

Self-Therapy

Volume 2

A Step-By-Step Guide
to Advanced IFS Techniques
for Working with Protectors

Jay Earley, PhD

“The many readers of Jay Earley’s *Self-Therapy, Vol. 1*, who have been helped to work with their inner systems by receiving the fundamentals of the IFS Model, will be pleased to find that *Self-Therapy, Vol. 2* offers them guidance for the inevitable challenges of our complex inner worlds. Our protective systems form an intricate and veiled web of alliances and polarizations that can confound us if we traverse our inner landscapes alone. This indispensable companion to the first volume systematically guides you to identify, track, negotiate with, and transform these devoted and persistent protectors to bring more Self-leadership, harmony, and peace to your inner world.

“I appreciate Jay’s thorough and methodical approach, enhanced by experiential exercises, case examples, special notes to the therapist, and Help Sheets. As an IFS trainer for twenty years, I recommend this book not only for those wanting to work on their own or with a peer, but also for students, graduates, and trainers of IFS.”

— Susan McConnell, Senior IFS Lead Trainer

“*Self-Therapy, Vol. 2*, is the exciting new sequel to *Self-Therapy*. It is an indispensable guide for anyone on the journey of mindful self-discovery, understanding, and empowerment. Written for both the professional and the layperson, it delivers a fresh, ‘must-have’ resource for the IFS Model. Jay Earley, in his surprisingly easy writing style, turns up the excitement by illuminating ‘hidden in plain sight’ patterns and masterfully mapping the steps that turn treatment roadblocks into bridges! As intrigued as you will be to dig into all these fascinating parts-work innovations, rest assured that Earley remains true to his signature style of supporting his readers by including powerful examples, step-by-step instructions, and worksheets. This is the book to take your IFS practice to the next level.”

— Roseanne Keefe, LICSW

“The first volume of *Self-Therapy* provided a practical description of the IFS Model of psychotherapy that helped many people explore and transform their inner worlds on their own. But one book cannot adequately cover the many IFS concepts and methods I developed the past thirty years; hence *Volume 2*. In it, you will find clear and practical descriptions of important concepts like polarization among parts and how to depolarize them, Self-like parts and how to detect them, and tips for maintaining and deepening the work.”

— Richard Schwartz, PhD, Creator of IFS,
author of *Internal Family Systems Therapy* and
You Are the One You've Been Waiting For

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Self-Therapy

Volume 2

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Self-Therapy, Vol. 2: A Step-by-Step Guide to
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I received feedback that improved this book from Bonnie Weiss, Howard Ditkoff (www.systemsthinker.com), Katrin Kirojood, Roseanne Keefe, Jean-Pierre Marceau, Diana Kirigin, Dayal Mirchandani, Frank Lindemann, Esther Michelson, Riox Rheigh Frosher, Ingemar Fransson, Hal Morris, and David Burkhard.

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Introduction

My book *Self-Therapy* is a manual for IFS (Internal Family Systems Therapy). It has helped countless people resolve their psychological issues, as I have discovered from the many emails I receive from people all over the world telling me what a difference the book (and IFS) has made in their lives.

Self-Therapy teaches you how to work on yourself using IFS and how to do IFS peer counseling with a friend. It also gives therapists a thorough grounding in the basics of IFS and how to use it effectively with their clients. Since *Self-Therapy* was published in 2009, it has sold nearly 25,000 copies, and the sales are still as strong as ever. This is a testament not only to the quality of the book but also to the effectiveness and ease of use of IFS.

IFS is a powerful form of individual therapy developed by Richard Schwartz, PhD, that has been spreading rapidly around the U.S. and the world, especially since 2005. It is user-friendly, spiritually oriented, and very effective in working with trauma as well as a wide variety of other psychological issues. Schwartz is the founder of the Center for Self Leadership, which offers professional trainings in IFS. See www.selfleadership.org for information about these trainings and other aspects of IFS.

Self-Therapy is an introduction to IFS, and many important

topics couldn't be included. I decided to write this sequel to *Self-Therapy*, which includes techniques and insights not in the first book along with much other content that I have learned about IFS in the years since I originally wrote *Self-Therapy*. That book was based on the IFS Basic Course and the Exiles Course that I have taught for many years. Since *Self-Therapy* was published, I have also been teaching advanced IFS courses for both professionals and the general public. These courses form the basis for this book.

A few of the chapters in this book are taken from two professional books of mine—*Negotiating for Self-Leadership in IFS* and *Resolving Inner Conflict*. I felt that it was important to make the insights from those books available to everyone.

Once I started writing this book, I realized that there was more material than could fit into one volume. So *Self-Therapy, Vol. 2* will be followed by further volumes in the *Self-Therapy Series*. I am excited about bringing this advanced information about IFS to the world.

Some of the topics in this book (and the rest of the *Self-Therapy Series*) are taught in the IFS trainings offered by the Center for Self-Leadership, and some I have developed myself. Some of the topics are a standard part of IFS, some are extensions of IFS, and some are applications of IFS to certain psychological issues.

Chapter 1 discusses the importance of tracking your parts and taking notes on your sessions and shows how to do this. Chapter 2 deals with the important question of when to switch target parts and when to stay with the one you have chosen. Chapter 3 introduces the distinction between managers and firefighters, which are the two types of protectors

in IFS. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with polarizations—inner conflicts between parts. They present a detailed, step-by-step process for resolving these conflicts. Chapter 6 discusses how to update your protectors so they understand your current adult capabilities and will therefore relax and cooperate with you. Chapter 7 shows how to negotiate with a protector to allow you to lead from Self and behave in a healthy manner in a difficult situation that is coming up soon in your life. Chapter 8 deals with Self-like parts—parts that believe they are the Self and therefore get in the way of the IFS process—and explains how to recognize and deal with them.

How to Use This Book

This book will be useful for both professionals and the general public. In order to reach both audiences, I have taken the following approach. The book is written for the general reader who wants to work on him- or herself using IFS. All the material will also be useful to therapists who want to use IFS with their clients. In addition, in various places in the book, I have added comments that are directed specifically to therapists; these are in sidebars titled *Therapist Note*.

Since this book is a sequel to *Self-Therapy*, I assume you have either read *Self-Therapy* or you have learned that material in another way, perhaps by taking the IFS Level 1 Professional Training. Therefore, this book doesn't present the basics of IFS. It assumes you know them and proceeds from there. To refresh your understanding of *Self-Therapy* before reading this book, read over the Help Sheets in Appendix A. If that isn't enough for you to feel up-to-date on the concepts in *Self-Therapy*, I recommend that you review that book before reading this one.

There are experiential exercises throughout the book so you can practice the IFS techniques that you are learning. I recommend that you do them, preferably with a friend, so you learn how the concepts actually work for you.

In this book, I occasionally use the Pattern System to show the relationships between types of parts. The Pattern System is a systematic, comprehensive way of understanding and diagnosing your personality that I have developed. See Appendix C for an introduction to the Pattern System.

CHAPTER 1

Tracking Your Sessions and Parts

I recommend that you spend some time right after each IFS session taking notes about what happened in the session and also keeping track of the different parts that emerged. This is useful for a number of reasons.

1. You are probably in an altered state when you are in the midst of an IFS session, and later it may be hard to remember clearly what happened. This is because learning that happens in one state of consciousness often doesn't transfer easily to a different state. The technical term for this is *state-dependent learning*. So take notes right at the end of a session when the work is still fresh in your mind.

2. It is important to follow up with the parts that you worked with in a session—to deepen the healing of your exiles and to check to see how your protectors are affecting your behavior in daily life. Taking notes will help you remember the parts you need to follow up with.

3. If you finish a session without completing the full sequence of IFS steps, which happens frequently, it is a good idea when you begin the next session to take up where you left off in the previous one. Your notes will help you remember which part to start with, how far you got with it, and how it looked or felt in the previous session to aid you in reaccessing it.

THERAPIST NOTE

Unless you have a very good memory, I recommend that you also take notes on each IFS session that you conduct right afterward. I do this, and then I refer back to my notes before the next session with that client. These notes have been a great help to me.

Notes on Sessions

I recommend two types of note-taking—notes on sessions and notes on parts. This section is for sessions; the next is for parts.

For each session, keep track of the main parts you worked with, what happened, and how far you got in the IFS process with each part. You don't need a lot of detail, just the main information. If you prefer to do journaling in more depth, that is fine. Here is an example of notes taken by Mathew on three consecutive sessions. (In the notes, he refers to each part as "him" or "it.")

First Session

Guilty Exile feels hopeful about getting help from me.

Afraid of the dark, alone, and going to sleep.

Tension between parents, at dinner table, making him feel insecure and afraid.

They didn't love him.

Mother was heavy, moody, and needy. That's the darkness he was afraid of.

He felt guilty that it was his fault that she was so dark.

5 years old

Mother sometimes blamed him for her crying.

Feels guilty because he teased another kid at playschool and got scolded.
Could feel Guilty Exile's needs in left side of my belly.
Needs to be understood.
Wants mother to see that he is free and strong.
Feels understood by me.

Second Session

White Protector is lonely, embarrassed about parents being old.

Mother's face was stony and she didn't respond to him. Mother needed him, talked too much. She was afraid and unhappy.

That was exhausting because he tried to help her but it didn't help.

White Protector tried to keep Mother in a good mood because otherwise, things got broken, dark, and chaotic.

A different exile. Terrified, lonely, and insecure.

It doesn't trust me because I have pushed it away.

I gave it some reassurance, but that wasn't enough yet.

Third Session

Guilty Exile. Feels mischievous, angry.

White Protector. Believes anger is dangerous, bad, and evil.

Afraid that mother would reject him for the anger, and he would lose his connection with her.

(Third session, continued)

Independent Part. Contemptuous of White Part.

Like a black monolith. It steps aside.

White Part's job was to keep mother happy, to keep her from rejecting him, and to cover Guilty Exile.

Controlling Part is afraid of chaos, pain, and fear if anger is expressed.

Guilty Exile is angry because mother didn't allow him to be male.

It expresses its rage thru images.

Now Guilty Exile gets younger and expresses the anger as a tantrum, which I never had a chance to do as a child.

The Controlling Part is now ready to take on a new role—being goal oriented.

White Part is now happy. It has become a firm ball, smiling, and yellow.

Exercise: Notes on Session

After your next IFS session, take notes on what happened or journal about it, if you prefer. Do this right after the session so it is still fresh in your mind. Refer back to these notes right before your next session and decide what to work on based on what happened in the previous session as well as your current concerns.

Notes on Parts

It is a good idea to keep an information sheet on each significant part that you work with, in addition to the session notes. You will most likely come back and work on each

part in a number of different sessions, maybe months apart, so this keeps that information in a handy place.

By the way, don't feel bad if you have many parts. This is not an indication that there is something wrong with you or that you will have difficulty working with them. We all have many parts. As I have kept track of my parts, I have come up with at least fifty.

Below is an example of the kind of information to keep for each part:

Protector Information

Name of Part

Age

Behavior

Emotions

Body sensations

Beliefs

Image

Situations or people that activate this part

Healthy feelings or behavior that are blocked by this part

What it is trying to get for me

What it is afraid would happen if it didn't do its role

Person it is modeled on

Constructive aspects of this part

Parts it is polarized with

Parts it is allied with

Exiles it protects

How far I have gotten in IFS process with this part

Exile Information

Name of Part

Age

Behavior (if blended exile)

Emotions

Body sensations

Beliefs

Image

Situations or people that activate this part

Healthy feelings or behavior that are blocked by this part (if blended exile)

Person it is modeled on

Constructive aspects of this part

Parts it is polarized with

Protectors it is polarized by

How far I have gotten in IFS process with this part

Each time you do a session that involves a given part, you will learn more about it, and you can fill in more information.

Let's see what notes Mathew took on two of his parts:

Protector Information for White Part

Age – 5

Behavior – Doesn't allow expression of anger or strength

Emotions – Lonely, embarrassed

Body sensations – Tension in solar plexus

Beliefs – Anger is dangerous and evil

Image – White cotton

Situations or people that activate this part – Anything that brings up anger

Healthy feelings or behavior that are blocked by this part – Strength

What it is trying to get for me – Safety

What it is afraid would happen if it didn't do its role – Mother would reject it

Person it is modeled on

Constructive aspects of this part

Parts it is polarized with – Guilty Exile

Parts it is allied with – Controlling Part

Exiles it protects – Guilty Exile

How far I have gotten in IFS process with this part – Transformed to yellow, smiling, firm ball

Exile Information for Guilty Exile

Age – 5

Behavior (if blended exile)

Emotions – Afraid of the dark, alone, and going to sleep, insecure

Body sensations

Beliefs – That he is not loved. That it was his fault that mother was dark.

Image

Situations or people that activate this part

Healthy feelings or behavior that are blocked by this part (if blended exile)

Person it is modeled on

Constructive aspects of this part – Angry

(Exile information, continued)

History – Tension between parents. They didn't love him. Mother was heavy, moody, and needy. That's the darkness he was afraid of. Mother blamed him for her crying.

Parts it is polarized with – White Part

Protectors it is protected by – White Part, Controlling Part

How far I have gotten in IFS process with this part – Expressed anger

Putting the information in terms of parts brings out important aspects of it that may not have been apparent from the session notes, such as the fact that the White Part both protects the Guilty Exile and is polarized with it. It also forces you to think about things that might not have shown up in the notes, such as the fact that the White Part gets activated whenever something happens that makes Mathew angry.

Notice that some of the items are not filled in. This is because Mathew doesn't know them yet or because they aren't relevant for this part. As time goes on and Mathew does more sessions and observes his parts during his daily life, he will fill in the addition information he gains.

Exercise: Notes on Parts

Choose a part that you have worked with a number of times. Take notes on it using the format described in this chapter. Then reflect on what you learned from the note-taking. Choose one or two other parts that are related to the first part you chose and take notes on them as well. The next time you do a session involving these parts, add to these notes.

This chapter has demonstrated how to keep track of your sessions and your parts. Feel free to use any method that works for you in tracking your work. Make sure to do it since it will greatly enhance the effectiveness of your IFS work.

CHAPTER 2

When to Switch Target Parts

Let's suppose you have chosen a protector to work on, called your *target part*. As you are getting to know it (during any of the steps P1–P5 described in *Self-Therapy*), another part may emerge. It is best to take a moment to feel the new part's emotions or body sensations and perhaps ask it a question or two. Then make a conscious choice about whether to ask it to step aside so you can continue with your original target part or whether to switch and make the new part your target part. This chapter discusses how to make this decision.

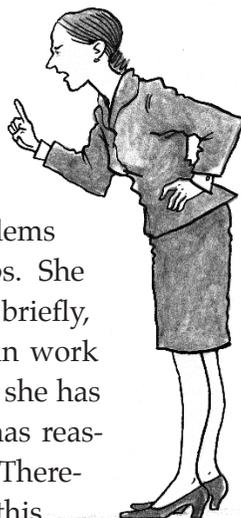
Reasons to Switch Target Parts

Let's look at a variety of reasons you might choose to switch target parts.

A Concerned Part or Protector Won't Step Aside

Suppose you are working with a target part and you check to see how you are feeling toward it. If you are feeling judgmental or angry toward it or you want to get rid of it, you aren't in Self. You are blended with a *concerned part* (see Chapter 6 in *Self-Therapy*) that feels judgmental, angry, and so on. You acknowledge the concerned part and then ask it to step aside. If it won't step aside, you ask what it is afraid of and try to reassure it about its fears. If it still won't step aside, you have no choice—you must switch and make the concerned part your target part.

For example, Maria is focusing on a part that tends to become distant in romantic relationships. When she checks to see how she feels toward it, she realizes that she is blended with an Inner Critic¹ that hates this Distancing Part because of the problems it has caused her in love relationships. She acknowledges the Critic, hears from it briefly, and then asks it to step aside so she can work with her Distancing Part. But even after she has heard what the Critic is afraid of and has reassured it, the Critic still won't step aside. Therefore, Maria must switch her attention to this Critic by making it her target part.



The same thing can happen if you are trying to work with an exile, and a protector jumps in and blocks the way. You ask what the protector is afraid would happen if it allowed you to work with the exile, and then you attempt to reassure the protector that what it fears won't happen. If the protector isn't reassured and refuses to give you permission to work with the exile, you must switch and make that protector your target part, at least for a while.

When you switch, keep track of the original target part. When you have worked with the concerned part (or other protector) and it is willing to step aside, or when you have finished with it completely, come back to the original target part and continue with it.

1. A self-critical protector. See *Freedom from Your Inner Critic* or Chapter 1 of *Self-Therapy, Vol. 3*.

An Important New Part Arises

Suppose you are working with a target part when a different part arises. For example, you suddenly feel sad or ashamed, and you realize that this isn't coming from the part you were focused on. You spend a moment feeling this new part and hearing its concerns. You realize that this part is very important in your life right now. It is behind feelings and behaviors that you really want to change. So you decide that it is more relevant to work with the new part than the original one. Tell the original target part that you will get back to it in the future (and make sure you do).

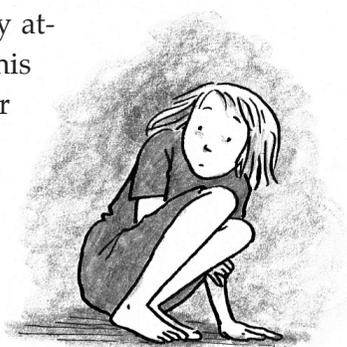
For example, Jon is working with a part of him that goes overboard to please his wife. While this is happening, a part arises that is really angry at Jon's wife because of how much he tries to please her. Jon realizes that his anger at his wife has been a big problem between them for a long time, so he decides that it would be really important to switch and work with his Angry Part.

A Part Arises That Is Usually Not Accessible

As you are working on a target part, suppose a new part arises whose feelings or beliefs are very vivid and alive to you in that moment, or an exile arises that is full of pain. You realize that this new part is usually not very easy to access, so this is a golden opportunity to work with it. The new part might be an exile whose pain is usually inaccessible, or it might be a protector that is usually vague. Now that this part and its emotions are clear, you may decide that you want to take this opportunity to work with it.

For example, while Gabby is working with a Judgmental Part, she begins to feel very frightened. When she checks in with the Frightened Part, she realizes that it is an exile

that is terrified of being physically attacked. She had been aware of this exile for some time, but whenever she tried to work with it, the fear would vanish. But that fear is now strongly activated. Gabby doesn't want to miss this opportunity, so she switches target parts to work with the terrified exile. She can always come back and work with her Judgmental Part in another session.



A Part Insists on Being Heard

A new part arises that is different from your target part, and it insists on being heard right now. It doesn't want to step aside for the original target part. It demands that you pay attention to it. Perhaps this part feels that you have been ignoring it, or maybe it is really triggered and needs to some attention. You don't want to go against a part with



such an urgent need because it will lead to bad blood. Let the original target part know that you will come back to it in the future, maybe even in the same session. Then turn your attention to the part that is demanding attention. Spend as much time with that part as it needs. Then you can choose to go even further and transform the new part or go back to the original target part.

The Target Part Is Afraid of Another Part

You are working with a protector—let’s call it Part A—and you ask it what it is afraid would happen if it didn’t perform its protective role. It says it is afraid that you will do something destructive or dysfunctional. For example, it says it is afraid that you will get really angry or you will procrastinate about an important task. First, ask yourself whether Part A’s fear is realistic. If Part A didn’t perform its role, would you be likely to act in the dysfunctional way that it fears? You need to be in Self to answer this question accurately.

If you aren’t likely to do what Part A is afraid of, its fear is unrealistic. This means that it is a good idea to



work with Part A to help transform it. However, if you *would* do what Part A is afraid of, it wouldn’t make sense to continue to work with it since it is giving you sound advice. It is warning you about something problematic that you might actually do.

In this case, switch your attention to the part of you that might actually get angry or procrastinate (or whatever the protector is concerned about). Let’s call it Part B. Not only is it important to transform Part B, but you can’t realistically ask Part A to let go of its role if you haven’t addressed its realistic concern.

Once you have worked with and transformed Part B, go back to Part A and see if it still needs to perform its protective job. If it can now let go, your work with it is complete. If Part A can't let go, proceed to do the IFS process with it. Since you have addressed Part A's realistic concern, see what else it is afraid of and work with it to transform that fear.

For example, Riley was working with a part that keeps her distant from her husband, Mark. When she asked what the Distancing Part was afraid would happen if it allowed her to be close to Mark, it said that she would fall into trying to please him and take care of him, and she would ignore her own needs. When she considered this fear from Self, she realized that the Distancing Part was right. She did have a Caretaking Part that had a tendency to ignore her own needs in order to cater to Mark's. Therefore, it wouldn't make sense to keep working with the Distancing Part until she had transformed her Caretaking Part, so she switched her attention to the Caretaking Part.

Riley got to know the Caretaking Part and healed the exile it was protecting so the Caretaking Part could let go of that role. Then she went back to her Distancing Part. She made sure the Distancing Part was aware of how the Caretaking Part had relaxed. The Distancing Part now felt more at ease about her being close to Mark, but it had other concerns as well. Having taken care of its fear of her being a Caretaker, Riley continued her work with the Distancing Part to resolve its other fears.

The Target Part Takes Orders from Another Part

Suppose you are working with a protector, and you ask what it is trying to accomplish by doing its job. It says it

doesn't know. When you inquire further, it says that it was assigned this job by another part, and it just follows orders. It can sometimes happen that one part is receiving orders from another part. In this case, to find out the positive intent behind the protective behavior, you have to go to the source—the part that is giving the orders. That part knows what the behavior is intended to accomplish and protect against, so it makes sense to switch target parts and focus on the part that is in charge. That part needs to be transformed for your behavior to change.

Reasons to Stay with the Original Target Part

Now let's look at the alternative. When is it important to stay with your original target part?

