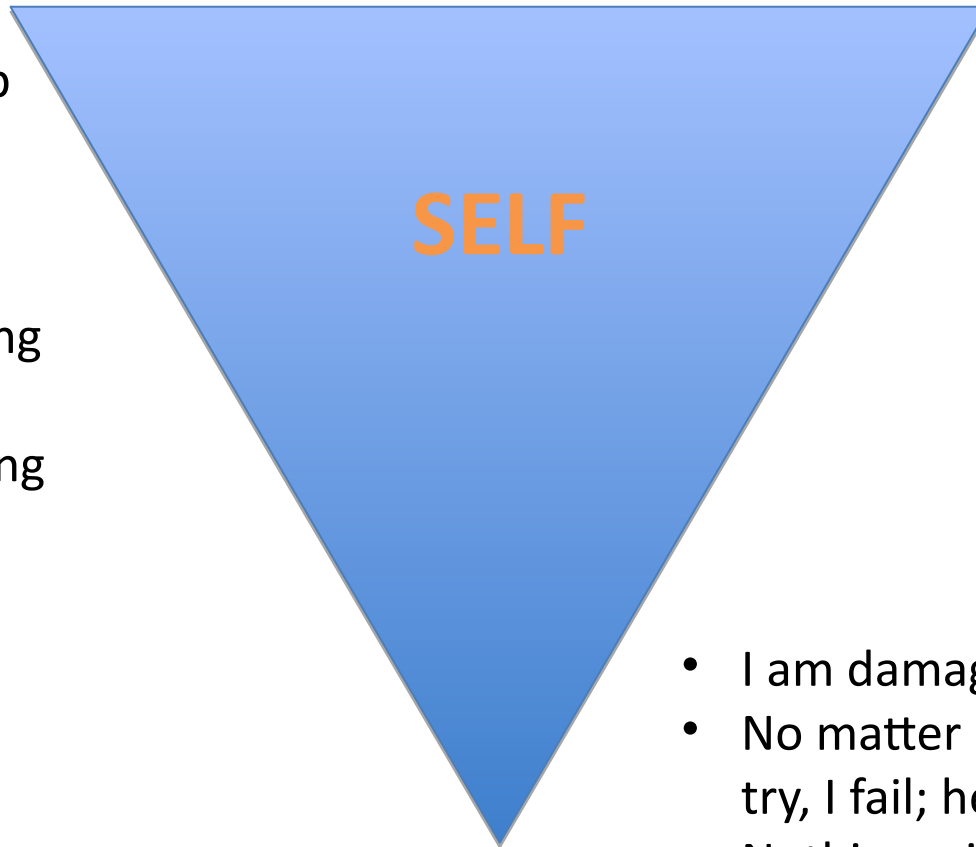
Addictive Process

- A **chronic cycle** of polarization between pre-emptive, critical, controlling parts (*Managers*) and reactive, avoidant, soothing parts (*Distractors*); each side is convinced their role is the best way to protect against long-buried (Exiled) emotional pain. (Sykes)
- **Dependence** on or commitment to a practice, habit or substance, to the extent that *cessation causes trauma*. (Recovery)
- **Anything we lie about.** (Schaef)

Polarization: The Battlefield

Managers

- Do you ever stop and think?!
- You're out of control!
- There's something wrong with you!
- You're never going to change!



Distracters

- I deserve this!
- You can't stop me!
- It is not my fault!
- I don't care!
- When is it my turn?!

Exiles

- I am damaged; shame
- No matter how hard I try, I fail; helpless
- Nothing will change.
- It's hopeless.

Goals of IFS Therapy

Relationship Building

Every protective part has a **positive intention**;
even negative behavior has adaptive function;

Exiles can be recovered, integrated and
unburdened.

Goal of therapy is creating connections
between “Self” and “Parts” i.e. **enhancing self-**
awareness through curiosity and non-judgment

Internal Connections

- Personality subdivided into roles or **parts**; multiplicity theory
- Inner world is a system; tracks network of emotional states with goal of **creating balanced system**
- Keep the basics; **Add Experiential** -- non-judgmental internal inquiry builds trust and empowerment

Six F's of Intervention

- **Find** a Part
- **Focus** on the Target Part
- **Feelings** toward the Part
- **Be-Friend** the Part
- **Fears** of the Part
- **Find Out**; Who is the Part Protecting?

