

the guide



Internal Family Systems

Concepts & Beyond

An exploration of Self, inspired
by Richard Schwartz's Internal
Family Systems

all parts are
welcome

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internal family systems

what is IFS?

Internal Family Systems (IFS) helps you understand the different parts of you

and many of these parts want to protect you - they are called

Protectors

some Protector parts are known as

Managers

Managers are parts that control to proactively keep you safe - for example

perfectionism

people-pleasing

overthinking

other Protector parts are known as

Firefighters

Firefighters are parts that react fast to emotional pain - for example

distraction

numbing

impulsive-behavior

Exiles are young parts hidden behind Protectors, who carry pain, fear, or shame from past experiences

The Self

Self is your calm, compassionate core, who can listen with curiosity, and without judgment

Finding Self helps Protectors to relax, and healing can begin for the exiles they've been guarding

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finding Self

what is Self?

The calm, curious core of you that can connect with and care for all your parts

When in Self

you feel spacious, open, and able to witness your inner experience without being overwhelmed by it

example anxiety

- if you were feeling anxious, instead of **BEING** the anxiety, you could say
 - I notice a part of me feels anxious right now, and I'm curious about what it needs „
- that curious part of you is Self

The 8 C's of Self

Compassion

Curiosity

Clarity

Calm

Confidence

Courage

Creativity

Connectedness

Self Quiz

I feel clear about what's going on inside me ✓

I'm curious about my thoughts or feelings ✓

I feel some compassion toward myself ✓

I trust I can handle what I feel ✓

I feel calm in my body ✓

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Summary Of The Internal Family

A mind made of parts

Within your mind resides your council of parts · they are core to understanding your thoughts, feelings & emotions

01

02

There are no bad parts

Every part has a positive intention, even if it feels extreme or destructive · IFS aims to welcome these parts, not remove them

Self is the natural leader

Calm, curious and compassionate, when you're in Self you can guide your inner world with clarity and care

03

By seeing, hearing, knowing and feeling our different parts, we can bring balance to our internal world

identifying parts

who's in
there?

Discover the inner parts shaping
your thoughts and feelings

01 notice the part

Pause and be mindful of a strong
feeling, thought, or sensation

Remember that
parts always have
a good intention

02 get curious

Turn toward the part with
interest, not judgment

ask yourself

what are you trying to do for me?

notice within

are any other parts showing up?

03 listen & learn

Hear what it says, how it feels, and what it needs

Sometimes where we find one part, we find many - and that's okay

make a parts map

get to know your
resident parts

list parts

name them based on the feeling

group them

are they managers,
firefighters or exiles?

add notes

what are they saying?
how do they feel?
what are they protecting?

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common parts

manager
perfectionist
must do to prevent
judgement

firefighter
numbing
blanks out emotions
to avoid overwhelm

exile
shame
believes you are
not enough

firefighter
angry
gets loud, sharp or
explosive to defend

exile
fearful
holds anxiety, panic or
terror from past

manager
pleaser
focuses on others'
needs to feel safe

firefighter
avoider
procrastinates or
detaches to escape

exile
lonely
feels deeply
isolated or unseen

manager
inner critic
self-critical to keep
you in line

firefighter
addicted
seeks relief in drugs,
screens, or habits

exile
abandoned
feels unwanted
or rejected

manager
overthinker
stuck in loops trying
to solve or prevent

firefighter
comfort
binges food, shopping
or shows to sooth

exile
helpless
feels stuck, small or
powerless

manager
controller
controls outcomes,
people or emotions

manager
planner
strategizes to avoid
uncertainty or pain

exile
unlovable
believes acceptance
is out of reach

firefighter
saboteur
derails progress to
prevent exposure

manager
responsible
must carry all to
prevent collapse

exile
grieving
carries sadness
and loss

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unblending

overwhelmed on
the inside?

Sometimes a part takes over
and we don't even notice

When you feel

consumed by rage

frozen with fear

drowned in sadness

swallowed by shame

paralyzed by procrastination

overcome with indecision

Unblending allows us to gently step back from
these parts, so we may observe, instead of
being overwhelmed

examples

	Reacting Blended	Responding Unblended
Inner critic	"I can't believe I messed that up again."	I hear the harsh voice · what's it afraid of?
Anxiety	"What if everything goes wrong?"	I feel the worry · what's it protecting me from?
Procrastination	"I'll deal with it later... I can't face it right now."	Something's pulling away · what feels too much?
Anger	"They don't get to treat me like that!"	I feel the heat · what's underneath it?
People pleasing	"I have to say yes or they'll be disappointed."	I feel pulled to agree · but do I really want to?

The goal isn't to fix the part · it's to listen to it

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burdens

what do you
carry?

A burden is a painful belief or
emotion a part holds from the past

When a part carries a burden

it's not just doing a job, it's carrying
pain · it's likely trying to protect you by

working too hard

avoiding things

lashing out

shutting down

overthinking everything

going quiet



They often
come from
things that were
too big, too scary, or
too lonely to face when
they first happened

Experience	Exile	Burden	Protector
Being scolded for small mistakes	Feeling not good enough	If I'm not perfect, I'll be rejected	Inner critic
Facing big emotions with no support	Overwhelm	If I try, I'll fall apart	Avoider
Only valued when being helpful	Fear of disconnection	If I say no, I won't be accepted	People Pleaser

Unburdening

when parts feel seen,
heard, felt & known,
they can begin to heal

What feels heavy or stuck in me today?

Is a part of me carrying this?

What is it afraid of or protecting me from?

What might it feel without this weight?

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Summary Of Parts, Blending & Burdens

Three types of parts

Parts are managers who control to avoid pain,
firefighters who soothe distress, and
exiles, who carry old wounds

01

02

Blending & Unblending

When a part take over your awareness, we are
blended · if we can notice a part with kindness
and care, without becoming it, we unblend

Old Wounds

When you exile a part in trauma or past
experience, it is wounded · when parts are
deeply hurt, Protectors form to keep them safe

03

04

Burdens

Burdens are the intense beliefs or feelings
parts carry from Old Wounds · they aren't who
you are, and can be released as healing begins

the deep breath



the power of breathing

Calms stress, lowers heart rate, and boosts focus and resilience

A Breath

When you take a deep, controlled breath, your body gets a signal that it's safe

It brings you back to the present · steady, softer, and more connected

Use it when

- ✓ You feel anxious or panicked
- ✓ You're caught in thoughts
- ✓ You just need a moment
- ✓ You're about to journal

One deep breath won't fix everything · but it can shift everything just a little

Breathing Guide

Inhale

⌚ 5 seconds

Breathe in through your nose



01

02

Hold

⌚ 10 seconds

Hold the breath in your belly



Exhale

⌚ 10 seconds

Slowly breathe out through pursed lips



03

After 1 deep breath, take 4 regular deep breaths before repeating



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