You Want to Finish with the Target Part

Sometimes, at the beginning of your therapy, it can be useful to get to know many different parts and understand their positive intent for you. However, once you start working with a part, it is usually best to finish the IFS procedure for healing and transforming it. For example, Dillon started working with a certain target part, a Depressed Part, and it is important for him to overcome his depression. So when another part arose, he asked it to step aside so he could keep working with his Depressed Part. He wanted to continue the IFS process with his Depressed Part by accessing the exile it was protecting so he could transform the Depressed Part and his depression would lift. This was especially important to him because he had worked with his Depressed Part before and not completed the work. Now he wanted to get results.

You Haven't Finished with Any Parts

If you are still in the early stages of your IFS work and you haven't yet completed work with any of your parts, your inner system won't realize what is possible. Your parts won't realize that exiles can be unburdened and that protectors can let go of their roles. Your protectors may be skeptical about your ability to heal your parts until they see it happen. Your parts may feel hopeless about change and, because of this, may try to keep you from engaging in IFS work or keep you away from your exiles. Therefore, it is important to complete at least one unburdening without waiting too long. The more your parts realize that profound change is really possible, the more they will cooperate with you.

The Target Part Feels Ignored by You

Some parts don't trust you at first. They don't expect you to really pay attention to them—perhaps because you haven't paid attention to them your whole life. Now that you are learning IFS, you can give them the attention they want. If your target part is upset with you for not paying attention to it, it wouldn't be wise to switch to a different target part. This would only increase the mistrust of the original target part. Stay with it so it can experience your interest in it. This will help the part trust you.

THERAPIST NOTE

When it comes time to decide whether or not to switch target parts, should you make the decision or leave it up to your client? I prefer to leave the decision to clients, whenever possible, because they know their priorities and often have an intuitive sense of what needs to happen next. However, if I am aware of a good reason to switch target parts (or stay with the original target part) and the client isn't, I will explain it to the client. For example, if we have worked with many different parts and have not completed the healing with any of them, I will explain to the client why this is a problem. I then encourage the client to make the decision, informed by my input.

Some of the reasons listed above **require** the client to switch to a new target part, for example, when a concerned part won't step aside or when the target part is pointing to a part that needs to be worked with first. In these cases, I don't **ask** the client to decide; I direct them to switch target parts.

The Inner Process Dimension of the Pattern System

How do you tend to deal with the question of switching target parts? There are healthy and problematic ways of doing this. I have created the Inner Process Dimension of the Pattern System² to clarify this. There are two problematic ways of dealing with this issue, which are opposites of each

2. See Appendix C for information about the Pattern System. The Inner Process Dimension has recently been added to the Pattern System, so it doesn't appear in some of the published material on it.

other. Each one is a *pattern* (a dysfunctional way of operating) in the Pattern System.

One extreme is the *Scattered Pattern*, which involves following each new part that arises without making a conscious choice to do so. Whenever a new part pops up, even if you are in the middle of working with a different part, you turn your attention to the new part without even considering whether or not this is a good idea.

Sometimes this approach is appropriate, especially if you are just starting out with IFS and you want to get the lay of the land. You may want to catalog a variety of your parts, and therefore you aren't concerned about healing them yet. In this case, switching your attention whenever a new part arises is fine.

However, if you do this very often, your work will end up being scattered. You will get pulled this way and that. Every new part will take you off in a new direction, and you won't make much progress with any one part. You will bounce around in your psyche, not getting far enough along with the steps of the IFS process for real therapeutic change to happen.

The opposite extreme is the *Rigid Pattern*, which involves being so focused on staying with your target part that you ignore other parts that arise. You are like a horse with blinders on. Or, if you notice another part, you immediately ask it to step aside without acknowledging it or considering its importance.

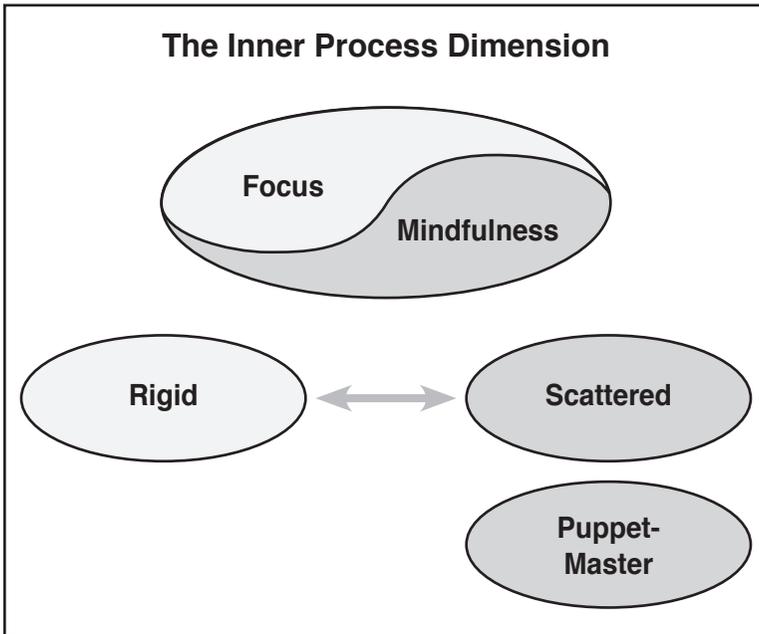
Here are some of the problems that can result from the Rigid Pattern:

1. You might overlook a part that is crucial to work on that day. For various reasons, a part that spontaneously arises might be important to deal with, and you won't realize this because of your single-mindedness.

2. A part may spontaneously arise that has an important relationship to your target part. It might be polarized with the target part. It might be an exile being protected by the target part. It might be allied with the target part. You don't want to ignore a part like this; you want to get to know it because this will help your work with the original target part.

3. The parts that are arising and being ignored might become resentful and sabotage your work with the original target part.

The following graphic will help clarify these distinctions. It is the *Inner Process Dimension* of the Pattern System. You can see the Rigid and Scattered Patterns on the left and right. The healthy version of the Rigid Pattern is the *Focus Capacity*, which involves staying on track with the thread of your work unless you consciously decide to switch target parts. If you have the Scattered Pattern, you need to develop Focus to transform it. The healthy version of the Scattered Pattern is the *Mindfulness Capacity*, which involves being aware of any feelings, sensations, and thoughts that arise in the moment. If you have the Rigid Pattern, you need to develop Mindfulness to transform it. The Focus and Mindfulness Capacities can be integrated with each other, which is why they are portrayed in a yin-yang symbol.



The Puppet-Master Pattern

The *Puppet-Master Pattern* (on the right side of the above graphic) can derail your IFS work if you aren't aware of it. Suppose you are trying to focus on a specific target part, let's say an Anxious Part, but then a part arises that feels sad. While you are checking to see what it is sad about, an Inner Critic part judges you for not doing IFS the right way. You ask the Inner Critic to step aside, and it agrees, but then a Foggy Part arises to try to stop you from feeling your anxiety. You give this part a little space to speak, with the intention of asking it to step aside, but instead of the Foggy Part speaking, you hear from a Hopeless Part that doesn't think this session is going anywhere. You ask the Hopeless Part to step aside, but it isn't willing. While you are asking it what it is afraid of, the Sad Part comes forward again.

This keeps happening. New parts keep popping up. When you ask one of these parts to step aside so you can stay on track, another part arises and takes over. While you are dealing with that part, another one pops up. You never really have a chance to move ahead with your work because an endless series of parts keep getting in the way. You keep being bombarded with parts; some are new and others may have come up earlier in the session.

There is one situation in which you can expect a bombardment of parts. When you are trying to access a traumatized exile, it is quite common for many protectors to block your access, and some of them will be pretty intense. This is not the Puppet-Master Pattern; it is just a group of frightened protectors.

With the Puppet-Master Pattern, there is one part, behind the scenes, that is orchestrating the bombardment of parts. It may appear to be just a series of parts that are getting activated, but in reality there is a Puppet-Master Part



behind the scenes that is causing all the other parts to activate because it wants to stop you from engaging in the work. It uses this clever strategy of causing an endless series of parts to arise in your awareness to distract you and prevent you from pursuing the work you set out to do.

In the first situation I mentioned above—a group of protectors that are simply afraid to let you access a traumatized exile—you just work with them one at a time and reassure them that you can handle working with the exile. When you have gotten permission from each of them, you can proceed. However, if you have a Puppet-Master Pattern, this approach won't work. You will just go in endless circles trying to reassure parts. You must find the Puppet-Master Part that is lurking behind the scenes and work with it directly. Find out what it is afraid of that causes it to orchestrate the distractions. You want to make a good connection with it and then reassure it about its fears so it will no longer feel compelled to throw these parts at you. You may have to find and heal the exile it is protecting before the Puppet-Master Part will let go of its job.

Exercise: Switching Target Parts

Consider your tendencies in switching target parts. To what extent do you have the Scattered Pattern, which causes you to switch too easily? _____

How does this happen? _____

To what extent do you have a Rigid Pattern, which causes you to not switch at all?

How does this happen? _____

To what extent do you have the Mindfulness Capacity, which allows you to be aware of new parts that arise?

How does this operate? _____

To what extent do you have the Focus Capacity, which helps you stay with your thread unless you make a conscious decision to switch? _____

How does this operate? _____

To what extent do you have the Puppet-Master Pattern, which causes a series of parts to arise in order to distract you? _____

How does this operate? _____

This chapter discussed the following reasons for switching to a new target part:

- A concerned part or protector won't step aside.
- An important new part arises.
- A part arises that is usually not accessible.
- A part insists on being heard.
- The target part is afraid of another part.
- The target part takes orders from another part.

This chapter also presented the following reasons for staying with your original target part:

- You want to finish with the target part.
- You haven't finished with any parts.
- The target part feels ignored by you.

I also discussed typical problematic patterns of switching target parts.

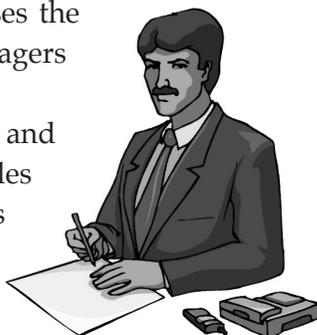
- The Rigid Pattern tends to stick too much with the original target part.
- The Scattered Pattern tends to switch too easily and frequently.
- The Puppet-Master Pattern involves one part that is causing many other parts to arise and interrupt your work.

CHAPTER 3

Types of Protectors: Managers and Firefighters

In the first half of *Self-Therapy*, I described how to recognize and work with *protectors*, but I didn't make the distinction between the two types of protectors that are identified in IFS. This chapter discusses the two types of IFS protectors: managers and firefighters.

Managers try to arrange your life and psyche so that the pain of your exiles never arises. For example, Bill has a manager that tries to keep him from reaching out to women for fear that he will be rejected.



Firefighters react impulsively when an exile has been triggered. They attempt to squash the exile's pain or distract you from it. When a firefighter is triggered, you may not be aware of the pain that was starting to arise. You may only experience the firefighter's reaction. For example, when Bill worked through his fears and called up Sandra for a date, it was clear from her response that she didn't want to go out with him. This started to bring up the pain of rejection from an



exile, but Bill didn't notice this because he immediately started drinking. His alcohol firefighter came in so fast that he didn't even feel the exile's pain. The drinking numbed him, which is what the firefighter was trying to do.

Managers are *proactive*, while firefighters are *reactive*. Managers act with foresight to stave off pain, in Bill's case, by blocking his drive to approach women he is attracted to. Firefighters react impulsively to stop pain that is beginning to arise into consciousness, often by numbing or addictive activities. If you think of managers as the adults in one's internal family and exiles as the children, firefighters are the teenagers who react impulsively to put out the fire of an exile's pain. (This is just a rough analogy. Some managers are child parts.)

For most people, managers are much more common than firefighters. Managers are the parts we usually think of when we refer to protectors. The following are common types of managers, drawn from the Pattern System:

Interpersonal Managers

- Distancing or withdrawing
- Judging
- Being defensive
- Being angry
- Being controlling
- People-pleasing
- Caretaking
- Being passive-aggressive
- Being rebellious
- Being self-absorbed or entitled
- Being a charmer

- Disowning your anger
- Being suspicious
- Being deceptive

Other Types of Managers

- Inner Critic
- Taskmaster
- Perfectionist
- Conformist
- Guilt Tripper
- Depressed
- Procrastinator
- Prideful
- Indulging in an addiction
- Being obsessive-compulsive
- Playing victim
- Intellectualizing
- Having a phobia
- Being numb or shutting down

I have already covered how to work with managers in *Self-Therapy*. Therefore, the rest of this chapter will focus on how firefighters are different from managers and how to work with them.

Firefighters

Firefighters have the job of squelching the pain that erupts from an exile when it is triggered. Real-life firefighters will charge into a dangerous situation to put out a fire, sometimes without worrying about the consequences for their own welfare. Think of the firefighters who rushed into

the skyscrapers during 9/11 without concern for their safety and ended up losing their lives. Our internal firefighters act in a similar manner. They fear that the pain of an exile will be overwhelming, so they ignore the possible destructive consequences of their actions and do anything they can to numb or distract us from that pain.

The following activities are often initiated by firefighters:

- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Sexual acting out
- Overeating
- Compulsive shopping, gambling, and other addictions
- Anger and rage
- Rebellion
- Dissociation (spacing out, losing awareness, fogging out, falling asleep)
- Thrill-seeking activities
- Being deceptive
- Being impulsive

In addition, more ordinary activities can be used by firefighters as distractions:

- Reading
- Watching TV
- Headaches
- Engaging in online activities

The activities listed above don't always come from firefighters. And almost any activity or feeling state *can* come from a firefighter. The crucial distinction is whether it is an ongoing, proactive activity (manager) or whether it is a sudden, impulsive reaction to exile pain (firefighter).

Working with Firefighters

Firefighters are often less verbal than managers, which means they may not communicate in words or it may be harder to get them to respond with internal dialogue. They may also be harder to negotiate with; they just want to perform their role.

This is especially true of dissociative firefighters—for example, parts that cause you to fog out, space out, or fall asleep. In fact, when you dissociate, it may be difficult to believe that this is coming from a part since it seems like such an automatic bodily reaction. When you first try to work with a dissociative firefighter by asking it a question (see Chapter 7 in *Self-Therapy*), you may get no response from the part. Or it may communicate with you through the body or through images but not verbally. Don't give up. If you spend some time accessing and getting to know a dissociative firefighter, it will usually come around and respond to you, and it will eventually engage in a dialogue with you.

You may have to spend more time just being with a firefighter rather than asking it questions. This helps gain its trust. If a firefighter is resistant to responding to you, don't push it. Just hang out with it in the same way you might be with a wild animal that is afraid of humans. The firefighter will slowly begin to trust you enough to reveal itself.

Accessing Self with Firefighters

It can be difficult to truly be in Self with respect to firefighters³ because they are often so destructive and hard to communicate with. This makes it hard to believe that firefighters

3. For details about how to get into Self when working with a protector, see Chapters 5 and 6 in *Self-Therapy* and Chapter 8 of this book.

have a positive intent—that they are trying to protect and help you. Remember that firefighters are doing what they think is crucial to protect you from intolerable pain.

First make sure you are in Self with respect to a firefighter. You must be truly interested in getting to know the part from its own perspective rather than just trying to get past it to the exile underneath. Even though it may be hard to appreciate that the firefighter is trying to help you given how much havoc it is causing, keep in mind that it is. If you have parts that dislike the firefighter or want to brush it aside, ask them to relax so you can really welcome the firefighter and get to know it.

You will often need to work with parts of you that hate the firefighter and want to get rid of it. I call these “concerned parts” because they have concerns about the firefighter. Make sure to validate any concerned parts before asking them to step aside. It is completely understandable that you would have parts that feel negative toward a firefighter, given how destructive most firefighters are. Acknowledge these parts’ concerns and then ask them to step aside so you can get to know the firefighter from an open place. This will allow you to discover the positive intent of the firefighter and develop a trusting relationship with it, which is an important step in the therapeutic process.

THERAPIST NOTE

Make sure that you (the therapist or coach) are in Self with respect to a client's firefighter. Because firefighters are often destructive and hard to communicate with, it is easy to get frustrated with them. If you notice yourself feeling annoyed at a client's firefighter or just wanting it to get out of the way, you aren't in Self. When you notice this, ask that part of you that feels frustrated, impatient, or judgmental toward the firefighter to step aside and then work on being open to finding out what the firefighter is trying to do for your client. If you model being in Self with respect to the firefighter, it will help your client to be in Self, too.

There is a lot to be gained by getting to know troublesome firefighters. They often engage in behaviors that cause serious consequences in our lives, so they deserve as much attention as other parts. Don't just try to get past them. Take time to focus on each firefighter so you can understand what it is trying to do for you and what it is afraid of. Do everything possible to develop a trusting relationship with it. This work is just as important as witnessing and healing an exile.

Firefighters respond especially well to being given hope that they can let go of their role. Once you have gotten to know a firefighter and you understand why it performs its role, it can be helpful to ask a question about a possible new role for the part. Ask, "If I could heal that exile you are protecting, would you still need to perform your role?" "If you didn't have to perform this role, what would you prefer to do?" This gives the firefighter hope that it can let go of a role

it may feel stuck in. It also provides an inducement for the firefighter to give permission for you to work with the exile it is protecting.

Exercise: Working with a Firefighter

Choose a firefighter that you haven't worked with before. Do an IFS session with it using what you learned in this chapter.

How easy was it for you to get into Self with respect to this firefighter? _____

What did you do in order to get into Self? _____

How willing was the firefighter to talk with you?

Did it communicate with you nonverbally? If so, how?

What did you do to encourage it to communicate with you? _____

Was it different from working with a manager? If so, in what way? _____

This chapter presented the two types of IFS protectors—managers and firefighters—and explained how to work effectively with firefighters, especially how to access and stay in Self when working with them.

CHAPTER 4

Conflicts Between Parts: Polarization

When two parts are polarized, it means they are opposed to each other. They are attempting to act in opposite ways, such as staying versus going or working versus relaxing. They form a polarity. However, polarization is more than just a polarity; polarized parts are also fighting against each other's goals. For example, a part that wants to eat a lot would be actively fighting against the dieting that comes from another part. Furthermore, each polarized part is convinced that it must take an extreme stand in order to counter the destructive actions of the other part.

Imagine that two sailors are on a sailboat, and each of them is concerned about the boat overturning. One of them is leaning out very far on one side of the boat, using a rope to hold himself in that position.

He believes that he must lean out that far in order to counteract the weight of the other sailor, who is leaning out equally far in the opposite direction. Both sailors believe they must be so extreme to keep the boat from capsizing. And tragically, they are both right. If either sailor were to give up his extreme stance and move toward the center of the boat without the other one also doing so, the boat would capsize.

This is often the case with polarized parts. They each believe that they must be extreme in their behavior or feelings to prevent the other part from doing something very destructive in a person's life. However, I am not saying that when two parts are polarized, they are equal in strength, as in this sailor metaphor. One part could be stronger than the other, or they could alternate in being the stronger part.

An Example: The Striver and the Procrastinator

Blake is working on a big new marketing project. He works long hours every day and has very little time for his wife and young son. When friends ask him why he is working so hard, and when his wife asks why she never sees him, he says, "I want to get ahead. I want to get a quick promotion and become highly successful." However, when looked at objectively, fifty hours a week would be enough in Blake's company for him to do quite well, but Blake regularly puts in sixty to eighty hours, often going back to work on the weekends. Few people at his firm are doing this, even people who are successfully moving up the ladder.

Blake sometimes skips meals. He occasionally works late into the night, even when there is no deadline the next day.



He is often so tired the next day that the quality of his work suffers. Blake has a Striving Part that is driving him to work this hard because it is irrationally afraid of failure. This part is a Taskmaster (see *Freedom from*

Your Inner Critic and Chapter 1 in *Self-Therapy, Vol. 3*). It does everything possible to make sure that Blake is a huge success because it is afraid of any hint of failure.

Blake has a second part that plays a major role in his psychological dynamics around work. When Blake was in the early years of high school, he wasn't a high achiever—quite the opposite. He spent his time having fun rather than doing his homework. He watched a lot of TV. He hung out with friends. He did just about anything except school work. When he had an important assignment, he would procrastinate and then end up doing a rush job that got a poor grade. Sometimes he didn't do his homework at all.



This behavior came from a Procrastinator Part of Blake. This part wanted to avoid doing anything that would be graded or evaluated. It was afraid of failure, and it dealt with this fear by avoiding projects that could involve failure—virtually all school and work projects. This fear was unconscious. If you had asked Blake why he wasn't doing his homework, he would have said he didn't feel like it.

Of course, this strategy was doomed. By avoiding projects, Blake ended up feeling like a failure—the very feeling that his Procrastinator was trying to avoid. Unfortunately, this kind of dynamic is common. Very often our parts cause us to act in ways that go against our best interests and even go against the protective intent of the part, which leads to exactly the situation that the part is trying to prevent.

In Blake's current life, his Procrastinator is mostly in the background, with his Striver running the show. Occasionally Blake collapses from overwork, often followed by a period of procrastination.

Each of Blake's two polarized parts has its own protective reasons for performing its role. In fact, they are both trying to help Blake avoid failure; they are just using opposite strategies. The Striver wants to ensure that Blake is a fabulous success, and the Procrastinator wants to avoid trying and failing. Furthermore, each part feels that it must be extreme in order to battle the excesses of the other part.

The Striver says, "I know that Blake has a tendency to be lazy, so I must push him to work very hard in order to combat this tendency. I'm afraid that if I let up even a little, Blake will turn into a bum like he was in high school." The Procrastinator, on the other hand, says, "I hate the way the Striver pushes Blake all the time. I must try my best to get out from under its thumb so Blake can relax and enjoy himself. I'm afraid that if I let go, the Striver will turn Blake's life into a nightmare of constant work." They are both trying to protect Blake from failure and from each other.