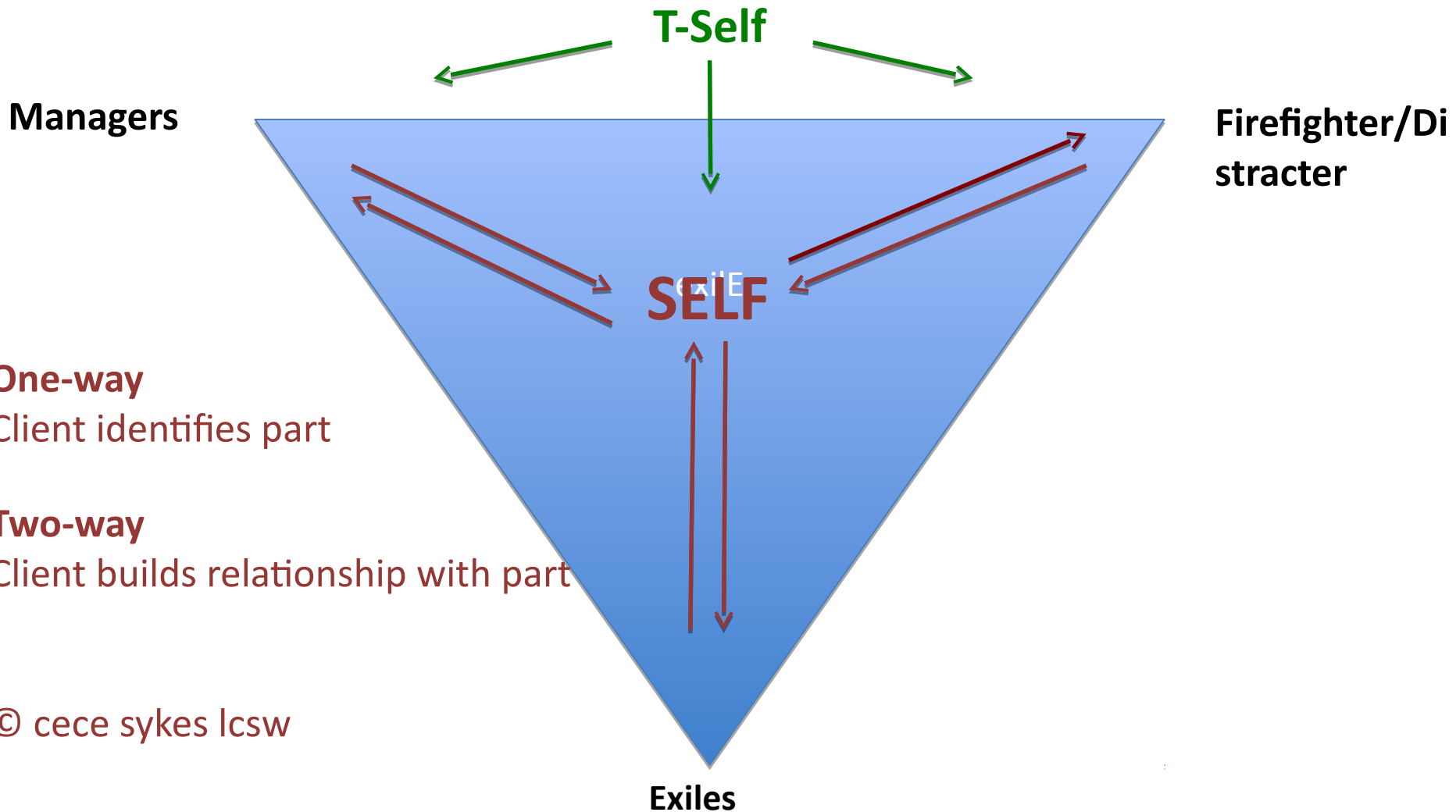
Parts Detecting

- Listen & Identify thoughts, emotions, memories and body sensations as **parts**
- Accurate empathy – reflect behaviors/activity of protectors as being positively motivated i.e. “... Sounds like you have a part helping you be angry...”
- Track the system-i.e., “... sounds like maybe a few parts are up-an angry part, a part that doesn’t like the anger and is there also a fearful part

Interviewing Protectors

- “When you help me do this.....
(behavior).....what is your intention or mission? How are you trying to help?”
- “What are you afraid will happen if you stop doing this....*(behavior)*?”
- “If you saw that there is *another way to keep the system safe*, would you be interested?”