Aspects of Polarization

Polarization is often about a specific action or decision, such as the amount of work Blake should put in. The two parts are at odds over how Blake should act. Neither is willing to release its extreme role unless the other part has also released its role. Each fears that if it lets go, the other part will take over and cause serious problems. Therefore, Blake may have to work with both parts, as well as their relationship with each other, to make it possible for them to shift.

Polarization usually happens between two protectors. In

addition to their conflict with each other, each of them is also protecting an exile. They are sometimes polarized about the best way to protect the same exile. In Blake's example, both the Striver and the Procrastinator were trying to protect an exile who felt like a failure. In other situations, each polarized part may be protecting a different exile.

Sometimes one polarized part will take over for a while and the other part will be strong-armed into submission. This can happen for a few hours or days, or sometimes years. Then a switch may occur and the other part will take over.

If you have underlying trauma, your protectors will be more extreme and dysfunctional because of an urgent need to protect you from reexperiencing the trauma. When one protector becomes extreme and its actions produce hurt and difficulty in your life, it triggers other protectors that try to mitigate the trouble. These other protectors may also become extreme in an attempt to battle the first one.

For example, Harmon had PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) from his time in the army in the Iraq war. He had a firefighter that got him drunk whenever flashbacks from battle scenes started to arise. This resulted in so much drinking that it was ruining Harmon's life. As a result, Harmon developed an intensely polarized manager that tried to get him to stop drinking by shaming him whenever he got blitzed. These parts were extremely polarized because of their need to avoid Harmon's underlying trauma and the consequences of his defenses against it.

The Positive Aspects of Polarized Parts

Even though polarized parts may be extreme, they often hold an energy or quality that is important for you. For

example, with Blake, his Striver held the energy of good work and accomplishment, and his Procrastinator held the energy of relaxation and enjoyment. Both of these are positive qualities, or they would be if they weren't extreme because of the conflict.

One common kind of polarization is between a part that wants to connect with people and a part that wants to be assertive, both of which are valuable qualities. Another widespread polarization is between the energies of safety/order and autonomy/freedom.

You don't want to erase or diminish the positive energy of either polarized part. You want to have access to each one's energy in a non-extreme form.

In resolving polarization, you aren't looking to just find a bland compromise between the parts or a negotiated settlement that is purely intellectual. The goal is to have your parts appreciate each other's strengths and good intentions, work through their extreme protective roles, and learn to cooperate with each other. This gives you much greater access to your creativity and power and also makes it possible for you to come up with an innovative solution to the inner conflict that is satisfying to both parts. When the Self can hold space for two polarized parts to work together, a dynamic, transformative process results.

In this chapter and the next, I present a sequence of ten steps for working with polarization. These steps are an elaboration of the procedure developed by Richard Schwartz, the founder of IFS, and described in brief in his book *Internal Family Systems Therapy*. They are summarized here and presented in more detail in the Help Sheet at the end of Chapter 5.

Polarization Steps

1. Recognize and identify the polarized parts.
2. Unblend from each part in order to access Self.
3. Get to know each part's role, positive intent, and conflict with the other part.
4. Develop a trusting relationship with each part.
5. Decide whether to work with an exile or engage in a depolarization dialogue.
6. Get permission from each part to have a depolarization dialogue.
7. Begin the depolarization dialogue.
8. Facilitate true dialogue.
9. Negotiate a resolution.
10. Work with the parts in real time.

Step 1: Recognizing Polarization

Step 1 involves recognizing when you are dealing with polarized parts in an IFS session. Here are some tips on how to do this.

Trailheads

When you are exploring a *trailhead* (a troublesome situation; see Chapter 4 in *Self-Therapy*), you may realize that you have opposite or conflicting responses to the situation. For example, Jane had fears about visiting her family because they tended to be so angry and shaming. When she explored this, she found that a part of her really didn't want her to go to a family reunion and a polarized part that felt she should. There was also a third part that missed her family since she hadn't seen them for a long time. She had two parts on one side of the polarization and one on the other. This is a common situation.

Difficult Decisions

When you are having trouble making a decision, this almost always involves polarized parts—one that wants to make the decision one way and one that wants the opposite. In fact, the reason you are having trouble deciding is because of your polarized parts. There is often more than one part on each side of this kind of polarization.

Protector Fears

One of the common questions we ask a protector is, “What are you afraid would happen if you didn’t do your role?” (see Chapter 7 in *Self-Therapy*). When the protector says, “I am afraid you will feel shame or be terrified” or some other painful emotion, this usually points to the exile it is protecting—an exile who is feeling that painful emotion. If the protector says, “I am afraid of someone hurting you” (or controlling you or judging you or some other form of harm), this also may point to an exile, one who was harmed in that way.

However, if the protector says, “I’m afraid you will get really angry” or go on a binge or engage in some other destructive activity, this usually indicates that the protector is afraid of another protector—the part that might engage in that activity. For example, Blake asked his Striver, “What are you afraid would happen if you didn’t judge me and shame me around my work habits?” The Striver said, “I’m afraid you will procrastinate and not get much work done.” This indicated that Blake’s Striver was afraid of a Procrastinator Part.

If the protector’s fear is realistic, you will probably need to work with the other protector it is concerned about. For example, Blake will need to switch and work with his Pro-

crastinator. If this protector is actively at odds with the first protector, they are polarized. For example, if Blake's Procrastinator is rebelling against his Striver, they aren't really polarized because the fight is just one way. Or if the other part is simply playing its role but not fighting back, they aren't polarized. For example, if Blake's Procrastinator is simply afraid of failing at the task it is avoiding but isn't reacting to his Striver, this isn't polarization.

Concerned Parts and Polarization

If you are attempting to get to know a protector and you realize that you are angry at it and would like to get rid of it, this is coming from another part that is interfering with your being in Self—what I call a concerned part (see Chapter 6 in *Self-Therapy*). This concerned part may be polarized with the protector. For a polarization to exist, both parts must be actively opposing each other. The concerned part is opposing the target part, but the target part may or may not be fighting back.

For example, Lydia sometimes gets enraged at her husband, which causes problems in her marriage. This comes from her Angry Part. A different part of Lydia doesn't like her anger and criticizes her for it. Let's call this part of Lydia the Stopper. If the Stopper is actively trying to stop Lydia from flying off the handle at her husband, and the Angry Part is fighting to express its anger, this is clearly a polarization. However, if the Stopper simply judges the Angry Part but doesn't really try to stop the anger, and if the Angry Part isn't aware of the Stopper, this isn't a polarization.

For there to be true polarization, the parts must be fighting for opposite goals. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that they are talking directly with each other or even

that they are aware of each other. Two parts can be fighting over how a client will behave without being in conversation with each other. For example, suppose Lydia's Stopper really tries to stop her from getting angry. It says, "Don't blow up at him again. This is ruining your marriage. Just keep it cool this time." This doesn't mean that it is necessarily aware that there is a *part* of Lydia that gets angry, which it is trying to stop. And her Angry Part may just be trying to express its anger against this resistance. The two parts may not actually be arguing with each other directly, yet they are still polarized.

Manager/Firefighter Polarization

Managers and firefighters are frequently polarized with each other. Most firefighters tend to be oriented toward excitement and intensity, fun and thrills. Most managers tend to be oriented toward control and order, especially if they are trying to stop the destructive activity of firefighters. In fact, as a result of successful IFS work, you might experience a decrease in the thrills that come from firefighters and begin to feel that your life has become boring. This difference in orientation between managers and firefighters lends itself toward polarization.

Because firefighter activity is often dangerous and self-destructive, managers come forward that are judgmental of firefighters and try to limit their behavior. In fact, for every harmful firefighter, there is usually a manager that is polarized with it which is trying to stop the firefighter from causing problems in your life.

When a manager doesn't succeed in stopping a firefighter, it often becomes harshly judgmental toward you for engaging in the firefighter activity. It shames you in an attempt to

prevent the firefighter from acting out again. For example, after you binge on food, a manager may arise that shames you for getting out of control.

When your life is being ruined by a firefighter, it is easy to think that you just need to work with this part and get it to change. However, because of the presence of polarization, it usually isn't enough to only work with the destructive firefighter and the exile it protects. You often must also engage with the controlling manager and work on the polarization directly.

Protector/Exile Polarization

It is possible to have a polarization between a protector (which could be a manager or a firefighter) and an exile. This may happen when an exile blends with you and attempts to take action in your life. Most exiles are hidden from consciousness and are only accessed during IFS sessions; that is why they are called exiles. These exiles usually don't create polarizations. However, certain exiles can blend with you and influence the way you behave. I call these parts *blended exiles*.

For example, Betty had a Needy Part (a blended exile) that often took over when she was in a love relationship and made her dependent on her partner. This part desperately needed her partner and got upset when he was away or when he was emotionally distant. It was willing to do anything to get his love. She had a Distancing Part (protector) that tried to keep her out of relationships so she wouldn't become so dependent. The Needy Part was polarized with the Distancing Part since the exile longed to be in a relationship and the protector was trying to keep her out of one.

There is another way that an exile can be polarized with

a protector. Sometimes an exile will make a strong push toward expressing its painful emotions. It wants to be known and tries to bring its pain to your attention. If the exile's effort is opposed by a protector that is trying to keep the pain hidden, these parts are polarized. This is particularly acute with trauma, which can cause polarization between a traumatized exile that sometimes gets hyperaroused and a dissociating or numbing protector that attempts to block this exile from arising in consciousness.

Other Examples of Polarization

Here are a few other examples of polarization:

Inner Critic vs. Inner Defender. If you have a harsh Inner Critic part, you are likely to have another part, which I call the Inner Defender, which tries to argue with the Critic to prove it wrong (see Chapter 4 in *Freedom from Your Inner Critic*). If the Critic says you are stupid, the Inner Defender may try to prove how smart you are. If the Critic says that a woman is a loser with men, her Inner Defender may point out how many men are attracted to her. Very often these two parts battle it out, and the Critic frequently wins.

Judgmental vs. Conflict-Avoiding. You might have a polarization between a part that is aggressive or judgmental in interpersonal conflicts and one that wants to avoid them. Elise has a protector that gets angry and judgmental toward her husband when conflicts come up in her marriage. She has another part that tries to stay away from conflicts in order to avoid her angry outbursts. This Conflict-Avoiding Part tries to get Elise to leave the room or become placating when a conflict starts. Since her Angry Part is often eager to engage in an argument, these parts become polarized about how to deal with interpersonal difficulties.

Polarization About Therapy. You might have a part that pushes you to engage in therapy or self-therapy, and another part that is afraid of the pain that arises in therapy or that resists therapeutic change. One part blocks or sabotages the therapy process, while the other part keeps trying to make it work.

THERAPIST NOTE

Here is an additional reason you may choose to focus on a polarization with a particular client. Suppose your client is so blended with a protector that she doesn't realize that it is causing problems in her life. The client may have chosen to work on this protector when she wasn't so blended with it, but now you have reached a point in the session where the protector has taken over, and the client simply repeats the protector's rationalization for its role. If you can't get the client to unblend from the protector, you won't be able to investigate the problematic aspects of the protector's role since the client (as the protector) doesn't think there are any.

However, you will often hear from a part of a client that is polarized with the original protector. If you focus on that part and let it have its say, you can work on the polarization between this part and the original protector. This will clearly bring out the problems with the original protector that the client couldn't otherwise have seen because of being blended with it.

For example, Paige has a part that is a Caretaker. She goes out of her way to focus on other people's needs and to make sure they feel comfortable and safe. She does this to the exclusion of being aware of her own (continued)

(Therapist Note, continued)

needs. Paige brings this up in a session because she realizes it is causing problems in her life. But as she is getting to know her Caretaker Part, it subtly blends with her, so when she asks what it is trying to accomplish, it simply says it cares about people and naturally wants them to be happy. The Caretaker won't admit that there is any problem with its caretaking, and Paige can't see any problems with it because it has taken her over. Paige's therapist tries to remind her of the problems she talked about with her caretaking, but she says that she doesn't see anything wrong with caring about people.

However, as the Caretaker is talking, another part of Paige speaks up that is sick and tired of Paige taking care of all these ungrateful people and ignoring her own needs. This part is polarized with the Caretaker. Paige's therapist, Melanie, makes sure that this part gets to speak its mind in some detail. As a result, the problems with the Caretaker become apparent without Melanie having to bring them up. Melanie can remain a neutral party who isn't taking sides. And even if Paige remains blended with the Caretaker, Melanie can initiate polarization work between the two parts. This will make the difficulties with the Caretaker even more obvious and will help Paige unblend from it.

Step 2: Unblending from Polarized Parts

Step 2 in working with polarization involves unblending from each polarized part so you can connect with each part from Self. (See Chapter 5 in *Self-Therapy* for how to unblend from a protector.) You may start out in a state of be-

ing blended with both parts and feeling torn inside. Or you might bounce back and forth between the two parts, being blended first with one part and then the other. For example, if you are polarized around eating, you might vacillate between being blended with a ravenous part and with a part that is trying to adhere to a strict diet.

Here is one simple way to unblend from both polarized parts. Hold both parts in your awareness at the same time. For example, imagine a room in which you invite each part to sit in a separate chair. Or hold one part in each hand, or feel each part in a different place in your body. This tends to help you unblend from both of them. It may help if you become grounded in your body first.

If you don't have an easy time holding both parts simultaneously, here is a more reliable method. Negotiate with each part (one at a time) to unblend so you can get to know the other part. Let's call them Part A and Part B. Ask Part B to step aside temporarily and let you get to know Part A. Reassure Part B that you won't let Part A take over and do destructive things, and that you will come back to Part B and get to know it after you have worked with Part A. Hopefully this is enough reassurance to convince Part B to step aside. Then ask Part A to separate from you so you can get to know it, as we usually do with a protector in IFS.

THERAPIST NOTE

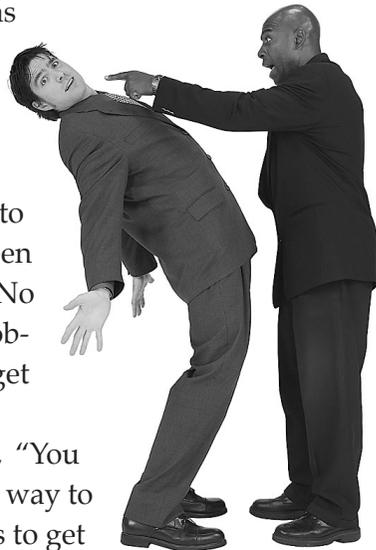
If the client can't get into Self very easily to do this negotiation, you as the therapist may have to talk directly to each part and get to know it. This is one application of *direct access*, an IFS technique that will be covered in a later volume in the *Self-Therapy Series*.

Here is an example of this unblending process. Dan tends to drink too much. This comes from a firefighter that he calls the Drinker. He also has a Controller Part (a manager) that tries to keep him from drinking too much. Whenever Dan begins to drink, the Controller tries to get him to limit himself to a couple of drinks. Sometimes it succeeds, and sometimes the Drinker wins and Dan gets very drunk. Then the Controller castigates him, telling him he is an alcoholic loser. This is a classic type of polarization.



When Dan started working with these two polarized parts, he decided to start by getting to know the Drinker. However, the Controller immediately took over, making Dan feel judgmental and disgusted with the Drinker. He was clearly not in Self; he was blended with the Controller, so he couldn't work successfully with the Drinker. He asked the Controller to step aside so he could get to know the Drinker from an open place. The Controller said, "No way! That part just causes problems in your life. You should get rid of it, not talk to it."

Dan said to the Controller, "You can't get rid of parts. The only way to change destructive behavior is to get



to know the part from an accepting place and discover what it is trying to do for me. All parts have a positive intent, so if you let me, I could make a connection with the Drinker and help it transform. You know, your strategy hasn't been working very well, so how about trying something new? Would you be willing to separate from me so I can work with the Drinker in this way?" The Controller was willing to see if this would work since it had to admit that its strategy hadn't been working. Dan then proceeded to get to know the Drinker. He wasn't blended with it because at that time, there wasn't an issue that was bringing up exile pain, so the Drinker wasn't activated.

While you are getting to know Part A, Part B may jump in and disrupt the process if it feels threatened. When this happens, negotiate again with Part B and see if it will trust you enough to let the session continue. If not, you may have to switch your focus and work with Part B first.

For example, while Dan was working with the Drinker, it told him how it drank to prevent him from feeling rejected. The Controller jumped in and said, "That's a really stupid approach. It doesn't help at all. It just makes matters worse." When Dan asked the Controller to step aside, it was so disgusted with the Drinker that it wasn't willing to. So Dan switched his attention to the Controller and got to know it first. He made the Controller the target part.

Of course, in order to do that, Dan needed to be separate from the Drinker. In this case, that wasn't a problem since the Drinker wasn't blended with him, so he could go ahead and work with the Controller first. Then, after Dan had connected with it, the Controller had no trouble allowing him to work with the Drinker because it now trusted him.

THERAPIST NOTE

A client may be so identified (blended) with one part of a polarization that he or she doesn't recognize the polarization at all. The client just thinks that he or she is trying to work with a difficult protector without realizing that blending has occurred with a polarized part.

For example, suppose Dan started out thinking that he had to get the Drinker to stop its destructive behavior. He assumed he was in Self as he tried to work with this problematic drinking part. In fact, Dan was blended with the Controller since he was feeling angry and judgmental toward the Drinker, but he couldn't observe himself, so he couldn't see that he wasn't actually in Self. In this case, it is up to you, the therapist, to recognize that the client isn't in Self and to point out the polarization so it can be worked on directly.

A related danger is that you, the therapist, might be blended with a part of you that is taking sides in a polarization—a part that feels critical of one of the client's parts or wants to get rid of it. The client's part may be causing the client a lot of problems or putting him or her in danger, so it isn't surprising that you might feel negatively toward it. You and the client may both be taking sides in a polarization without realizing it.

Your first priority is to recognize that you are blended with one side of a polarization and to unblend from that part and return to Self. Then you will be able to see that the client is also blended and taking sides. That awareness will allow you to help him or her come back into Self.

For example, suppose that you are Dan's therapist, and you are blended with a part of you that wants to get rid of Dan's Drinker because of how much it is ruining Dan's life. If you try to work with the Drinker from this place in you, it will resist you because it realizes that you aren't open to it (you aren't in Self). You must first unblend from the part of you that wants to get rid of the Drinker so that you are truly in Self and open to getting to know it. Then if Dan is blended with his Controller, you will be able to see this and help him unblend.

Exercise: Unblending from Polarized Parts

Choose two polarized parts to work with. Access each part and then unblend from it. If you have time, focus on each part separately and get to know it.

Could you hold both parts in your awareness at the same time? _____

How hard was it to unblend from both parts?

Was one part more reluctant to separate and allow you to get to know the other part?

What did you do in order to separate from each part?

Step 3: Getting to Know Each Polarized Part

Once you are unblended from each polarized part, you can proceed to Step 3, getting to know each polarized part and developing a trusting relationship with it.

Follow the usual procedure that you already know for getting to know a protector (see Chapter 7 in *Self-Therapy*). Find out the part's role in your psyche and its positive intent for you. There are two important questions to ask protectors: "What are you trying to accomplish by performing your role?" and "What are you afraid would happen if you didn't do your role?"

This will lead toward an understanding of what the protector is trying to protect you from. It is especially important to understand the positive intent of a polarized part because its behavior can sometimes be extreme and destructive, or at least look that way to the part it is polarized with. Finding out its positive intent goes a long way toward keeping the other part from vilifying it.

For example, Dan discovers that his Drinker Part is trying to protect a young exile who was deeply wounded by his mother's rejection.



The Drinker feels that this pain is intolerable and must be suppressed at all costs. Once Dan (and the Controller) became aware of the pain this exile was carrying, they were more sympathetic to the extremes of the Drinker. This doesn't mean they felt it was OK to abuse alcohol; it just means they had a greater understanding of the Drinker's motivation.

The Controller was trying to protect a number of exiles who were triggered by the consequences of Dan's drinking. One exile felt ashamed when Dan got drunk and out of control. Another exile was afraid of abandonment because Dan's marriage was in trouble because of his drinking.



While you are getting to know each part, ask how it feels toward the part it is polarized with and what it does to counter the other part. This gives you a clearer idea of the polarization dynamics.

For example, the Controller hates the Drinker and is ashamed of its behavior. It tries to keep Dan from drinking at all or at least to limit his drinking. When this fails, it shames the Drinker to try to keep it from repeating this behavior in the future. Of course, this shaming just makes Dan feel worse about himself, and in fact, it backfires by making Dan more likely to go on a bender in the future to protect the ashamed exile.





The Drinker tries to counter the Controller's rigidity about alcohol. It feels oppressed and shamed by the Controller and hates it. Its strategy is to make Dan unconscious of consequences (unaware of the Controller) so he can drink as much as he wants. You can see how each part becomes more extreme in trying to counter the other.

Step 4: Developing a Trusting Relationship with Each Polarized Part

Let each part know that you understand why it performs its role, and express appreciation for its efforts on your behalf. This helps to create a trusting relationship with each polarized part (see Chapter 8 in *Self-Therapy*). You will have to be a mediator between these parts when they dialogue with each other. Since the parts usually start out hating each other, true dialogue can be difficult to achieve. The polarized parts will only be willing to cooperate with each other if they really trust you. Otherwise, one part may start to act out as soon as the opposing part begins to speak.

Let's look at how this worked with Dan and his parts. Dan said to the Controller, "I appreciate your efforts to limit my drinking. I understand the pain and difficulties that the drinking is causing me, and I want to stop, too." This helped the Controller to feel that Dan was on his side and helped it not be so outraged when Dan also made a connection with the Drinker.

When Dan got to know the Drinker, he said, "I appreciate your efforts to protect the young child part who was so wounded by my mother. I know you go to extremes with your drinking, but I understand that you do it because you

think I couldn't tolerate feeling that pain." This helped the Drinker to feel connected to Dan and trust him.

Once you have expressed appreciation to a polarized part, check to see if the part can take in your appreciation. If the part isn't taking it in, check to make sure you are still in Self because that might be why the part isn't taking you in. Or, if the part has difficulty trusting anyone because of its history and therefore can't take in your appreciation, work on this trust issue directly with the part (see Chapter 8 in *Self-Therapy*).

Dealing with Trust Issues

A part may not trust you because it believes that you have been favoring the part it is polarized with. If this is true, admit it and explain, "I don't want to do that anymore. That's why I want to get to know both you and the other part and resolve the polarization." If it isn't true, explain what your attitude is toward that part so it can realize that you really are open to it and interested in it (and therefore in Self).

For example, suppose that Dan's Controller didn't trust him. It might say, "You have been allowing all this binge drinking to go on. How do you expect me to trust that you appreciate my efforts to stop this craziness? It seems as though you really favor the Drinker." Dan could respond, from Self, "You're right. I have allowed way too much drinking to happen. And I don't feel good about that either. But the drinking hasn't happened because I support it but rather because I haven't been in Self. The Drinker just took over and did the drinking. I am trying to stop that now by having this dialogue between you and the Drinker." This should help the Controller to trust Dan.

As each part develops a trusting relationship with Self, their polarization may decrease as a result of this alone. At the beginning of inner work, protectors don't know that Self exists, and they don't realize that Self is a source of understanding, compassion, and strength. The beauty of IFS is that when our parts recognize Self and connect with it, they tend to become more collaborative and have more Self energy inside themselves.

Polarization Session

The following is the first segment of a transcript of a session with a participant in one of my polarization courses. It shows Steps 2 and 3 of the process—unblending from both polarized parts, getting to know them, and developing trusting relationships with each of them.

Jay: Anne, tell me about the polarized parts that you want to work with.

Anne: Well, there's a part that feels strongly about making a contribution. It wants me to make a contribution to the world—in a big way—to lead workshops, write books, or be out there helping humanity to evolve in some way.

Then I have this other part that just doesn't want to have anything to do with people. It doesn't want to be out there; it just wants to be in my apartment or alone with nature. That part thinks the contribution part has been brainwashed by my family because I come from a family of political activists. It thinks the desire to make some kind of difference is from conditioning. The part that wants to make a difference thinks the alone part has some kind of pathology from my childhood.

J: So they each have pretty strong judgments about the other one.

Notice that each part feels negatively toward the other.

A: Yeah, they do.

J: OK. Just take a moment right now and see if you're blended with either of those parts.

In order to successfully engage in polarization work, the client must be in Self and not blended with either part.

A: It feels like I'm a little bit blended with the part that wants to stay away from people because I had weird interactions with some people this morning.

J: OK.

A: I feel like people are a pain in the butt, you know?

J: OK, so ask that part if it would be willing to separate from you so that you can get to know it and help it—just in this session, not necessarily at other times.

A: Yeah, it's actually pretty happy to, and it's pretty interested in this process.

J: OK.

A: It's happy to cooperate.

J: All right, good. Thank it for that. I'd like you to get to know each of these parts in turn. Do you have any sense of which part you'd like to start with?

A: The part that just separated, the Stay Away Part, says I should start with the other part, the Life Purpose Part. It says to go ahead and let the other one speak first. It's being very cooperative. And the Life Purpose Part really wants to speak.

J: OK, let's go with that. Take a second to access the Life Purpose Part, if you haven't already, and let me know when you feel it in your body or have an image of it.

A: OK, I felt this kind of upswelling of energy around my heart—like this part is here now and I'm in touch with it.

J: And how are you feeling toward that part right now?

A: I'm feeling some affection for it. I guess you could say that I'm feeling fond of it.

This is the check to see if Anne is in Self with respect to the Life Purpose Part. She needs to not only be unblended from it but also interested in getting to know it from an open place. It seems that she probably is.

J: So invite the part to tell you what its role is or what it wants for you.

A: It wants me to be out there, to be making a contribution of some sort. I have a lot of knowledge that could be useful to some people and ways of accessing the inner life that a lot of people don't know about. It thinks I have a lot to contribute. And it feels passionate about my doing that.



J: OK, ask the part what it hopes to get or accomplish by having you do that.

A: Well, you know something really interesting flashed through my mind when you asked me that question. This part thinks I'm going to prove myself worthy in some way.

That's really new information for me. That part thinks this is a way to prove myself worthy to other people.

J: Ask the part what that would do for you if you proved yourself worthy.

A: This is so funny. It's like there's some little wounded, humiliated exile that would be vindicated.

J: OK. There's an exile inside that's feeling humiliated and wounded, and the Life Purpose Part wants to protect it by having you be out there making a contribution and having people recognize your worth. Is that right?



A: Yeah, and this part sees that when I was little, people made fun of me. They thought I was weird and criticized me for being too sensitive, and the exile got wounded by this. Being sensitive is a gift—it's not a liability at all. Somehow this protector wants to turn things around for the exile. It wants the exile to experience that its sensitivity is powerful.

Some of its motivation feels like a natural expression of my gifts, but there's also this edge to it. It wants to show everybody that they were wrong about me when they devalued my sensitivity.

J: Right, so there are two aspects of this part's motivation. One aspect is just a natural desire to manifest your gifts and live your life's purpose, and the other is to protect the exile.

As is often the case, there is one aspect of the Life Purpose Part's motivation that is healthy and one that is "extreme," (the

IFS term for dysfunctional). The desire to express her gifts and make a difference in the world is healthy. The desire to prove that her sensitivity is valuable rather than bad is more extreme because it comes from a need to protect her exile who was humiliated when she was a child. This is the protective side of the Life Purpose Part.

A: Yeah.

J: See if there's anything else this protector wants you to know about itself.

A: No, that's really what it wanted to say.

J: And are you feeling appreciative of this part, of what it's trying to do for you?

A: Oh, yeah—totally.

J: Yeah, I figured you were. So let the part know that. It may already have known that, but just in case it didn't, let the part know of your appreciation for it.

A: OK.

J: And how is it responding to you?

A: It likes feeling acknowledged. It feels ... just calm, like it's been seen and that feels good.

Anne has not only discovered the Life Purpose Part's role, she has also made a nice connection with it by expressing her appreciation. This will help when the two parts dialogue with each other.

J: Good. Now ask the part how it feels toward this other part, the Stay Away Part.

A: It feels really angry toward that part. It feels like that part is trying to sabotage it all the time.

J: All right. So let's just check and see if it's OK with the Life Purpose Part for you to now get to know the Stay Away Part.

A: It wants some reassurance that I'm not going to just let the other part run things.

J: Yeah, so reassure it that you are only going to get to know the Stay Away Part, and you won't let it take over.

A: Yeah. Now it is willing.

At first, the Life Purpose Part was hesitant to allow Anne to get to know the other part for fear it would take her over and keep her away from people. However, she reassured it that she wouldn't let that happen, and it gave permission.

J: So focus on the Stay Away part.

A: OK.

J: Do you have an image or a body sense of that part?

A: It's like this bighorn sheep with giant horns, and it butts everything to keep it away. It's very protective, and it likes to run into things and smash them to make them go away. This Sheep Part is not very tactful.

As she has gotten to know the Stay Away Part better, its name has changed to the Sheep Part. A name change is fairly common.

J: How are you feeling toward the Sheep Part now?

A: I'm feeling great affection toward it. (laughs)

J: OK, good.

A: But I also notice, when I tune in to that part, that I have a low-grade headache. I can feel this energy around my head that's muffling it—that's making me numb or something. I don't think it's just from butting things. It's almost



like turning down my awareness somehow, turning down my sensitivity—like a numbing kind of feeling.

J: So invite that part to tell you what it wants or what its concerns are.

A: It says it wants everybody to leave me the hell alone. It says I'm better off by myself. I could just hang out with nature and feel really filled up and balanced. It wants me to just hang out with my own inner system and not have to deal with other people at all. That's what it wants for me.

J: Ask the part what it's afraid that other people will do to you that makes it want to get away from them.

A: I get an image of being a little kid and having all these big people screaming at me, right in my ears. It's like this horrible static on the line all the time—really, really loud. I can't hear myself think, there's so much interference. I can't feel myself either.

J: It sounds like this part is really concerned about other people keeping you from feeling yourself. Is that right?

A: Yeah. I'm getting this image of this little girl who's covering her ears and her head, trying to protect herself, trying to turn all that craziness off ... I'm having some sadness come up.

J: Is this little girl the same part, or a different one?

A: It feels like it's the exile that the Sheep Part is protecting. The exile is overwhelmed by all this noisy, chaotic input from other people.

When Anne asked the Sheep Part what it was afraid of, she not only discovered its positive intent, but she also accessed the exile it is protecting.

J: OK, so the Sheep Part is really trying to protect her . . . from this interference and shouting from other people.

A: And violence, too. It's not just noise. It's physical abuse.

The Sheep Part is trying to protect Anne from anger and violence that she experienced as a child.

J: So ask the Sheep Part to tell you how it goes about trying to protect the little girl.

A: It makes it so when I'm with other people, I feel really stressed, and when I'm by myself, I feel really nice and peaceful. The Sheep Part makes the difference much more extreme than it would be otherwise.

J: It makes your experience of other people more stressful.

A: Yeah.

J: Ask it how it does that.

A: It makes me believe that my energy is getting drained when I'm with other people. And it makes me feel really tired and have a craving to be alone.

J: See if there's anything else that the Sheep Part wants you to know about itself.

A: It's rather hostile. It says, "I'm never going to let you be with other people. I'm always going to keep you in this place."

J: So it's feeling hostile toward you?

A: Yeah, like, "Don't mess with this." The Sheep Part is saying, "I'm in charge—I'm going to keep it that way. Don't try to tweak the system at all."

J: Uh-huh. Ask it what it's afraid you're going to try to do that makes it hostile toward you.

A: It's afraid that my life purpose is going to override its wishes—that my Life Purpose Part is so strong that it's going to win out in the end.

J: So it's feeling hostile because it's afraid that without that anger, the Life Purpose Part will take over, and it won't be able to protect the Little Girl Part.

A: Yeah. There's this really interesting feel to it. The Sheep Part feels like it has to get really mean and bitchy. It understands that the Life Purpose Part is really sweet, and it doesn't want to let that sweetness win out. So the emotions of the two are really polarized as well.

J: Ask the Sheep Part what would happen if the sweetness won out.

A: People would be naturally drawn to me.

J: And if they were drawn to you, what is it afraid would happen?

A: Then I'd have a lot of people around me, and they'd start screaming and being abusive and mean—treating me badly.

Notice how the polarization is making the Sheep Part more extreme. It believes that it must be hostile to counter the Life Purpose Part so it can protect that wounded exile.

J: I can hear that you're feeling some of the pain that comes from being screamed at. That's probably some of the exile's pain.

A: Yeah.

J: I can certainly see why the Sheep Part would feel the need to be so protective, if that's what it's trying to protect you from.

A: Yeah.

J: It sounds like you're appreciating that the Sheep Part is trying to protect the exile.

A: Yeah. Definitely.

J: So let it know that you appreciate what it's trying to do.

A: I just got this really strong hit that this Sheep Part doesn't want to do its job anymore. It's grown these giant horns, and it's got a headache from them and from pushing everything away all the time. But it's really scared of the exile getting hurt. And it's also concerned about being seen as bad—even though I don't see it as bad.

Once the Sheep Part felt Anne's appreciation, it relaxed its rigid attachment to its role. This is probably because it now realizes that Self is there to help with the danger it perceives. Once it relaxed, it realized that it was tired of its job.

J: So even though you don't see it as bad, there may be other parts of you that do. And it's concerned about that?

A: And people in my life who think that my distancing behavior is a really bad thing.

J: Sure—that would make sense. The Sheep Part's job is designed to make them feel that way so they won't get too close to you, right?

A: Yeah.

J: You might let the Sheep Part know that we are working on making the situation safe enough so it could let go of its role, if it wanted to.

A: This part feels like it's kind of between a rock and a hard place. It really wants to give up that function, but it's *really* afraid for the exile. However, now it really feels my support, so it's not stuck by itself with this dilemma. It's got some help.

This part of the session shows the importance of developing a relationship between Self and each polarized part. Once they feel connected to Self, they are much more amenable to learning to cooperate with each other.

This transcript will continue in the next chapter. It illustrates one of the biggest advantages of using IFS to resolve polarization. There are other therapy methods that include dialogues between polarized parts, but they simply have the parts talk to each other. IFS recognizes the importance of the Self and of having each polarized part connect to the Self before starting the dialogue. This makes a huge difference.

Exercise: Getting to Know Polarized Parts

Continue with your polarized parts from the previous exercise. Take each part in turn, get to know it, and develop a trusting relationship with it.

Did either part have trouble trusting you? _____

What did you do to gain its trust? _____

What did you learn from each part about how it feels toward the other part? _____

What did you learn about what each part does to counter the other part? _____

This chapter has described polarization and covered the first steps in working with it. The polarization steps continue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Resolving Conflicts Between Parts: Depolarization Dialogues

Once you have connected with each polarized part, you can proceed toward depolarizing the situation and promoting cooperation between the parts.

Step 5: Deciding Between Exile Work and Dialogue

Each polarized protector is locked into its extreme role for two reasons: (1) it is protecting an exile, and (2) it is polarized with a part it thinks is dangerous. Therefore, there are two choices for how to resolve the situation (though, in many cases, you will have to do both):

1. **Exile Work.** One option is to heal the exile (or exiles) being protected by one part or by both parts and then help the protectors to let go of their protective roles so they can get along with each other. To the extent that one of the protectors is extreme because it is protecting a very vulnerable or traumatized exile, it will probably not let go until the exile is healed. Therefore, following the standard IFS approach, get permission from the protector to access this exile and then follow the steps to get to know the exile, witness the origins of its burden, and reparent, retrieve, and unburden it (see Chapters 10–14 in *Self-Therapy*). After this work has been done, help the protector to relax and let go of its role (see Chapter 15 in *Self-Therapy*).

Since this procedure is covered in *Self-Therapy*, I won't discuss it in detail in this book except to show how it relates to polarization work.

2. **Dialogue.** The other option is to facilitate a depolarization dialogue between the two parts. This helps them learn how to cooperate rather than fight with each other. This process is explained in the rest of this chapter.

Step 5 in the polarization process involves deciding which of these approaches to use. You could simply start working with one of the polarized parts in the standard IFS way and see how far you get. If you run into problems—for example, if the other part keeps jumping in and attacking the part you are focused on—this may indicate that you need to focus on the polarization. If you follow through completely with one part and unburden its exile but your behavior doesn't change, this probably also means that you must work on the polarization directly.

Sometimes a polarization seems to be caused mainly by the extreme behavior or feelings of one protector, while the other side is mostly an attempt to deal with this. Usually the extremes of this first protector come from its dire need to protect an exile, so it makes sense to unburden that exile first. Then check to see if that protector can become less extreme or even let go of its role. This may resolve the polarization. Even if it doesn't, healing this exile will make it easier to resolve the polarization through dialogue.

Let's return to the example of Blake, who has a polarization between a Striving Part that is pushing him to work very hard and a Procrastinator Part that is trying to avoid doing work that it finds threatening. Suppose Blake senses that the Procrastinator is intense because of its fear of taking

on this task and failing. It is protecting an exile who was judged or humiliated when Blake was young. In this case, Blake probably won't get much traction until this exile is healed and the Procrastinator can let go.

One the other hand, sometimes it seems that the main driving force behind the polarization is the two parts trying to counter each other. This doesn't mean that both parts aren't also protecting exiles but rather that they are very concerned with countering each other. That is primarily what drives the polarization. In this case, it makes sense to start with the depolarization dialogue. Helping the two parts cooperate may resolve the polarization without needing to heal the exiles, or it may create a more congenial internal relationship, which will make it easier to access and heal the exiles.

Let's imagine a different polarized situation—one between Holly's Taskmaster and Procrastinator. Her Taskmaster is really pushing hard, and her Procrastinator is fighting back against the extreme push. Holly knows that her Taskmaster's overblown desire to succeed is modeled after her extremely pushy father and is designed to protect against his judgments. She has a sense that the exile being protected—the one who was hurt by the father—isn't extremely wounded. In this case, it would make sense for Holly to begin with a depolarization dialogue rather than exile work.

Sometimes two parts are fighting each other primarily because you grew up in a highly charged, polarized environment, and you are recreating that external environment internally because each polarized part is modeled after one side of the childhood polarization. In this case, it would be useful to begin with a dialogue.

When you are getting to know a protector, here is one way to tell whether it is more concerned about the exile it is protecting or the part it is polarized with. Ask the protector the standard IFS question, “What are you afraid would happen if you didn’t (do your role)?” If the protector says, “I’m afraid you will fly off the handle” (or some other destructive behavior), then, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, this points to a polarized part—the part that might fly off the handle (or engage in the feared behavior). This probably indicates that the protector is primarily concerned about countering its polarized part, so it might be better to start with a depolarization dialogue.

No matter which approach you start with, you may need to use the other approach as well, so it may not matter in the end where you start. For example, in some cases, even if you start with a depolarization dialogue, you will still need to heal the exiles being protected in order to resolve the polarization. Or even if you don’t **have** to heal them to resolve the polarization, it would still be helpful to heal them at some point for your well-being.

On the other hand, even if you start by healing one or both exiles, you may still need to engage in a depolarization dialogue to fully resolve the polarization.

Exercise: Deciding Which Approach to Use

Continue with the polarized parts you worked with in the last chapter. Decide whether it would be better to heal an exile being protected by one of the parts or do a depolarization dialogue. If you choose to heal the exile, go ahead and do that using what you know from Chapters 11–14 of *Self-Therapy*. Then decide if you also

need to heal another exile being protected by that part or perhaps one being protected by the opposing part. If so, heal that exile. If you choose the dialogue, this completes the exercise.

If you decided to heal an exile, which exile? _____

What happened in going through the healing steps with that exile? _____

If there was a second exile, how did that work go?

If you were able to heal the exile(s), did that work resolve the polarization? _____

Step 6: Getting Permission for a Depolarization Dialogue

If you decide on a depolarization dialogue, the next step is to get permission from both parts for the dialogue. Ask each part, one at a time, if it would be willing to have a dialogue with the other part in order to resolve the conflict. Make it clear that the dialogue will be under your guidance (in Self). You might ask each part if it is aware of the work

you did with the other part. This will help it to be more open to dialoguing.

In many cases, both parts will agree to the dialogue because of the preliminary work you have already done in developing a trusting relationship with each of them. However, if either part isn't willing, ask what it is afraid will happen in the dialogue. Then reassure the part about its fears.

Here are some common fears that polarized parts have about engaging in a dialogue and how to handle each one:

1. One part is afraid that the other part will take over and do dangerous things. For example, one part might be afraid that the other part will become enraged at someone if it is let out of the box it has been kept in. Explain that you will stay in Self and won't let the other part take over. Of course, by this you don't mean that you will prohibit the other part from taking over. We never use force with parts in IFS. You will stay in Self and focus on fostering a constructive dialogue between the parts, so the other part will be unlikely to do anything dangerous.

2. One part is afraid to talk to the other part for fear of being attacked by it. For example, one part might be afraid that an Inner Critic Part will start judging it. Explain that you will be in charge of the dialogue and, if the other part attacks, you will ask what it is afraid of that makes it attack, thus shifting the conversation in a different direction. You will be encouraging each part to learn to cooperate with the other. Remind the frightened part that you already connected with the other part safely earlier in the session.

3. One part doesn't want to talk to the other because it feels that the dialogue would legitimize the other part. Part

A believes that Part B is so evil that it shouldn't be given any airtime. It wants to completely dismiss Part B and have nothing to do with it. Explain that Part B has a positive intent for you and therefore deserves to be heard. Also make it clear that ostracizing Part B cannot work because it will just operate out of your awareness and do more damage. Furthermore, the dialogue will result in a new cooperative situation where Part B won't be destructive anymore.

You have a big advantage because of the work you have already done in getting to know each part and discovering its positive intent. While this was happening, you found out how each part was trying to help and how it was trying to protect a wounded exile.

In addition, while you were getting to know one polarized part, the other part may have been listening in the background. (Parts do this.) By listening, it may have discovered that the first part, which it thought was totally evil and destructive, was actually trying to protect a hurt child part. This kind of understanding helps to decrease the animosity between the parts. Each part begins to see that the other part is really trying to help you. So even though they each think that the opposing part is causing problems, they are likely to be more open to each other and more willing to dialogue.

For example, Dan's Controller at first hated the Drinker Part because it was causing serious trouble for Dan. However, the Controller overheard Dan's work with the Drinker and found out that it was trying to protect a wounded little boy who had been severely rejected by his mother. As a result, the Controller softened. It realized that the Drinker was doing its best to cope with devastating pain, and that realization made it more open to dialoguing with the Drinker.

If one part won't give permission, this may indicate that you need to work more on your relationship with this part. It may not trust you enough for the dialogue to be successful. Check to see if you really appreciate the part, and if necessary, spend more time getting to truly understand and appreciate it. Or if the part doesn't realize that you appreciate it, convey your appreciation and help the part to take it in. If the part still doesn't trust you, work directly on the trust issue (see Chapter 8 in *Self-Therapy*).

Another possibility is that the part is afraid because you don't have enough access to Self, and therefore you wouldn't be able to prevent the other part from attacking it or doing something dangerous. In this case, you must put off the depolarization dialogue until you are more fully in Self.