Flow of Therapy: Two-way Street



Polarizations

- Two sets of parts attempting to protect the system with conflicting approaches; Manager vs FF/D
- Each side/team has positive intentions
- System seeks homeostasis: attempting balance
- Acceptance of both sides; build self-part trust first, not part-to-part
- **Usually start with managers:** reassure fears of takeover by FF or exiles
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Creating Compassion for “Using” Parts

- “I am not here to take anything away from you.” Whose problem is it?
- **Identify** multiple soothers; quick fix vs. sustained solution
- **Risks-** Identify intended vs unintended consequences
- **Protective Role :** Positive intention
- **Choice: “The Ninth C”-** Developing freedom to choose: exercising judgment



Creating Compassion for 'Controlling' parts

- **Acknowledge Chaos;** Listen deeply to fears and concerns of the Managers
- **Validate** that FF will lose control – “Have you ever seen this happen?” Yes!
- **Identify impact of blamer parts:** intensify the addictive cycle; Re- burdens the exiles
- **Reassure** that Self and FF- can connect; FF's do have a positive intention, so can build healthy self-part connection;
- **Hope Merchant-** remain hopeful that “Using” parts can accomplish task another way (9th C).

I'm FINE



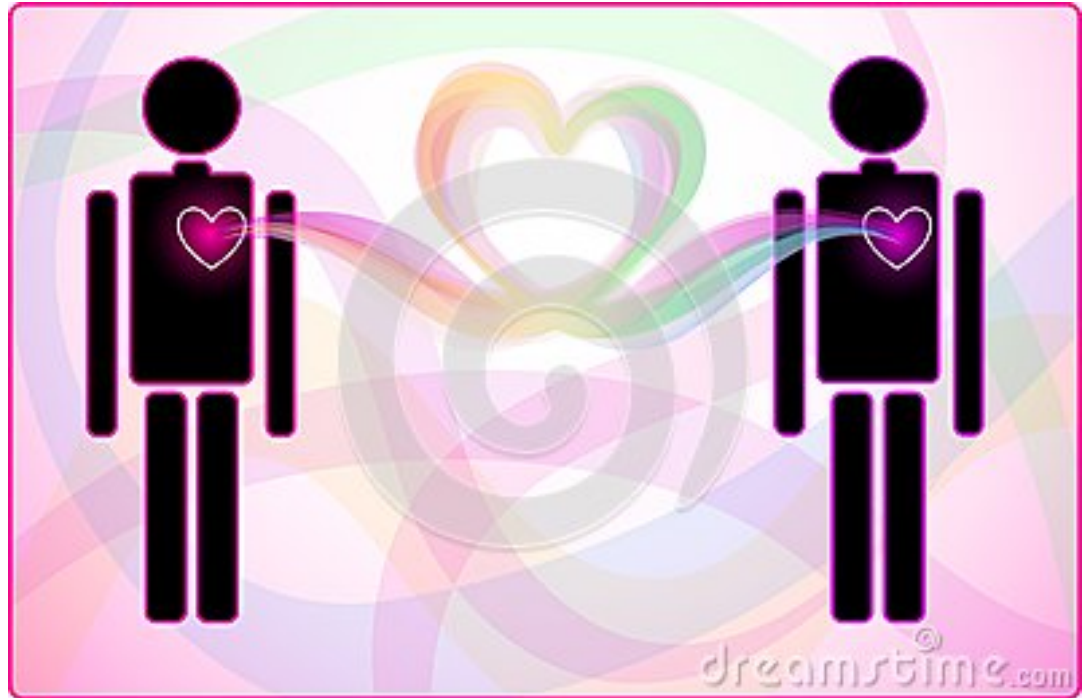
KEEP
CALM

And

Hide your
feelings

Self – Led Connections

- Awareness
- Availability
- Acceptance



Self Spectrum: Degrees of Consciousness



Self Spectrum

Self energy is not static; not “in” or “out”; increments; percentages; fluid; determined on two levels