THERAPIST NOTE

You (the therapist) can help reassure a part that is afraid of what might happen if it agrees to talk with its polarized part. Sometimes parts don't trust the client to know enough or be strong enough to ensure that nothing bad will happen, but they may trust you. Therefore, use your authority to gain their permission. Reassure them that *you* won't allow either part to take over and do dangerous things or attack the other part.

Step 7: Beginning the Depolarization Dialogue

Once you have permission from both parts, it is time to begin the depolarization dialogue, which is Step 7 in the process.

There are three ways to set up the dialogue—externally, internally, or using a mix of the two.

Externally. This approach was pioneered by Gestalt Therapy. You arrange three (or more) chairs or pillows, one representing each part and one representing the Self.

When it is time for one part to speak, you sit in that chair and embody the part or play the role of the part. Another way to say this is that you *consciously blend* with the part. This is different from normal blending, where you may not be aware that a part is blended with you. In this case, you consciously choose to blend with the part so you can feel its feelings and speak its concerns, but because you are doing this purposely, you won't be overwhelmed by the part's feelings or buy into its worldview. You *become* the part in the moment but retain your larger sense of perspective.

You speak out loud as the part. You look at the other chair and direct your conversation to the other part in that chair. Then you switch seats, become the other part, and respond by speaking out loud back to the first part. Whenever it seems helpful, you occupy the Self chair and speak as Self to facilitate the dialogue.

An advantage of this approach is that it is easy to access and identify with each part. Each part really comes alive, and you understand its feelings and beliefs. You rarely get the parts mixed up. This is especially helpful if you don't have good access to your parts or you tend to shift from one part to another without realizing it. The external approach helps you to maintain your clarity about the parts.

The disadvantage of the external approach is that your Self may not be easily accessible, and accidental blending may occur. Since you are consciously blending with each part, your Self isn't as easily present when you are being the part. Conversely, when you are doing the dialogue internally,

you are in Self while hearing the parts talk to each other. This makes it easier to stay in Self and not get too blended with either part.

Internally. You bring the two parts together in an inner space where they can talk to each other. This could be visual—for example, seeing the two parts sitting in a room together or at a conference table. Or you could just sense the parts in a place where they can communicate with each other. When each part speaks, you hear what it says internally.

You must also be present in the inner space as Self so you can facilitate the dialogue. However, make sure that you don't see an image of yourself in the internal space. As I mentioned earlier, any image you see is not Self. Instead of seeing the Self in the space, feel yourself in the space as Self.

The advantage of this internal approach is that it makes it easier for you to maintain a strong Self presence. You also don't have to speak out loud and move from chair to chair, which can sometimes be distracting.

Mixture. You arrange the internal dialogue as above, but you physically sit in each of the two chairs as each part is speaking inside. This helps you access each part more clearly and keep them differentiated. There are a variety of ways to mix external and internal work, so feel free to use your creativity in designing an approach that works for you.

More Than One Part on a Side. It is possible that you may have more than one part on one side of the polarization or even on both sides. In this case, it is often useful to find one part on each side that will be a spokes-part for that side. However, if this doesn't work because there is a part that doesn't feel represented by the spokes-part, also include that part in the dialogue.

Beginning the Conversation

Either part can begin the dialogue by speaking to the other. Occasionally one part may want to speak to you first, but then direct it to speak to the other part. At first, the parts will probably just state their existing positions and argue with each other. That is fine. It will give you a clear understanding of the polarization and how each part is reacting to and countering the other. If the parts start to get into a rapid-fire argument, ask them to slow down and hear each other.

Don't allow the parts to attack each other. That would interfere with the development of real dialogue. Furthermore, you have promised them that you won't allow attacks to happen, so follow through on this. If one part starts to attack the other, remind it that the goal of the conversation is for the parts to learn to work together.

Sometimes you may be surprised to discover that the parts are already moving into true dialogue. Because of the preliminary work you have done to connect with and develop trust with each part, they might be ready to cooperate. In addition, each part may have learned about the other part's positive intent and the fact that it is protecting a vulnerable exile. This knowledge often softens their stance toward each other.

The parts are especially likely to cooperate if both of them are trying to protect the same exile. Before this polarization work, they wouldn't know this, but once they do, they tend to feel connected to each other, even if they are using opposing strategies to protect the exile.

Step 8: Facilitating True Dialogue

Once each polarized part has stated its position clearly and they have gone through a couple of rounds of conver-

sation, begin to facilitate an actual dialogue between them. This is Step 8 in the polarization process, which is similar to mediation and conflict resolution between people. There are a variety of ways to move the argument toward dialogue. If one of the parts resists moving toward dialogue, remind it that it is impossible to get rid of parts, so it can't expect to do away with or overcome the other part. Therefore, dialogue and cooperation are the way to go.

The following are ways to facilitate dialogue:

Explaining Positive Intent

It is helpful if each part explains its positive intent and shows what exile or exiles it is trying to protect. This helps the other part to be less hostile. Sometimes the parts will spontaneously describe their positive intent during the early stages of the dialogue, but if they don't, ask them to do so. This moves the conversation beyond simply taking positions.

For example, Sandra's Family Part argues that she must go to a family reunion, while her Safety Part is adamant about not going. The Family Part initially argues that a good person stays in touch with his or her family. Sandra asks the Family Part to tell the other part what it is trying to get for her. It says it wants her to be loved and accepted by her family and especially her sister. She also asks the Family Part to show the other part the exile it is protecting. It shows an exile who was rejected by her family.

You can help by reframing each part's intent in positive terms so that part feels heard by you. This also helps the other part to understand the first part's good will. For example, Sandra might say the following to her Family Part, "Oh. I see. You really want me to be accepted and loved by my family."

Listening to the Other Part's Concerns

At some point in the conversation, ask Part A to listen to what Part B is saying before it responds. You might even ask Part A to acknowledge what Part B has said, perhaps by paraphrasing it. Then ask Part A to respond in a way that takes into account Part B's concern. If Part A doesn't understand Part B's concern, you can explain Part B's viewpoint. Make sure Part A has really heard and taken into account Part B's position.

Part A doesn't have to agree with Part B; it just needs to listen and respond accordingly. Ask Part A to respond in a way that takes into account Part B's concerns. It may agree with them or argue with them, but it shouldn't ignore them.

For example, when Sandra's Safety Part says that it doesn't think it is safe to go to the family reunion because it is afraid Sandra will be ridiculed, ask the Family Part to really listen to this fear. When the Family Part responds, it might say, "I understand that you are afraid of being ridiculed, but I don't think that is likely to happen. And I think it is so important to stay connected with your family that it is worth the risk." Here the Family Part is still advocating for its position, but it is responding to the Safety Part's concerns.

Then ask Part B to do the same thing—to really listen to Part A's concern and respond accordingly. This begins real dialogue, which means that two parts are really listening to each other. You are beginning to access the healthy side of each part, or the Self within each part. (IFS recognizes that each part has Self within it. This is what you want to bring forward in this dialogue.)

If Part A doesn't really understand one of Part B's concerns, you can help by stating clearly the concern that was

missed. (You will see me do this in the transcript that follows.) You might notice that Part A is ignoring a crucial aspect of what's bothering Part B, and therefore Part B is still arguing in an extreme way because it doesn't feel heard. For example, Janet had an Inner Controller Part that was worried that her Indulger Part would cause her to die from the complications of being overweight. The Indulger Part only saw that the Inner Controller was concerned about her health. Janet (in Self) pointed out the Inner Controller's more extreme fear to the Indulger so it could be dealt with.

Pointing Out Commonalities

You can facilitate cooperation by pointing out things that the two parts have in common. If you discover that they are protecting the same exile, make this clear to them. It will help them feel connected to each other.

Another commonality is that the two parts might be able to agree with each other's goals. For example, in Anne's polarization, the Life Purpose Part wanted Anne to make a contribution to the world, while the Sheep Part wanted her to spend more time connecting with herself. When they talked with each other about these goals, they could each agree with the other part's goal. They had different priorities, so this didn't resolve the conflict, but it did help the parts trust each other more.

Teaching the Value of Cooperation

Explain to the parts that they stand the best chance of getting what they want for you if they learn to cooperate with each other. They may not understand that cooperation is possible or desirable. Each part usually thinks that the only way to attain its goal is to win over the other part. So if you can explain to them that cooperation is the best way

to get what they think is best for you, it will help open them up to real dialogue.



THERAPIST NOTE

You may have to intervene in the conversation between the parts and make suggestions that facilitate dialogue. Your client may be too caught up in the internal struggle or may not know how to move toward dialogue.

The Relationship with Self in Promoting Dialogue

The movement toward cooperation is aided by your presence in Self. It isn't just your suggestions that make a difference but also the quality of your presence and your openness to both parts.

It is crucial that each part trust you. If a part isn't willing to move past arguing toward dialogue, this may be an indication that it doesn't trust you enough. Then you need to go back and work more on your relationship with that part.

You are aiming for the two parts to begin to cooperate with each other. After all, they each want something positive for you, and they are stuck with each other—neither one can get rid of the other. Both parts should be aware of this by now, even though they may not have realized it at

first. So it is in their best interests (as well as yours) for them to learn to cooperate. In fact, it is usually possible for both parts to get most or all of what they want if they cooperate.

You have a good chance of convincing the parts to really listen to each other because of the preliminary work you have done in accessing Self, getting to know each part, and developing a trusting relationship with it. This creates a sense of safety for each part because they now realize that there is a larger, caring force present—the Self. They have connected with you (Self), and they know that you respect them and take their concerns seriously.

Step 9: Negotiating a Resolution

Resolution can take two different forms. Often the two parts are disagreeing over what action to take in a certain situation. One type of resolution is deciding what to do or how to handle that situation. However, there is a deeper and more important kind of resolution, which involves the two parts learning to appreciate each other and cooperate with each other. This will have a larger impact because it will influence how these parts handle future decisions or conflicts, and the spirit of cooperation will spread to other parts as well.

Resolutions of either kind can occur at any step in the process. Sometimes just getting to know the two parts from Self will produce a resolution. Sometimes a resolution appears at the beginning of the dialogue.

If you have gotten this far in the dialogue and there is still no solution, you can step in as Self to help produce one. If you are doing the dialogue externally, switch into a third chair, which represents Self. If you are doing it internally, speak from the place of Self.

If appropriate, ask each part to suggest a solution that takes into account the other part's concerns and needs. If this doesn't produce a resolution, offer a solution from Self. After observing the dialogue, you can sometimes see a resolution from Self that would be agreeable to both parts. However, don't get attached to your solution. It is just one step in the negotiating process.

THERAPIST NOTE

If the client doesn't see a resolution, you can offer one. Sometimes you have a better perspective on the conflict than your client. You can offer this perspective or even offer a solution that you see. However, remember that you often don't know the whole story, so your solution may not be fully attuned to the client's situation, at least in the form that you originally propose it.

See if the parts will both agree to your solution. Even if they don't immediately agree, this can shift the dialogue in a fruitful direction. If either part doesn't agree, ask what its concerns are and then modify the solution to take those concerns into account. Or ask the part to offer a modified version of the solution.

Another option is to ask the part what it would need in order to agree to the solution being offered. Maybe it will agree if it gets something that it believes is important. For example, Sandra's Safety Part said it would agree to go to the family reunion if Sandra was willing to talk with her sister and brother first about how to handle her cousin's nasty shaming remarks.

Keep negotiating until you have reached a solution that is acceptable to both parts. This can sometimes take quite a bit of time as each part considers the possible solution and discusses its concerns. Sometimes one of the parts will suggest a new, creative idea that hasn't been considered before. This is one of the benefits of having this kind of cooperative dialogue. It helps access the positive qualities and creativity of each part.

If you keep the dialogue going as the parts negotiate about a proposed solution, they are very likely to arrive at something that will work for both of them and, of course, for you. After all, they both want the best for you, so when they are fully cooperating under the guidance of Self, a solution is bound to come. During the dialogue, a part may show the exile it is protecting, and sometimes it becomes clear that this exile must be healed for the polarization to be resolved.

The Depolarization Process

The entire process of working with a polarization often takes multiple sessions. You have to get to know each polarized part separately before you can begin the dialogue. That in itself could take an entire session or two. Then the dialogue might need to go through a number of phases. In addition, you may need to try out a proposed solution in your life to see what happens. This often brings up unresolved issues that must be dealt with in future sessions. It is helpful during this process to begin each new session by reengaging this work from the point where it left off in the previous session.

If the two parts aren't ready to come to a resolution in a particular session, ask them to agree to one step toward co-

operation that works for both of them. You can then return to take further steps in later sessions.

For a recalcitrant part, it may be important for it to simply realize that the way it is currently operating isn't working. It may not yet be ready to cooperate with the opposing part. However, when it realizes that its current strategy of fighting with the other part isn't getting the results it wants, it may rethink its calcified position and be more open to cooperation in future sessions.

At the end of this chapter, there is a Help Sheet that outlines all the steps of the IFS procedure for working with polarization. It can be used to guide you in a session.

Anne's Depolarization Dialogue

This is a continuation of the polarization session with Anne from earlier in the book. It shows Steps 5–9 of the polarization process. This particular segment illustrates how the parts can move into a cooperative mode with each other and the importance of healing an exile to promote depolarization.

J: See if the Sheep Part would be willing to have a dialogue with the Life Purpose Part.

A: (laughs) It says it will if I hold its hand. It wants to make sure it stays in touch with me. It doesn't want to be out there by itself.

J: Is that OK with you?

A: Yeah, it's fine.

This hand-holding is an indication of the valuable work Anne has already done in connecting with each part and developing a trusting relationship.

J: Check with the Life Purpose Part and see if it's willing to have a dialogue with the Sheep Part.

A: It wants to hold my other hand. (laughs) It's like, "I'm not going to let that other part have one of your hands if I can't have the other one. We have to keep this even."

J: So I guess they're kind of already in a space where they can talk to each other, if they're each holding your hand.

Since they are already in contact internally, I don't bother to ask her to choose the internal versus external setup.

A: Yeah. They're sitting across from each other making funny, mean faces at each other.

J: Invite them to start talking to each other. Either one of them can begin. Let me know what they're actually saying.

A: Well, the Sheep Part is saying to the Life Purpose Part, "You're going way too fast. We have to slow this whole thing down. You're trying to make something happen that just isn't ready to happen yet."

The Life Purpose Part is saying, "I've been waiting all my life! How much longer do we have to wait for this?" And it's also saying, "Anne's not going live forever, so at some point we have to get this show on the road."

J: OK. Let the dialogue continue, and keep letting me know what they're saying.

A: The Sheep Part says, "She's way too fragile for what you have in mind for her." Which tells me that the Sheep Part is confusing me with the exile—that the Sheep Part doesn't get that I'm an adult and I'm really capable now.

It is often the case that a part confuses the person with another part. Sometimes, as in this case, a protector sees the person as an

exile. At other times, a polarized part sees the person as the other polarized part.

J: Why don't you say that to the Sheep Part and see how it responds to you.

A: Well, it says that I have that exile inside of me, and she could get stirred up at any moment. So it understands that I'm not really the exile, but the exile is just under the surface.

J: So it still needs to protect her.

A: Yeah.

This is an important step toward true dialogue. When one part shows the exile it is protecting, that tends to soften the other part because it realizes that the first part isn't simply bad—it is trying to protect you from pain. This awareness makes it more open to that first part.

J: Ask the Life Purpose Part to take a moment to take in what the Sheep Part is saying. It doesn't have to agree but rather to just take it in.

I do this to shift the conversation in the direction of dialogue rather than argument.

A: OK, it's done that.

J: Now let it respond in a way that takes the Sheep Part's concerns into account.

A: Well, the Life Purpose Part actually got concerned about that exile, like, "Oh, somebody here is in a lot of pain." It's not about these two parts anymore. It's about this Little Girl who's in pain. The Life Purpose Part doesn't want to do anything that's going to hurt the Little Girl.

It's really interesting. I just saw the Little Girl come into this circle. The other two parts each took one of her hands,

and she's sitting in the circle. So now it's the four of us. And the Little Girl is curled up and looking down, but it feels important that she's part of the circle now.

Both of the protectors say they want to help her. This is really sweet. (laughs) And the Sheep Part just took off its horns and put them on the little girl, saying, "You want to try on a little Halloween costume here?"

The little girl is laughing, but she says, "No, it's way too heavy for *my* head!" But the Sheep Part isn't real angry and harsh anymore.

This is a big change. The parts are really dialoguing and beginning to cooperate.

J: Certainly an important part of the resolution of this will be doing the healing work with that Little Girl. However, let's keep going with this dialogue and see how far these two can get in terms of deciding what to do about this life purpose project that you want to do.

A: It doesn't feel like they're in opposition anymore. It feels like they're in agreement that the exile needs some help and that nothing else should happen until that happens. I don't mean that it has to happen today since I know we're nearly out of time. But the Life Purpose Part is on board with the agenda of taking care of the exile instead of just pushing forward with my other goals. And the Sheep Part is very happy about this.

J: Ask the Sheep Part the following: if we healed the Little Girl of her pain and fear so she was safe, would it still need to keep you away from people?

A: It says that would be a great relief. It's really tired of its role, and it's sick and tired of being judged as bad by other

people. It would be happy to take a break if the Little Girl were truly safe.

J: Great. And how does the Life Purpose Part feel about that.

A: It says that it's about time. When the Little Girl is healed, it is ready to take over and get me out in the world making a difference.

J: So maybe this is a good place to stop for today.

The two parts are now fully cooperating. The next thing that needs to happen is to heal the Little Girl. This can be done using the standard IFS procedure. This session illustrates both aspects of resolving polarization—exile healing and depolarization dialogue—and how they can work together. It isn't usually this easy to achieve cooperation between polarized parts, but it can happen.

Exercise: Resolving a Polarization

Continue with the two polarized parts you have been working with. Whether or not you have healed the exiles they were protecting, set up a depolarization dialogue and follow it through to resolution, if possible. Use the Help Sheet.

Did the parts start out the dialogue arguing with each other? _____

What did you do to facilitate real dialogue? _____

How did you help the parts learn to cooperate with each other? _____

Did you or a part come up with a resolution for this polarization? What was it? _____

What negotiation needed to happen before both parts agreed to the resolution? _____

Do you need to do additional work on either part or its exile? _____

Did you discover any additional parts that need to be worked with? _____

If you need to do additional work to fully resolve the conflict, go ahead and do that. This could take more than one IFS session.

What additional work did you do? _____

Did that resolve the conflict? _____

Step 10: Working with the Polarization in Real Time

When two polarized parts come to an agreement in a session, this isn't the end of the story. The agreement still has to be put into practice. Anything might arise at the moment

in your life when the solution is put into action. Then more work may be needed.

For example, after Anne heals the exile that the Sheep Part was protecting, the Sheep Part will probably relax its role to a significant degree. Then the Life Purpose Part will prompt her to work on a project to bring her talents and gifts to the world. This will probably involve her having much more contact with people than she has had in the past. This may trigger the Sheep Part. Even though it may have largely let go of its role, new growth on Anne's part may result in new, possibly threatening interactions with people. If the Sheep Part gets reactive again, Anne will need to handle it in the moment and possibly do more IFS work with it in sessions.

After achieving resolution in a session, it is important to be aware at those moments in your life when the polarizing issue comes up. At those times, you need to work on being in Self, which means unblending from each part, if necessary.

Then remind the parts what happened in the session, and ask them to let you be in charge now. This allows you to make decisions and take action according to the solution that was worked out in the session. These actions should be satisfying for both parts and should help you be functional and feel good in the situation.

For example, suppose Anne gives a talk or leads a workshop to make her work known in her local area. This might trigger the Sheep Part to make her feel numb and distant from people. (This could happen because its exiles weren't completely healed or because this situation seems unusually dangerous to the Sheep Part.) At that moment, Anne needs to recognize what is happening and ask the Sheep

Part to step aside and allow her to handle the situation from Self. This would allow her to be open and in contact with the people she meets. She might want to remind the Sheep Part that the Little Girl is now healed and safe, and she won't be humiliated by the people at her lecture.

When new or unexpected situations arise, the polarized parts may become triggered anew, and you may need to engage in further dialogue with one or both parts. During this real-time work, you may get new insights about the parts that will guide your work in future sessions.

For example, now that the Life Purpose Part is freed, it might start pushing Anne to work overly hard and take on projects that are beyond her current professional experience. Since this part is trying to gain self-worth from this work, it could go overboard and become extreme in this way. This could trigger the Sheep Part to become extreme again, closing her down and pushing her to hide from people.

Then Anne would need to have them dialogue more with each other to work out these new issues. She might also need to work with the exile that the Life Purpose Part is protecting. When that exile is healed, the Life Purpose Part won't be so likely to push her. It can simply be motivated by its true desire to bring her gifts to the world. As a result, the Sheep Part will be less likely to react by trying to close her down.

What If Your Behavior Doesn't Change?

What if you seem to have resolved a polarization but your behavior doesn't change? Suppose you come to a resolution in the dialogue, or you unburden an exile and its protector seems to relax, but you continue to engage in the problematic behavior that prompted you to work on this is-

sue in the first place. Reaccess the part (or parts) that is the source of that behavior and ask it why it continues to act the way it does. Its answer will indicate what work you need to do next.

Here are some of the possibilities:

1. You may have only healed one exile. Remember that each protector in the polarization is protecting an exile. The protector on the other side of the polarization may still be acting in an extreme way because its exile hasn't been healed.

2. The successful work you have done with one exile has now opened up a deeper exile who needs attention.

3. The protector in question might be protecting more than one exile, and you have only healed one of them. For example, suppose Carrie has a polarization between an Overeating Part and a Food Manager. You find the exile that the Overeater has been protecting—a part that was deprived and feels needy—and you heal that exile. However, Carrie's overeating continues. You explore further and discover that she has an Angry Part that has been exiled by the Overeater because of the danger of expressing anger in her family of origin. This anger issue must also be healed before the Overeater will be willing to stop. And Carrie might have even more exiles that this part is protecting, perhaps including a starved exile who was bottle-fed.

4. There might be a second part on one side of the polarization. Although there are two sides to a polarization, there can be more than one part on each side. Maybe you have indeed helped to transform one polarized part or even both of them, but there might be a second part on one side of the

polarization that you haven't identified. You will need to discover that other part and work with it. For example, remember that Holly had a polarization between a Taskmaster Part that pushes her to work very hard and a Procrastinator that avoids essential tasks because it is afraid of failing. You work successfully with those two, but Holly continues to avoid important work. Then Holly discovers that she also has a Rebel Part that is defying the Taskmaster because it doesn't want to be dominated by that part (since Holly had a dominating father). The Rebel is obviously on the same side of the polarization as the Procrastinator because they are allied with each other. Holly must work with the Rebel and get it to agree to any resolution that is going to succeed.

5. Maybe the original polarization has indeed been resolved, but some other part feels threatened by that. This part could undermine the resolution. You will need to find this part and work with it so it becomes comfortable with the changes that ensue from resolving the polarization.

For example, suppose Holly resolves her procrastination issues and starts accomplishing a great deal and becoming quite successful. This shift might trigger a part of her that is afraid of success. This part will try to undermine the previous healings and polarization solutions in order to keep Holly from being successful. Holly must uncover this part and help it unburden its fear.

The human psyche can be very complex. Don't assume that just because you have followed the IFS procedure and unburdened and transformed parts, your behavior will change right away. One piece of behavior can be determined by multiple parts. When the external change that you want is not happening, explore inside until you discover why.

Then work on the parts you discover until all of them have been healed and transformed and the polarizations have been resolved.

6. Something may have changed in your external situation that makes resolving the polarization difficult. For example, maybe you have a new boss at work who is really controlling or reactive. Or maybe you have entered into a new relationship that is leading you to be more vulnerable than ever before. Or maybe your ex is threatening to harm you. An external change can require you to do deeper inner work to work through whatever fears are coming up. Or it might require you to change or leave your external situation.

Exercise: Real-Time Polarization Work

Choose a polarization that you have resolved in an IFS session. Follow up in real time in situations where the conflict was coming up before. Make sure that you lead from Self and implement the resolution in those situations.

What happened in the real-time situation? _____

What did you do to remind the parts of the solution?

What else did you need to do to implement the resolution? _____

Were you able to act in the healthy way you wanted as a resolution to the polarization in that situation?

If not, what else needs to be done to resolve the polarization? _____

Polarization Help Sheet

This Help Sheet can be used to guide you in doing sessions on polarized parts or in facilitating your practice partner or client.

1. Recognize and identify the polarized parts.
2. Unblend from each part in order to access Self.
 - a. Hold both parts in consciousness at the same time.
 - b. Ask each part to step aside in order to get to know the other part.
 - c. Reassure each part that (you) the Self will get to know it, too, and won't let the other part take over.
3. Get to know each part's role, positive intent, and conflict with the other part.
 - a. Unblend from any Concerned Parts.
 - b. Find out what the part is trying to do for you.
 - c. Find out what the part is afraid would happen if it didn't perform its role.

- d. Find out how the part feels toward the polarized part.
- e. Find out how the part counters the polarized part.
4. Develop a trusting relationship with each part.
5. Decide whether to work with an exile or engage in a depolarization dialogue.
6. Get permission from each part to have a depolarization dialogue with the other part under your guidance.
 - a. Reassure each part that you won't allow the other part to take over or attack.
7. Begin the depolarization dialogue.
 - a. Decide whether to do it internally or externally.
 - b. Each part states its position and responds to the other.
 - c. Continue until the positions and conflicts are clear.
8. Facilitate true dialogue and resolution.
 - a. Each part reveals its positive intent and the exile it is protecting.
 - b. Each part listens to the other's concerns and fears and responds accordingly.
 - c. You point out commonalities between the parts.
 - d. You educate the parts about the value of cooperation.
9. Negotiate a resolution.
 - a. Either a part or the Self (or the therapist) suggests a resolution.

(continued)

(Polarization Help Sheet, continued)

- b. Each part considers the resolution and brings up concerns and suggestions.
 - c. The parts negotiate with each other until they come up with a resolution they can both agree to.
10. Work with the parts in real time.
- a. Access Self.
 - b. Remind the parts of their agreement from the session and ask them to let you lead from Self.
 - c. You implement the resolution.

These two chapters have explained how to recognize polarizations and how to resolve them when the standard IFS process isn't sufficient to do that. For more detail, see my book *Resolving Inner Conflict*. I have also developed an online tool, *Self-Therapy Journey*,⁴ for personal growth and psychological healing that includes a guided meditation for resolving polarizations.

4. www.selftherapyjourney.com

CHAPTER 6

Updating Protectors About Your Capacities

Updating is a standard IFS technique. Our protectors are stuck in the past; they believe that we are little children who are vulnerable and have few internal or external resources for handling problematic situations. This is how we all were as children. Another way to say this is that the protector is protecting a young, vulnerable exile, and it thinks that you are the exile. It doesn't realize that you have a Self with many more resources than when you were a child.

You can ask a protector, "How old do you think I am?" Very often, the protector will mention a childhood age—two or eight, for example. Notice that this is a different question from the one you might ask an exile. You ask the exile, "How old are you?" (Of course, you could also ask a protector this question, and it will often be a young child part, too.) However, when you are preparing to do the process of *updating*, ask the protector how old it *thinks* you are.

The Updating Process

Once you have found out how old the protector thinks you are, tell the protector how old you actually are. Then show the protector a series of scenes from your life that include growing up, maturing, accomplishing things, handling difficulties, and reaching your current age. This

updates the protector as to your current capacities.

When you were young, you were vulnerable and under your parents' power. However, now you are autonomous and in charge of your own life. In childhood, you didn't have a mature Self present to help, so your protectors often



had to handle painful situations on their own. Now that you are an adult, you have a competent, perceptive Self to help in difficult circumstances.

In addition, you probably have many strengths and capacities as an adult that you didn't have as a child. For example, you are probably more grounded and centered. You may be more assertive, more perceptive about interpersonal situations, better able to support yourself financially, and so on. You have probably accomplished things in your life and overcome obstacles. You are an adult with much greater ability to handle yourself.

As part of the updating process, you can also show the protector your current life arrangements and the various people who will support you when needed. You probably have friends, family, maybe a spouse or lover, perhaps a community you belong to, or a support group you can rely on.

Even if you haven't had much access to Self in the past, your Self is probably starting to become available because of your IFS work. However, the protector may not realize that your Self is now available to help, so you need to make

this clear. Since you (in Self) and the protector are now connected, the protector is more likely to listen to you and trust what you say.

Here is an example of one woman's updating of a protector. "I showed it a scene from high school when I was on the student council, my college graduation, and an image of me taking care of my daughter when she was a baby. I showed the protector images of me living on my own after my divorce and supporting myself with the job I had then. I remembered a time when I really stood up for myself at work. Then I showed the protector my current group of lovely, supportive friends."

You may wonder, "What if I don't have much in the way of adult capacities or resources?" You certainly have much more ability and support than you did as a young child. You have more capacity simply by being an adult because of biological and cognitive development. Also, you survived whatever traumas happened to you as a child and moved on with your life, even if it has been limited in certain ways.

You certainly have more resources than you did as a child. For one thing, your society grants you more rights as an adult. After all, the reason that the exile ended up with a burden in childhood is that you had no one to help you handle and process the difficult situation that caused the burden. You certainly have more support now than you did then. If you doubt your own capacities or resources, this may be coming from a part that needs to be worked with.

If the protector isn't interested in being updated, tell it, "I have some information that might benefit you at some point in the future, but I can see that you don't want to hear it now." That may pique the protector's curiosity.

The entire updating process is intended to help the protector understand your current age, experiences, capacities, and resources. This information helps the protector realize it doesn't need to interfere with the therapy process because of its fear of your not being able to handle what may happen.

When to Use Updating

Updating can be useful in the following situations:

1. You are asking a concerned part to step aside and allow you to work with another protector (see Chapter 6 in *Self-Therapy*), but the concerned part believes that if it steps aside, the protector will do something destructive that you can't handle. You update the concerned part so it will feel safe in stepping aside.

2. You are asking a protector to give permission to work with an exile (see Chapter 10 in *Self-Therapy*), but the protector believes that if it gives permission, something bad will happen to the exile that you can't handle. Updating reassures the protector that you can handle whatever may happen. The protector might also be concerned that if it steps aside, the exile will overwhelm your internal system with its distress. Updating can be used to reassure the protector that you can handle an exile's distress.

3. You don't have time to heal the exile behind a protector, and an important situation is coming up in your life where that protector usually behaves in a dysfunctional manner. You update the protector about your capacities and ask it to let you be in charge in that situation so you can act in a healthier way.

4. You have healed an exile, and you are talking to its protector about letting go of its protective role (see Chapter 15

in *Self-Therapy*). Updating the protector can provide it with even more reason to let go.

Updating can also be used as part of the process of negotiating for Self-leadership, as will be shown in the next chapter.

Updating Exercise

Choose a protector to work with. Go through the standard IFS steps to get to know the protector and develop a trusting relationship with it.

What is the protector afraid of that makes it perform its role? _____

Now update the protector about your current age, situation, resources, and capacities. See if that helps the protector let go of its role.

What did you show the protector about growing up?

What did you show the protector about your experiences that indicates your maturing capacities? _____

What did you show the protector about your current life situation? _____

What did you show the protector about your resources and supports? _____

Did that help the protector let go of its role? _____

If not, what was the protector still afraid of, or why
wasn't it reassured? _____

This chapter has shown how to update a protector so that it understands your current age, situation, capacities, and resources. Updating makes a protector more likely to cooperate with you.

CHAPTER 7

Negotiating with Protectors for Healthy Behavior

In the standard IFS procedure, once you have gotten to know a protector and have developed a trusting relationship with it, you ask its permission to work with the exile or exiles it is protecting (see Chapter 10 in *Self-Therapy*). IFS understands that most protectors can't fully let go of their roles until the exiles they are protecting have been unburdened. Once you have permission, you go through a series of healing steps with the exile, and then you return to the protector to see if it now can let go of its protective role (see Chapters 11–15 in *Self-Therapy*).

However, there are situations in which it may take quite a while to heal the exile being protected. And if more than one exile is being protected, it may take even longer. If you have an important situation coming up soon in your life that involves a protector acting out, it can be very helpful to find a way to get that protector to relax even before all its exiles have been healed. This can be done by explaining to the protector how it is safe for it to let go of its role and allow you (in Self) to behave in a healthy manner in that situation. I call this *negotiating for Self-leadership*.

There are also other situations in which negotiating for Self-leadership can be helpful. Suppose you have unburdened the exiles behind a protector, and you have asked the

protector if it can let go of its protective role (see Chapter 15 in *Self-Therapy*). It has relaxed to some extent, but it hasn't let go completely. By negotiating for Self-leadership, you can convince it to relax even further. If the protector you are working with took on its protective role mainly through childhood conditioning, negotiating for Self-leadership may be the best way to help it let go.

This chapter describes how to negotiate with a protector to allow you (in Self) to handle a situation that is coming up soon rather than having the protector blend with you (as usual) and deal with the situation in its dysfunctional way. Although this method has been taught by Richard Schwartz in his trainings, he hasn't put it into writing.

The way you negotiate depends on the circumstances. We will explore three types of circumstances: (1) when the protector's fears are unrealistic, (2) when the protector's fears are somewhat realistic, and (3) when the protector was conditioned.

Negotiating When the Protector's Fears Are Unrealistic

Let's consider the point in the IFS process when you have gotten to know a protector and have developed a trusting relationship with it. When a situation arises that activates this protector—such as meeting a new person, going out on a date, or interviewing for a job—the protector usually takes over and performs its extreme role. For example, it might make you withdraw, get angry, shut down emotionally, or please people. If it is an Inner Critic Part, it might start pushing and attacking you.

The protector performs its role because it is afraid of what would happen if it didn't. For example, it may be afraid

that you will be judged, shamed, rejected, or betrayed if it doesn't do something. These fears come from childhood, when you actually were hurt in one of these ways. However, in the current situation in your life, it isn't as likely that you will be hurt in the way the protector fears.

In negotiating with a protector, it is best to deal with a specific situation that is coming up soon. This allows you to negotiate with respect to the exact parameters of that situation. This section deals with the case in which the protector's fears are unrealistic for that situation because you wouldn't be hurt in the way it fears even if it let go of its role. In a later section, I show what to do when there is some validity to the protector's fears about a situation.

You can learn to negotiate with the protector to allow you (Self) to take the lead in this situation so you can respond in a healthy way rather than in the dysfunctional way that comes from the protector. For example, suppose you receive constructive criticism from your boss and the protector normally withdraws or gets angry. If you are instead able to respond from Self, you can take in the criticism, decide whether it seems valid, and then either disagree with your boss or develop a strategy to improve your performance.

The protector became extreme in childhood because it was dealing with a dangerous or harmful situation—for example, you were ridiculed when you didn't do something perfectly or you were yelled at when you made a mistake. The protector becomes activated in your current life because it believes that the same harm is going to happen now.

Ask the protector what it is afraid will happen in the upcoming life situation. When you learn what it is afraid of,

let the protector know that you agree that you don't want this to happen either. This helps to further build an alliance with the protector before you proceed to negotiate a different response.

Then explain to the protector that your current situation is very different from your childhood one. Acknowledge that the protector's role was needed back in childhood and give it appreciation for what it did for you at that time. Then explain that the current situation is different. The people you are dealing with today won't hurt you the way your parents (or other people) did back then. In addition, you were under the power of adults when you were a child, but you aren't under anyone's power now. Therefore, the protector doesn't need to perform its role.

Explain to the protector that you can make good decisions and handle the situation successfully from Self. Describe the healthy way you plan to handle situation and the advantages of doing that. Ask the protector if it would be willing to relax and allow you to handle that situation from Self when it arises.

A Trusting Relationship

If you have developed a trusting relationship with the protector and have given it appreciation for what it did for you in childhood, it is likely to listen to you. In fact, it is only possible for negotiating for Self-leadership to succeed if you have already created a good connection with the protector so that it trusts that you understand its role and appreciate its hard work on your behalf.

If you attempt to negotiate with a protector before developing a good relationship with it, the protector will believe that you don't understand it and are dismissing it. It will

feel hurt and resist you and may even become angry at you. Negotiating for Self-leadership can only work if the protector really trusts you in Self.

Here is how to develop such a trusting relationship. Let the protector know that you understand what it has been trying to do for you, and express appreciation for its efforts. Then check to see how the protector is responding to hearing this. If it is responding positively, there is probably enough trust. If the protector isn't taking in your appreciation, there is more work to be done to develop trust. (See Chapter 8 in *Self-Therapy* for details about how to do this.)

Protector Fears

If the protector doesn't agree to relax and let you handle the situation, ask the protector, "What are you afraid would happen if you did relax?" When you find out what the protector is afraid of, explain to the protector why that feared outcome won't happen. Then ask again if the protector will agree to relax. The protector may then come up with a different outcome that it fears. Explain to the protector how that outcome won't happen either. Continue the process until the protector has been reassured about all of its fears and is willing to relax. (If the protector brings up an outcome that might actually happen, see the next section for how to deal with this.)

Keep in mind that parts don't usually want to be performing their dysfunctional roles, even if they won't admit it. In other words, every part has a healthy role that it would prefer to perform, but it believes that its extreme role is vitally necessary in order to prevent serious harm. Therefore, if you can convince a protector that its usual role isn't necessary, it will often be happy to let go of it. The success of this

negotiating approach relies on the inherent health of your internal system.

The following are common protector fears about what will happen if they don't perform their roles. After each fear, I show how to reassure the protector about that fear.

Someone Will Harm or Reject You

The protector might be afraid that if it doesn't perform its role, you will be harmed by someone in the situation. By harm, I mean judgment, shaming, domination, betrayal, intrusion, anger, physical violence, or exploitation. For example, an angry protector might be afraid that if it doesn't get angry, you will be dominated by your husband. A different protector might be afraid that you will be rejected, deprived, abandoned, or not seen by someone in a certain situation. For example, a people-pleasing protector might be afraid that if it doesn't please your friends, they will reject you.

Reassure the protector that the people in your current life situation are not likely to be harmful or rejecting in the way your parents (or others) were during childhood when the protector originally took on its role. For example, a woman reassures the protector that her husband isn't controlling or that her friends will like her even if she doesn't please them all the time.

Sometimes the protector, in its attempt to prevent a certain harmful or rejecting response from people, is actually *provoking* people to react in the way it fears. This means that, on the one hand, its fear is valid, but on the other hand, if it let go of its dysfunctional behavior, its fear wouldn't be valid.

For example, Jason has an angry protector that gets enraged at people in order to protect him from being controlled and judged. Jason's father was controlling and judgmental, and this protector evolved to protect Jason from his father. Now it gets enraged at anyone who reminds it of the father or in situations similar to those that triggered the father. Unfortunately, getting angry at someone is likely to provoke them to judge you or try to control you. In this case, the protector's reaction is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Its provocative attempts to protect Jason are causing the very thing it wants to protect him from.

Strange as it may sound, this dynamic is not unusual. It is actually quite common for protectors to cause the very outcome they are trying to prevent.

In this case, as part of negotiating for Self-leadership, explain this dynamic to the protector. After giving the protector appreciation for protecting you as a child, spell out how the protector, by provoking people, is now causing the very problem it is trying to stop. Then explain that if the protector lets go of its provocative role, the reaction it fears from people won't happen.

It may not be easy to get a protector to agree to relax right away. Even when they understand the consequences of their actions, protectors are often still frightened about your being hurt. After all, they have evidence from your adult life that you do get hurt. In this case, ask the protector if it would be willing to try Self-leadership as an experiment. This way, the protector can see if you actually do get hurt when it lets go of its role.

Tell the protector that it can jump in with its usual role if people do respond in the way it fears. This will encourage

the protector to try the experiment, and then it will see that you actually aren't in danger. After that, the protector will be more willing to allow Self-leadership.

You Won't Be Able to Handle a Difficult Situation

The protector might be afraid that if it doesn't perform its role, a situation will arise that you can't handle. For example, a self-effacing protector might be afraid that if it doesn't keep you small and meek, you might take public stands on controversial issues and have to deal with disagreement and criticism. The protector expects you to be devastated by criticism because that is what happened when you were a child and were harshly criticized by your parents.

Reassure the protector that you are a competent adult with many more strengths and capacities than you had as a child, so if you encounter disagreement or criticism, you can deal with it. Furthermore, you have much more in the way of external support now than during childhood. You may have a spouse, friends, family, a support group, a community, or a therapist who can help you deal with the situation. This is the updating process discussed in the last chapter.

It isn't necessary that you have a high degree of strength and support—you just need to have more than when you were a child and enough to handle the situation. If you don't have the ability to handle the situation that is coming up, negotiating for Self-leadership won't be possible for that situation until you do. Figure out which parts are interfering with this capacity and work to heal them.

A Painful Exile Will Be Triggered

The protector might be afraid that if it doesn't perform its role, something will happen that triggers an exile who is holding pain or trauma that would be too much for you to

handle. For example, a protector may fear that if it doesn't withdraw from conflicts, someone will get angry at you and trigger an exile who is terrified of anger.

There are two possibilities:

1. The exile has been largely healed, so it won't get triggered. Maybe this exile has been triggered in the past, but reassure the protector that if the exile does get activated now, its reaction will be mild.

2. The exile is still in a lot of pain. In this case, reassure the protector that if this exile does get triggered, you will take some time out to get into Self and care for the wounded exile. You may not have been able to do this before learning IFS, but now you have the ability to comfort and nurture a wounded exile so it won't overwhelm you.

If the exile hasn't been healed, focus on healing the exile before attempting to negotiate for Self-leadership. If you don't yet have the capacity to stay in Self and nurture an exile, work on developing that capacity by working with your exiles.

You Will Do Something to Bring On Negative Consequences

The protector might be afraid that if it doesn't perform its role, you will take some action that will be detrimental or will trigger people in the situation to be harmful or rejecting. For example, Joe had a Shut-Down Part that was afraid that if it didn't close down his emotions and impulses, he would go around trying to date and sleep with every woman he could find.

In this case, the protector is worried about a part of you that it is polarized with (or was polarized with in the past). If that polarized part has been transformed, reassure the

protector that the part will no longer take the destructive actions that it did in the past. For example, Joe can explain that he has worked through his sexual addiction, so his Shut-Down Part can relax and allow Joe to be in touch with his feelings and desires. If the polarized part has a good enough relationship with you that it won't take over and cause problems, reassure the protector about that.

If the polarized part hasn't been transformed or at least become connected to Self, work with that part before attempting to negotiate for Self-leadership.

The Protector Will Be Banished

The protector might be afraid that if it doesn't perform its role, it won't have a job anymore and will be banished. Explain that if the protector realizes that its role is no longer necessary, it can choose any other role in your psyche. Reassure it that it won't be banished. (See Chapter 10 in *Self-Therapy*.)

Example Session with Unrealistic Fears

Following is the transcript of a session I did with Mandy, a participant in one of my ongoing groups in which I was teaching about negotiating for Self-leadership. I will omit the beginning of the session, where I helped Mandy get in touch with the part that was causing her difficulties, and start where we began to work with that part.

Mandy: I would like to work on the part we have identified that sets up my work schedule so that I don't have enough time for fun.