Vertical-clarity and non-judgmental awareness of the inner system; ability to identify and unblend from inner states; trusting, active relationship with parts

Horizontal-awareness of impact on others; identify parts in relational connection; reflection and responsiveness to events or with others

Shifts back and forth in session, over time in clinical relationship and psycho-spiritual view, over course of lifetime

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Eight C's of Self Energy

Calm

Creative

Connected

Compassionate

Confident

Clarity

Courageous

Curiosity

+ Choice (9th C)

Couples and Compassion

- Reassure 'manager' partner that 'using' partner has controllers/ critics /self-judgment
- Unhook - Do you have a part that takes that same position? U-Turn (Schwartz)
- Explain impact of narcissistic/using parts; encourages control and intrusiveness
- **Over-responsibility /Under-responsibility-** positive intention of meeting vital needs; early roles of caretaking or avoiding; Focus on their own polarity

Complex Trauma

- Emotionally painful events unable to be understood at the time; buried on back burners of consciousness; burdened self-defeating beliefs. (IFS) “ *Past parading as the Present...*”
- “Un-integrated memory caused by a high-stress cortisol release...shut down of hippocampus, explicit memory and pre-frontal cortex; results in **sub-optimal development** of neural networks.” (Daniel Siegel)
- **Pain in isolation.** (Gabor Mate’)

Trauma Issues

- Suicidal Ideation-protective soother;
- Transference- betrayal by caretaker = betrayal by therapist
- Medication-avoidance and dependence
- Neediness-early needs never met
- Flashbacks-parts telling their stories: self-part
- Dissociation-necessary protector
- Idealization and Demonization

Working with Managers

- Often over-identify w/ 'good' managers
- Work over-time to prevent flooding by exiles
- Need reassurance
- "Get it right so don't feel like bad person"
- Fear FF taking over: attempt balance
- Often operate 'neck up;' minimize emotion

Working w FF/ Distractors

- Appear chaotic, invite management
- Ask abt high and low risk soothers
- Check for level of risk, impulsive, compulsive; consequences; impact on functioning and relationships
- **Find positive intentions and Fears**
- Acknowledge manager criticism
- Narcissistic, self-absorbed, resist feedback

Working with Exiles

- Establish trust; help protectors step back
- Create compassionate connection to exile
- Ask exile what happened in past
- Witness the story from Self/open heart
- Help exile identify burdens
- Release burdens
- Invite lost qualities

IFS and Healing

- **Compassionate witness** to protectors and to the exiles holding memories of their suffering; Create new meaning from old burdens.
- **Self-Spectrum**-notch by notch
- **Attachment-** heals attachment wounds by building empathy to exiled vulnerability

Compassion: all parts are welcome

*“Metta is the ability to embrace all parts of ourselves, as well as all parts of the world. Practicing metta illuminates our inner integrity because it **relieves us of the need to deny different aspects of ourselves.**”*

[Sharon Salzberg *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*](#)

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”

Carl Rogers

IFS Relationship Qualities

- **Calm vs Activated /Defensive** –expressing and listening w/o reactivity or blame
- **Confident vs Insecure /Judgmental** – belief self and other are capable + whole
- **Clarity vs Confused / Overwhelmed**-perceive own inner system and impact of other's system
- **Curious vs. Assuming/Cynical** – open mind

Relationship Qualities, con't

- **Compassion vs Contempt/Rejection**-empathy for own and other's intentions + vulnerability
- **Courage vs Internalization/Caretaking**-express w/o fears of being exposed or hurting other
- **Creative vs Immobilized/Trapped**- thinking out of the box; finding our choices
- **Connected vs Isolated/ Abandoned**-noticing our shared humanity, shared responsibility

Hope and Self-Compassion

- “Sometimes we think that to develop an open heart, to be truly loving and compassionate, means that we need to be passive....Yet this is not what is meant by compassion. Quite the contrary. Compassion is not at all weak. It is the strength that arises out of seeing the true nature of suffering in the world. Compassion allows us to bear witness to that suffering, whether it is in ourselves or others, without fear; it allows us to name injustice without hesitation, and to act strongly, with all the skill at our disposal.” [Sharon Salzberg, *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*](#)

For Info: Center for Self Leadership

www.selfleadership.com

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