Jay: OK. Focus on that part. Let me know when you're in touch with it.

M: Yeah. I am, and I think I spend too much time blended with it.

J: Well, let's hear from it. Invite that part to tell you what it's trying to accomplish by setting up your schedule in the way it does.

M: The part says, "You know, your employment situation is not up to speed, and all these tasks need to be done in order to increase the chances of a better job. You just don't have time to relax and have fun." This part feels urgent about this. It's talking a lot about money and the future. It says, "You don't have all that many years left when you'll be able to work, so you really need to get on this." It's riding me pretty hard.

And there's something else, too. It's not only finances—there's something about emptiness, and being invisible, or being like a child playing alone in a room. The protector wants to avoid that.

J: So I understand the financial worries that this part has. I don't understand the other aspect—about being alone.

M: I think it equates being poor with being alone, invisible, and disconnected from other people. (pause) Somehow, I feel really relaxed right now. There's something about articulating this that feels like a relief.

J: Say more about that. What's the relief?

M: Well, I even yawned a little bit. I'm really relaxing. Identifying this belief as coming from a protector breaks its hold over me. Because when I see that it's a protector's belief, it makes it clear to me that it's not all that realistic. I mean, it's accurate to the extent that there's a recession and my income is down. But it's ignoring some important things about life. And seeing that relaxes its hold over me.

She has spontaneously unblended from the part.

J: So to use the terminology that we've been using today, it seems like you're seeing that the protector's fears are not entirely realistic.

I had been teaching the group about negotiating for Self-leadership and how to check to see if a protector's fears are realistic.

M: Yes, I think that's right. I had a vague sense of this, but it wasn't enough to break its hold on me.

J: So check and see how you're feeling toward this protector right now.

M: I feel very weary. It's so strident and insistent. It's like it has blinders on. It just won't listen.

J: So it sounds like you're not very open to it right now. You're kind of judging it and wanting it to be different. I understand why you might feel that way, but it seems that your attitude toward it is judgmental. Is that right?

M: Yeah.

She isn't in Self with respect to the part. A Judgmental Part is blended with her.

J: So even though I suspect your judgments are accurate, see if the part that's judging this protector might be willing to step aside, just for the next few minutes, so you can get to know this scheduling protector from a more open place.

M: Oh yes, it's very willing.

J: OK, invite this protector to tell you more about what drives it or what it's afraid of.

M: Well, now I feel a little bit like crying, and I think that's the part. Yes, it's desperate. I mean, it actually grabs my hand and says, "This is really bad! This is a scary situation. We've got to do something about this." This is all it sees.

J: It's desperate.

M: Yeah, it says, "Nothing has panned out with your money in the long term, and that means that I have to keep you going full speed ahead."

J: Ask it what it's afraid would happen if it didn't push so hard. If it left you a little room to have more fun and relaxation, what is it afraid would happen?

M: It's afraid that I would fritter my life away. It's afraid that I would use up the rest of my savings and just go completely bare-assed into my old age.

J: So it's really worried about your financial future—that you would be headed for disaster if it didn't just push you incessantly.

M: Yes, yes.

J: So even though you don't agree with that and you can see that it's pushing too hard, can you also see that it has your best interests at heart and is trying to protect you from something it's really afraid of?

M: Yes, and it's very clear how blended it has been with me.

J: For right now, just let the protector know that you appreciate what it's trying to do for you. If you do.

Expressing her appreciation for the part helps her develop a trusting relationship with it, which is essential for negotiating for Self-leadership to work.

M: Oh, yeah. I mean, it's been a complete trouper. It has been very valiant in using every scrap of energy to protect me, for sure.

J: (pause) See how the protector is responding to your appreciation.

M: Well, it's very grateful. I feel like crying right now. I have the sense that he put his head on my shoulder and just sobbed because he's so exhausted. By the way, he seems to be male. He's been working so hard for so many years.

J: OK, that's good to know. He's really exhausted doing this role. Even though he feels like he has to do this job, he's really exhausted.

Once Mandy made a good connection with the protector, he could admit to himself that he is really tired of his role. This is good preparation for his being willing to let her lead.

M: Yeah, he's totally exhausted with it.

J: Let the protector know that you are going to help him not have to push so hard without endangering your finances.

M: Well, I'm telling him, "You've done great, and clearly this way hasn't brought about what you hoped, so let's try another way."

J: You certainly understand that there are legitimate concerns about your finances. You're not doubting that. But you seem to be aware that it would be possible for you to have a schedule that allowed more fun and relaxation without endangering your ability to find a job and make money. Is that right?

I am spelling out why the protector's fears aren't realistic so she can use that information to reassure it.

M: Yes.

J: So take a moment now and explain that to the protector. Explain what you have in mind and how it's not going to cause the problems that this part is afraid of.

M: I told the protector this, and he can hardly believe it.

It's not that he's skeptical, but it seems to be a completely new concept to him. He's battle-weary. He's been a soldier for like decades.

J: See if he'd be willing to take a rest and let you set up your schedule from Self instead of his having to do it.

M: He says, "Yeah." I mean, he just sat down and slumped over, nodding. He's so tired, and I think he gets the sense now that I have some capacity that he didn't see before. He was so terrified that he didn't see my capacity to discern the right things to do for my financial future. This means I can afford to let go of extraneous work so I don't overwork myself and get sick.

J: So even though we haven't done an official updating, he can see your capacities. Is that right?

Updating would be used to show this protector her current capacities, but he seems to understand them without our needing to do that explicitly. This is probably the result of Mandy making such a good connection with him.

M: Yeah, I have a sense of him seeing my capacities.

Now we are finished. The protector has agreed to let her lead and sees that she has the ability to choose wisely.

J: OK, so thank him for that. Before we stop, I want to suggest that the next time you are involved in setting up your schedule, make sure to be aware of the work we just did, and if necessary, remind that protector that he can relax and let you do it. Reassure him that you will do what is needed to protect your finances, but you're also going to set aside some time for fun and relaxation. Remind him of this at that time so he doesn't just jump in and set up the schedule the way he usually does.

I am suggesting that, at those moments when the protector might be triggered to take over, Mandy remind him that she can handle it safely.

M: OK.

This is an example of negotiating with a protector whose fears aren't valid. The next section explains how to handle the situation when a protector's fears are at least somewhat valid.

Exercise: Negotiating for Self-Leadership with a Protector with Unrealistic Fears

Choose a protector to work with whose fears are unrealistic in your current life or at least in a situation coming up soon. Follow the standard IFS procedure for getting to know this protector and developing a trusting relationship with it. Then choose a specific situation that is coming up soon in your life. Negotiate with the protector to stop enacting its role in that situation and to allow you (in Self) to be in charge.

What situation did you choose? _____

Were the protector's fears unrealistic? _____

How did you reassure the protector that it doesn't need to protect in that situation? _____

Was the protector convinced to let go? _____

What happened when the actual situation arose? _____

If it turns out that one of the protector's fears is somewhat realistic, use the approach described next.

Negotiating When the Protector's Fears Are Somewhat Realistic

Even though the protector's fears come from childhood, it is possible that they are somewhat realistic in the present. That is, if the protector lets go of its role in a certain situation in your current life, you might actually be judged, rejected, shamed, yelled at, or whatever else the protector is afraid of. For example, if you have a Perfectionist Part that is driving you to get your work perfect, this might be due to the strict standards of your boss, so if you tried to work in a more relaxed manner, you might be seen as a failure. In this case, the Perfectionist Part's fear may be realistic.

The protector's fear is often much greater than is warranted by what would happen in the current situation. After all, that fear is based on the past. However, whenever there is a grain of truth to the fear, you must reckon with it in negotiating with the protector. This doesn't mean that you can't successfully negotiate for Self-leadership; it just means that you must be prepared to deal with hurtful reactions from people, or whatever the protector fears, and you must explain to it how you plan to do this.

You are probably in a much better position to deal with whatever happens than when you were a child. You have much more internal strength for dealing with situations than you did as a child. You also have friends, family, and other people to turn to for help, advice, and support. You are more resilient and self-supporting and probably won't fall apart if something hurtful happens. This means that it is likely that you will be able to handle whatever the protector is afraid of.

If you are in a situation that is truly destructive or where you would indeed be hurt or attacked if you responded in a healthy way, you may have to take steps (perhaps along with other people) to change the situation, or, if that isn't possible, to leave it. Only then can you expect the protector to relax and allow you to behave in a healthy manner.

Sometimes we unconsciously seek out people in our current life who are as harmful as our parents were. If this is the case, you won't be able to reassure the protector about its fears, so negotiating for Self-leadership won't be possible unless you stay away from such people or figure out a way to neutralize them.

Formulating a Plan

First, ask the protector what it is afraid would happen if it did relax and let you handle the situation from Self. When you find out what the protector is afraid of, if there is some truth to its fears, acknowledge this and then formulate a plan for handling the feared outcome—for example, you being judged, dismissed, or shamed. These plans might include any or all of the following:

1. You will approach the impending situation in a way that minimizes the chances of your being harmed. For ex-

ample, you will approach potentially dangerous people in a calm, grounded manner that isn't likely to trigger them. Or you will avoid them altogether. Or you will phrase a request in a way that makes it more likely that it will be granted.

2. You will get support in the situation. For example, you will get input from friends or colleagues about how to handle the difficult situation or even bring people into the situation who are on your side.

3. You will stay away from toxic people or situations. For example, if you know that someone is likely to become enraged or shaming, you will make a point of avoiding that person unless there is no other choice. Or you will choose not to engage with a difficult person when he or she has been drinking or is testy or otherwise likely to react in a harmful way.

4. You won't provoke people. You will make sure not to interact with a potentially hurtful person in an angry or dismissive way that might trigger him or her to become angry or judgmental.

5. You will care for the exile if it gets triggered. If someone does hurt you—for example, by being angry or rejecting—you will take some time out soon afterward to access the exile who has been hurt and give it caring and love from Self.

6. You will assert yourself in the face of harm or rejection. For example, if Sally is ignored, she will practice restating her opinion or reaching out for connection to give herself the best chance of being received. Or if Don is judged, he will say that he thinks his ideas are valid and will ask for a full hearing and discussion about them.

7. You will explicitly set limits on harmful behavior. For example, if Jill's husband gets angry and hurtful, she will let him know how much this hurts or scares her. Then she will say that she won't deal with him until he calms down. If necessary, she will leave the room. If he follows her into another room and keeps it up, she will leave the house.

8. You will engage the other person in a dialogue about changing the relationship. If you are in an ongoing relationship with a hurtful person, you will find a time to sit down with that person, when you aren't in the middle of a conflict, and have a discussion about his or her harmful behavior. You will explain to the person how you are being negatively impacted by his or her behavior. Even though you will own your feeling reactions, you will also ask the person to change his or her behavior so the relationship feels safer to you.

9. You will develop a certain capacity so you can execute your plan successfully. For example, you might need to develop your ability to assert yourself, negotiate from a powerful place, or give a talk. In this case, your plan might involve taking a course or reading a book on negotiation tactics before going into a high-stakes meeting. It might mean attending Toastmasters meetings before giving a speech or hiring a trainer to help you learn a skill you need. Once you have developed the skill or capacity, you can put the plan into operation in your life.

10. If you are in a toxic situation that can't be fixed by your behavior, you will attempt to change the situation. This may involve working with other people in the situation to get the changes to occur. For example, you will agitate for changes in the culture of an organization you are part of.

11. If you are in a harmful situation that you can't change, you will get out. For example, you will find a new job or end a relationship.

THERAPIST NOTE

Some of these plans may involve actions that are difficult for a client to take. The client may need coaching from you on formulating a successful plan. You might also need to work with parts of them that would interfere with these healthy, self-protective behaviors. Don't try to negotiate for Self-leadership until your client is ready to handle whatever might happen in the situation. Or if you have started negotiating, hold off until your work with the client has prepared him or her to handle things. If a client can't manage to create or enact such a plan when it is needed, negotiating for Self-leadership isn't appropriate until he or she can.

Negotiating with the Protector

Once you have formulated a plan for dealing with possible problems, explain the plan to the protector and ask if it would be willing to relax and allow you to take the lead in that situation. Since you have already made a good connection with the protector and have now addressed its concerns, it is likely to agree.

If the protector still isn't ready to agree, ask it what it is afraid of now. Then formulate a plan for handling that fear and explain that plan to the protector. Keep going until all the protector's fears have been addressed.

Notice that by formulating such a clear plan that includes interacting with the world from strength, you are showing

the protector the power and clarity of Self. This will help the protector trust you (in Self) and agree to allow you to lead.

Remember that the relationship between your Self and the protector is crucial to the negotiation being successful. No amount of logical explanation can substitute for a good internal relationship between Self and the protector.

Example Session with a Realistic Fear

This is the transcript of a session with Karen, a participant in one of my groups. I was teaching the group about negotiating for Self-leadership.

Karen: I was being trained for a new position in my company, and at some point I was told that I would not get the position. This dismissal was done in a way that was traumatic and hurtful to me. It happened about ten months ago. Since that time, I've been feeling a lot of hurt and grief, and more recently I realized that I'm feeling a lot of anger.

So it's become obvious to me that I need to speak to my boss and tell him my reaction to the way I was treated. I have a specific body symptom related to holding back my anger about this incident. The part creating this symptom told me very clearly that until I express this anger, it's going to keep bothering me. So my body is telling me that it is imperative to do this. But I remember other times when I've expressed anger toward my boss, and I've always been cut off and dismissed.

So there's a part of me that's saying, "Hey, let's not express this anger. There will be negative consequences." And that part actually has some real experience to validate that fear.

Jay: OK. We need to work with the protector that says, "Don't express your anger." Go inside and contact that pro-

tector. Do you feel it in your body, or hear it, or see an image of it? Let me know when you're in touch with it.

K: It's showing up as a voice in my head. I hear more the tone of the voice than the actual words. It's like, "Da da da da da. It's better not to get angry because . . ." I don't know what the rest of the words are. Just "Quiet it down. Keep it down. Don't get angry. It's not going to work." That's where it is at the moment.

J: Check and see how you're feeling toward that part right now.

K: Part of me is feeling really angry with it, and part of me is actually curious about it, wants to find out more about it.



J: So ask the part of you that's angry with it if that part would be willing to step aside for the rest of this session so you can get to know this Quiet-Down Part from an open place.

It is especially important to be in Self when negotiating for Self-leadership because this approach will only work if the protector trusts you. So before going further, I must help Karen unblend from the part that is angry at the protector.

K: The Angry Part just wants to be heard, and it's saying, "God damn it. You're going to stop me from expressing my anger yet again!" It's interesting. This part is angry because somebody wants to stop me from being angry.

The "somebody" is the Quiet-Down Part.

J: Good. I'm glad that part is being heard. See if there's anything else it wants to say.

K: I let it know that I want to get to know this Quiet-Down protector in order to actually free up my anger. It's grumbling a little bit, but it's willing to step back and let us work with the protector. It says, "Well, it better work!"

J: OK. Thank it for being willing to step back. And check and see how you're feeling toward the Quiet-Down Part now.

K: I feel kind of curious.

J: OK. Invite it to tell you what its concerns are about expressing your anger.

K: I just keep hearing this voice saying, "You know, it doesn't really work to get angry." It feels like it's related to my mother.

J: That's **your** understanding of the Quiet-Down Part, which I don't doubt is accurate. But just invite the part to let you know what **its** perspective is.

The idea that it is related to her mother didn't come from the Quiet-Down Part, so I suggest that she really get its perspective. This is not just to make sure that Karen is right. It is also to engage with this protector in order to develop a good relationship with it.

K: It just keeps saying things like, "It doesn't work to get angry. It won't get you what you want. It's better to smooth things over." That's its refrain.

J: Ask the Quiet-Down Part what it's afraid would happen if it let you express your anger.

K: It's just saying it doesn't work. I'm not sure what it's afraid of.

J: Ask it. See if it will tell you.

K: It's very alarmed about the question. I think it's get-

ting a little bit afraid that its power and grip on me might be starting to slip.

Notice how I had to be persistent in asking the Quiet-Down Part about its fears to finally get an answer. It was reluctant to reveal its fears out of concern that it wouldn't be able to protect her anymore.

J: OK. Ask the Quiet-Down Part what it's afraid would happen if its grip on you slipped.

K: Well, it's showing me a picture of my mother in a state of extreme anxiety, agitation, and terror. The picture includes my father, who's angry and yelling. My mother is really terrified of his anger.

J: Ask the part to give you some more information about what it's afraid of.

K: It's showing me that if I get angry, I'm going to get beaten, badly beaten by my father. Now I can actually feel a part of me that's like my mother, that's absolutely terrified of his anger.

J: OK. So there's a lot more we could do with that exile, but for the moment, it sounds like you've got a pretty good understanding of what the Quiet-Down Part is afraid of and why it doesn't want you to express anger. Let it know that you understand.

K: It's saying, "Yes, I **told** you there was a good reason for doing what I'm doing."

J: Good. Check and see if it feels like the Quiet-Down Part is starting to trust you at this point.

K: Not very much.

J: Not very much. Ask it what it doesn't trust about you.

K: It doesn't trust my emotional impulsiveness.

J: I see. So it doesn't trust that you won't slip up and get angry. Is that right?

K: Yeah.

J: See if it trusts that you are actually understanding it and connected to it right now.

K: The Quiet-Down Part seems to be saying that I understand part of it, but there's a sense of it holding itself away from me and not really being willing to be seen completely.

J: So ask it what it's afraid would happen if it let you see it completely.

K: It's afraid it would start to dissolve.

J: It's afraid it would start to dissolve. And then it wouldn't be able to protect you?

K: Right, and then I would just be this helpless child in the face of my father's dangerous anger. Yeah, it's just showing me a picture of how it made me into a very reasonable child who didn't provoke my father—a facade of being reasonable, intelligent, and capable, which actually kept him calmed down.

J: So it sounds like it really did protect you from some serious harm when you were little.

K: I believe so.

J: So let the Quiet-Down Part know your appreciation for what it did for you back then.

Giving a protector this kind of appreciation is the best way to develop trust with it.

K: I appreciate that you gave me a strategy for keeping the family calm. It absolutely wouldn't have worked if I had been an angry child. It would have been a chaotic family instead of a relatively calm one.

J: See how the Quiet-Down Part is responding to you now.

K: It's a lot closer. And it's kind of letting me know that it's been working very hard and it looks somewhat tired of its role. It's actually looking ready to give it up.

J: I bet.

Notice that the Quiet-Down Part has completely shifted. Now that it trusts the Self, it realizes that someone else is there who can help. So it doesn't have to hold so tightly to its role, and it can realize that it is actually tired of its role. This happens frequently.

The standard thing to do next with this session using IFS would be to work with the exile who was so frightened of her father's anger. But since I am doing negotiating for Self-leadership, I go in a different direction.

J: Now ask the Quiet-Down Part what it's actually afraid would happen if it allowed you to speak to your boss about your feelings about being passed over for that position.

K: It says that he would just dismiss me and laugh at me. He would diminish me, devalue me. He wouldn't take me seriously.

J: I'd like you to see if you can assess realistically whether the Quiet-Down Part's fear is likely to happen—that your boss would dismiss you and not take you seriously. See if you can make that assessment from Self.

K: (pause) It really depends on how I speak to him. If I speak with strength and clarity, he'll take me seriously. But if I approach him with an emotional outpouring, I'm more likely to be dismissed.

J: That makes total sense. So it sounds like you could make a plan to speak to him from strength and clarity.

K: Yeah.

J: Sounds good. Ask the Quiet-Down Part if, under those circumstances, it would be willing to let you speak to your boss about this.

K: It's not sure about that. It isn't convinced that I can come from a place that isn't emotional, especially if I am going to talk to my boss about my feelings.

Even though the Quiet-Down Part has softened, it isn't yet ready to agree until she has a solid plan in place to handle what it is afraid of.

J: OK. That makes sense. What's your plan for doing that?

K: I'll prepare beforehand exactly what I'm going to say so I'm clear. And I'll get into a centered place before approaching him so I don't get choked up. Actually, I've talked to some coworkers about this, and a couple of them have offered to coach me on how to talk with him. So that would also be helpful.

J: Good. Explain this to the Quiet-Down Part and see how it feels now about allowing you to do this.

K: The Quiet-Down Part now looks like it has completely laid down its role. It's so worn out that it's barely conscious. It's just completely deflated. I feel a little bit sorry for it. So it's clearly no longer in that role at all.

In this case, not only has the Quiet-Down Part agreed to allow the Self to lead in this situation, but it seems to have transformed and let go of its role altogether. Of course, Karen will need more time to see if this is really true.

J: You might just ask the Quiet-Down Part if there's some other role it would like to adopt in your psyche. It doesn't have to—it's just an option. It can just rest if it wants to. But if it wants to choose something else, it can.

K: It seems to be just fine with observing what happens without taking any particular role. But I notice that I'm feeling Self quite strongly, and feeling it as strength and clarity and groundedness. It feels like the perfect place from which to speak to my boss.

J: So just take a moment to feel that in your body.

K: I actually feel it very much in my body. I feel a lot of presence in my body and a lot of clarity in my head. I have an intention to say very, very clearly what my experience was. I have a sense of setting boundaries around the way I will and won't allow myself to be treated, even though it's after the fact. That feels like a very good place.

J: OK, check and see if the Quiet-Down Part wants to say anything, or if any other parts do, or if you want to say anything to them before we stop.

K: Well, the Quiet-Down Part is glad that I've found this place of strength. The little exile really needs some attention at some point. I can see how little and scared she is. I want to let her know that I see her there, and I'll come back to her at some point. That seems to be all.

It's good that she is aware of the exile work that still needs to be done. Despite the transformation of the protector, the exile is not yet unburdened.

This session demonstrates negotiating for Self-leadership in a situation in which there is some truth to the protector's fears.

Planning the Healthy Behavior You Want

It is helpful to not just get the protector to relax in the situation that is coming up but also to think about how you would like to act if it does. In addition to planning how to

handle any difficulties that might arise, it is also useful to plan the healthy behavior you want.

In the above example, Karen planned to get grounded and centered before approaching her boss and then to speak to him with strength and clarity about why she should have gotten the new position. In the previous example, Mandy planned to set up her schedule with enough time for rest and relaxation while still taking care of everything that is needed for her financial future.

In some cases, you may even want to practice the new healthy behavior, perhaps by doing a role-play with a friend where you try out being assertive, or attuned, or whatever it is you would like to do. That way, when the protector lets go, you won't be in a vacuum. You will already know what to do.

**Exercise: Negotiating for Self-Leadership
with a Protector with Realistic Fears**

Choose a protector whose fears are at least somewhat realistic in a situation coming up soon. Follow the standard IFS procedure for getting to know this protector and developing a trusting relationship with it. Negotiate with the protector to stop enacting its role in that situation and allow you (in Self) to be in charge.

What protector did you choose? _____

What situation did you choose to negotiate around?

What was the protector afraid of in that situation?

What healthy behavior did you choose for that situation? _____

Why were the protector's fears realistic? _____

What plan did you formulate to deal with those fears? _____

How did you reassure the protector that it doesn't need to protect in that situation? _____

Was the protector convinced to let go? _____

If the protector wasn't ready to let go, work on healing the exile(s) it is protecting. Then try negotiating with it again.

When the situation occurs, remind the protector to relax and allow you to act in the healthy way you have planned.

What happened in the actual situation? _____

Did the protector let go? _____

If it didn't let go, what was it afraid of? _____

How did you behave in that situation? _____

Negotiating with a Conditioned Part

One of your parts may behave the way it does largely because of being taught and conditioned to be that way in childhood. For example, suppose you have a People-Pleasing Part that goes out of its way to make other people happy at the expense of your own needs. In the usual IFS situation, this part would be protecting an exile who was harmed or rejected as a child, and once you healed this exile, the People-Pleasing Protector would be willing to let go of its role.

However, suppose that you learned to please others primarily because your parents taught you to be a pleaser. They told you that good people make it their first priority to please others. They rewarded you for pleasing them by praising you and giving you attention and love, and they withheld their praise and love when you didn't please them. In this way, your People-Pleasing Part learned to function that way through childhood conditioning.

If this is the case, the usual process for transforming a protector won't work very well. There really isn't an exile in pain that is being protected by the People-Pleasing Part. Or if it is protecting an exile, this protection isn't the primary

reason for the part's pleasing behavior. Therefore, you can't expect that healing this exile will make enough difference for the People-Pleasing Part to transform.

Here is how to use negotiating for Self-leadership with a conditioned part, using the People-Pleasing Part as an example. Explain to the part how your life would be better if you paid more attention to your own needs and asserted yourself. Explain that your friends will still appreciate you even if you don't go out of your way to please them all the time. Or if one or two of your friends might, in fact, pull away from you for not pleasing them, you can handle that. You could even let go of those friends if they don't change. You would prefer to have friends who will appreciate your ability to assert yourself and take care of yourself.

If you live in a more problematic situation in which you would really be ostracized if you asserted yourself (or acted in some other healthy way), the process isn't so simple. In order to negotiate for Self-leadership, you will have to figure out how to deal with the rejection or attack you might experience if your protector let go of its role, or devise a plan for how to change the situation or get away from it. This type of situation was covered in the previous section.

The same approach applies to any part that was primarily conditioned. For example, suppose you were conditioned to be angry, controlling, dependent, rebellious, judgmental, perfectionistic, overly intellectual, or some other behavioral pattern. If the part that acts this way is also protecting an exile in pain, you can approach transforming it in the usual way, but if the primary reason for the part's behavior is conditioning, negotiating for Self-leadership will probably be the best way to get this part to change.

In this case, the part may be afraid that if it doesn't enact its usual role, it won't be rewarded the way it was in childhood, or those rewards may be withheld. Reassure the People-Pleasing Part that you will still get the connection you need from people in your life, or even if you lose someone, you would still prefer to be acting in a healthy way. The protector's fears won't be intense because there isn't much underlying exile pain. It primarily fears not getting rewarded or praised, which can still be compelling but isn't a strong fear.

Therefore, it is helpful to explain to the part the advantages you want to have in your life by acting in a healthier manner. If your part was conditioned to be angry or controlling, explain to it how people will be happier with you and more connected with you if you let go of that behavior. If your part was conditioned to be dependent, explain the advantages of being self-supporting. If your part was conditioned to be an intellectualizer, explain the advantages of being in touch with your body and your emotions. And so on.

Then ask the part if it is willing to let go of its usual role and allow you to function in a healthy way. It is likely to agree.

When to Negotiate for Self-Leadership

There are four common situations in which it is useful to negotiate with a protector for Self-leadership:

1. When there isn't time to heal the exile before a problematic life situation arises
2. When you have healed the exile, but the protector needs additional help in letting go of its role

3. When the protector took on its protective role largely through childhood conditioning
4. In real time, at the moment of the life situation

Before Healing the Exile

There are many circumstances in which you don't have time to fully unburden the exile that is being protected before a situation will arise in which you want to change your behavior.

For example, Marianne had serious trauma and therefore a massive number of intense protectors. It took us months to even begin to have access to any of her exiles and even longer to unburden them. In the meantime, she occasionally encountered a life situation in which a protector was getting her into trouble.

This protector, which she called the Defuser, engaged with angry, dangerous men to try to defuse their rage in group situations, even though she didn't need to. Marianne brought up one of these situations that was coming up during the next week. I helped her learn to negotiate with the Defuser during the session so it became willing to relax its usual destructive role and stay away from a dangerous man.

Another common situation is when you are near the end of the time allotted for your IFS session. You have gotten to know a protector and have created trust with it, and you are now ready to access the exile being protected and heal it. However, there isn't time in the session to go through all the healing steps of witnessing, reparenting, retrieval, and unburdening.

Nevertheless, you are facing a troublesome situation in the upcoming week in which you would like to behave in a

healthy manner. You can spend a few minutes negotiating with the protector to allow you to lead in that situation. Plan to come back to the exile in the next session, if possible, to do the healing work with it that would then allow the protector to fully relax.

After Healing the Exile

Normally, after you have unburdened an exile, you then reaccess its protector and ask if it is aware of the work that has happened and how the exile is transformed and now feels safe. You then ask the protector if it can now let go of its role, and often it can.

However, sometimes the protector is still not ready to do so. This could be because of another exile it is protecting that hasn't been healed yet or for a variety of other reasons (see Chapter 15 in *Self-Therapy*). Of course, you want to ferret out the reasons the protector is holding on to its role and resolve them so the protector can let go.

In addition to this, you can negotiate with the protector to see if it would be willing to relax and let go of its role (or at least experiment with letting go) by explaining how its role is no longer needed, especially in a certain situation that is coming up soon. You have a good chance of being successful at this because one important exile has been healed.

Here is an example of how to negotiate for Self-leadership at the end of a session, after an exile has been healed. In this session, George has been working with a protector, the Slave Driver, which continually judges him and pushes him to overwork.

So far in the session, he has gotten to know the Slave Driver and has received its permission to work with the exile it is protecting, called the Little Boy. He has gone through

the healing steps with the Little Boy, who has been unburdened and transformed.

Now he turns his attention back to the Slave Driver and asks if it might now be willing to let go of judging him. It feels somewhat better, but it is still concerned that he won't work hard enough to be successful. He reminds the Slave Driver that the Little Boy is feeling fine about himself, so he will be OK even without approval from George's boss. The Slave Driver relaxes some, but it still isn't ready to completely give up judging. It is afraid of George being lazy and getting bad performance reviews from his boss. George's "laziness" comes from a fear of being inadequate, which comes from the Little Boy. So George explains to the Slave Driver that he isn't likely to procrastinate now that the Little Boy is feeling good about himself.

George also explains to the Slave Driver that its judgments have been part of the problem. It has been making the Little Boy feel inadequate. The Slave Driver is shocked to even consider that. It is trusting George a lot more now, but it's still worried about his not working hard enough. George says that he agrees with the Slave Driver's goal of working hard in order to do a good job and reminds it that he has good work capacities and has been working well on his job.

The Slave Driver likes that idea, but it's still worried about getting judged by the boss. So George reminds the Slave Driver that George isn't a child anymore and is no longer under his father's power. And his boss is pretty reasonable most of the time, unlike his father. However, the Slave Driver is still afraid of the pain that will result if he is judged. George explains that if his boss does judge him and it hurts the Little Boy, George will take care of the Boy just

as he did earlier in the session, so the Boy will end up feeling good about himself. George also explains that if his boss does get unreasonable, George will talk to him about how he is treating George.

George asks the Slave Driver if it would be willing to experiment with letting George put this plan into operation for a trial period. The Slave Driver is finally willing to try this new approach and see if it works.

The Slave Driver had a number of different fears, but when George persisted, it finally relented and agreed to relax.

A Conditioned Protector

See the previous section on Negotiating with a Conditioned Part.

In Real Time

After you have negotiated with a protector in a session, it is helpful to follow this up with further awareness when the life situation actually happens. Even though the protector has agreed to let Self lead in that situation, it may forget and take over in the heat of the moment.

Therefore, remember to be aware when the life situation comes up and notice if the protector starts to take over. Then remind the protector that it agreed to let you lead in that situation. Make an effort to handle the situation from Self and not allow the usual dysfunctional behavior that comes from the protector. For example, recall the end of the session with Mandy. I suggested that she be aware whenever she was setting up her schedule and that she remind the part not to create a schedule that is all work.

If the protector is still reluctant, ask if it would be willing to allow you to lead as an experiment so the protector can see how it works.

Help Sheet for Negotiating for Self-Leadership

This Help Sheet can be used as a guide in working on yourself or in facilitating a practice partner or client.

1. Create a trusting relationship with the protector.
2. Choose a specific life situation that is coming up soon.
3. Think through the healthy behavior you would like in that situation instead of the protector's usual behavior.
4. Ask the protector if it would be willing to relax and allow you to lead from Self in that situation.
5. If the protector isn't willing, ask what it is afraid would happen if it did.
6. Reassure the protector about why each of its fears isn't likely to happen. This may include updating.
7. If there is some validity to one of the protector's fears, formulate a plan for how you will handle that feared outcome.
8. Explain this plan to the protector and ask if it would be willing to relax and allow you to lead in the situation. If it has further concerns, address each one until it agrees.
9. Explain to the protector the advantages for you if it relaxes and allows you to function in a healthy way.
10. Be aware when the life situation arises and remind the protector to allow you to take the lead. Enact the healthy behavior that you planned.

This chapter has shown you how to negotiate with a protector for Self-leadership and when it is useful to do so. This is not a substitute for healing the exile or exiles that are being protected. It is a preliminary step or an adjunct to exile unburdening. For more detail, see my booklet *Negotiating for Self-Leadership in IFS*. I have also developed an online tool, *Self-Therapy Journey*,⁵ for personal growth and psychological healing, which implements negotiating for Self-leadership.

5. www.selftherapyjourney.com

CHAPTER 8

Recognizing Self-like Parts

Some parts think they are the Self. This means that when you are blended with such a part, you think you are in Self, and you don't recognize the limitations of the part you are blended with. These parts are called "Self-like" not because they necessarily have more of the qualities of Self, such as compassion or connectedness, but instead because they appear to be the Self.

Dominant Self-like Parts

I have noticed a special case of Self-like Parts, which I call *Dominant Self-like Parts*. Most Self-like Parts are activated only at certain times, and when they are, you think you are in Self and don't know that you're blended with that part. However, Dominant Self-like Parts go further. If you have a Dominant Self-like Part, it is activated almost all the time in your life, and it runs the show in your psyche. It doesn't just believe that it is the Self—it believes that it is you. It may even believe that you don't have any parts.

For example, one of my clients had a Dominant Self-like Part that rigidly controlled her psyche most of the time. It not only kept her exiles hidden but also kept her other protectors and her Self on the sidelines. It was terrified that if it let go of control even the slightest bit, chaos would ensue or something very dangerous would happen. It recognized that she had parts, but it wouldn't allow any of her other parts to

speak to her for fear that this would lead to a breakdown of the Self-like Part's control and would result in chaos.

Another client lived in his head almost all the time. He had a Dominant Intellectualizer Self-like Part that ran his life from his intellect and didn't allow emotions, intuition, body awareness, images, or any other inner phenomena to occur. This client didn't see this Intellectualizer as a part of him. He just believed that was the way he was.

A Dominant Self-like Part can take any number of different forms. What makes it dominant is the fact that it doesn't believe it is a part. Therefore, the most important thing in dealing with a Dominant Self-like Part is to recognize that it is a part—that you have other parts, and most importantly, that this part isn't the Self. Then you can ask it to step aside so you can experience being in Self. The Dominant Self-like Part is probably afraid that if it steps aside, you will be overwhelmed by one or more of your exiles or that your internal system will become chaotic. In some cases, these fears might even be well founded; for some people, this could happen. However, in most cases, this fear isn't realistic.

If a Dominant Self-like Part does step aside and you start to become flooded with pain, immediately ask the exile that is overwhelming you to contain its pain so that you can be safely in Self. Let the exile know that you will work with it later when you are solidly in Self; then you can really heal it. After all, that is why exiles flood you—they want to be heard and healed. When flooding is a danger, it helps to have someone else witnessing your session and supporting you. Once you have gotten your exile(s) to agree not to flood you, explain this to the Dominant Self-like Part and see if it can step aside. Or if you don't yet have access to the exile that might flood you, explain to the Dominant Self-like

Part that you won't allow your exiles to flood you; you will negotiate with them to stay separate from you so you can truly be in Self.

Flooding isn't always the issue with Dominant Self-like Parts. They might have any of the normal fears that protectors have. The important thing is to recognize that they aren't you and they aren't Self. Then the work is fairly straightforward.

THERAPIST NOTE

When a client is blended with a Self-like Part (Dominant or not), it is often difficult for your client to realize this. It is your job as therapist to be a "parts detector" and recognize this blending. When you see it, suggest to the client that he or she may be blended with a part rather than being in Self and describe what makes you think so. Ask the client if that feels accurate to him or her rather than just telling the client that he or she is blended. Always ask what the client thinks. Once the client agrees, proceed to work with the Self-like Part to get it to step aside and allow the client to be in Self.

If the client doesn't recognize that he or she is blended with a part, you can try *direct access*,⁶ which involves you interacting with the Self-like Part directly as a part. You can temporarily provide the Self in the system as you get to know the Self-like Part. Once this part opens up and begins to trust you, it may step aside and allow the client to be in Self. This permits you to let go of direct access and return to the standard way of working in IFS.

6. Direct access will be covered in Vol. 5 in the *Self-Therapy Series*.

Subtly Judgmental Parts

In Chapter 6 of *Self-Therapy*, I discussed *concerned parts*, which have negative feelings toward the target part—the part you are working on. You learned to check for being blended with a concerned part by noticing how you feel toward the target part. If you feel judgmental, angry, or frightened, for example, you are blended with a concerned part, and you ask it to step aside so you can work with the target part from Self. However, even though you have done this and accessed Self, a concerned part might blend with you later in the session without your realizing it. Frequently this is a Judgmental Part whose judgment is subtle, so you can miss it and believe that you are still in Self.

As you are getting to know the target part, you might begin to feel a little angry or critical toward it, or you might want it to go away. You might start out in Self, being open and nonjudgmental, but as you learn more about the problems the target part is causing in your life, you might start to feel annoyed at it.

For example, suppose you are getting to know an Arrogant Part that feels superior to people. As you recognize all the situations in your life in which this Arrogant Part operates, you realize that it is a major factor in your unhappiness because it has kept your heart closed for a long time. This Arrogant Part looks down on the women you are involved with romantically, causing you to break off relationships that had real potential. It is condescending to your coworkers, causing them to be angry at you. It acts arrogantly toward your friends when they don't come through for you, which has ended some friendships. By now, you see all the damage this part has caused, and you want to get rid of it. You can't

help but feel resentment toward it for damaging your connections with people. These negative feelings come from a Judgmental Self-like Part that has crept in and blended with you. Though this is a natural reaction, it keeps you from being in Self because Self is not judgmental or resentful.

Here is another example of judgment creeping in. Suppose you have a quiet, self-effacing part that keeps you from speaking up or asserting yourself. At first, you feel quite open to connecting with it, and you're curious about why it needs to behave this way. However, as you begin to get to know it, a part of you surfaces that sees this part as a wimp and feels disdainful toward it. It is such a loser! You feel ashamed of it. A Judgmental Self-like Part has blended with you, and you are no longer asking the Self-Effacing Part questions from an open place. The questions begin to sound more like attacks. "What makes you act like this?" really means "What's wrong with you?"

Once you realize that you are blended with a Judgmental Part, ask it to step aside so you can get to know the target part from an open place. You may want to acknowledge that you understand why the part might feel judgmental and then explain why that attitude prevents you from doing effective IFS work. If the Judgmental Part won't step aside easily, follow the procedure you learned in Chapter 6 of *Self-Therapy* for working with concerned parts and getting them to step aside.

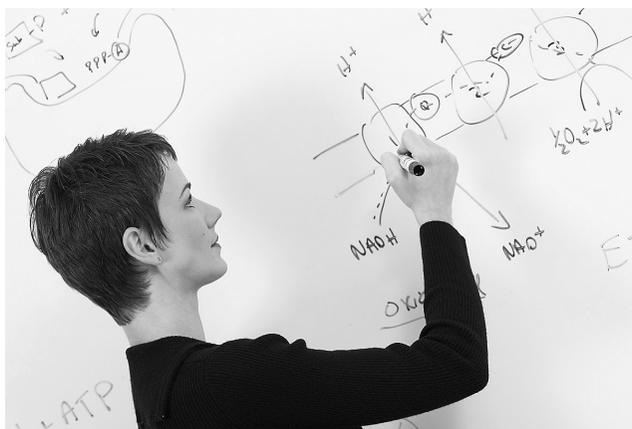
Intellectualizers

When you are getting to know a part (see Chapters 7 and 11 in *Self-Therapy*), it is common to think you are in Self when in fact an Intellectualizer Part has taken over. One sign of this is that you analyze the target part rather than

asking questions and listening for its responses. Ideally, you should allow the *target part* to tell you about itself. When you are truly in Self, you aren't an intellectual observer who is figuring the part out. You are a curious listener who is open to learning things from the target part, and what you hear is often a surprise. If you aren't open in this way, you may be blended with an Intellectualizer that needs to have everything figured out.

For example, suppose you are getting to know a part that withdraws in social settings. You remember that, in the past, you have withdrawn because you were afraid of people's rejection and judgment. This is useful information, but it isn't coming from the Withdrawing Part—it is coming from an Intellectualizer who is psychologizing about the Withdrawing Part. You aren't asking the part questions and being open to its answers; instead, your Intellectualizer has taken over.

Once you realize you are blended with an Intellectualizer, focus on it. Validate the usefulness of intellectual insight, but explain that it derails the process if it happens when you



are trying to get to know a part. Ask the Intellectualizer to step aside so you can truly be in Self, but let it know that it can come back in at the end of the session to correlate what you learned with previous insights and develop a fuller intellectual understanding of your psychology. Intellectual Parts *are* valuable—at the right time and place. When a part feels valued like this, it is more likely to cooperate with you.

Once the Intellectualizer has stepped aside, here's how to relate to the Withdrawing Part (or any part) from Self: ask it what it is afraid of that makes it withdraw, and wait for its answer with an open mind. The answer should come from the Withdrawing Part, not from your head.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell whether you are blended with an Intellectualizer. When you are working with a part that doesn't communicate in words, you often have to interpret what its communications mean. For example, suppose you are working with a part that communicates visually. It starts out looking like a black stone. You reassure the part about one of its fears, and the image of the part shifts to a piece of granite with striations in it. You interpret this to mean that the part is less closed to you. It may be hard to tell whether you are really communicating with the part or figuring it out intellectually.

Ask yourself whether you are open to whatever shifts in image, feeling, or body sensation come from the part. You may have to interpret what they mean, but you aren't just figuring out the part with your head. You are waiting for its communications and understanding them, and the understanding often comes from your intuition rather than your intellect. This means you are in Self. If, instead, you are trying to figure out the part based on your previous

understanding of it and your memories, you are probably blended with an Intellectualizer.

Impatient Parts

The following is a common situation that can be tricky to detect. You have been doing a session for a while and you are eager to get results. You naturally want your parts to heal so you will feel better, but there is an extra push to get on with the work. You can't just trust the IFS process to unfold in its own time.

For example, you may push to access an exile before you have really connected with its protector. Or if a concerned part is getting in your way, you may want to simply get past it without acknowledging it. You label parts as "resistant" when they won't let you in fast enough. Whenever something happens to delay your immediate therapeutic goal, instead of calmly getting to know the part that is blocking the work, you get frustrated and impatient and want to barge ahead. It is understandable that a part of you might feel impatient at times. After all, you do want to complete the IFS process with the parts you are focusing on so you can resolve your pain and function better in your life.

However, being in a hurry to heal your parts actually slows things down because it tends to trigger protectors that block your path. The target part may not trust that you really want to get to know it, and therefore it won't open up to you. It may sense that you just want to get past it to an exile, so it may refuse to cooperate. Parts will resist you if they don't trust that you really want to know them. Therefore, in IFS, the fastest way to resolve an issue is to work slowly, patiently, and respectfully with all parts involved.

When you realize you are blended with an Impatient Part,

focus on it. Validate its desire to get on with the work, and then remind it that the fastest way to do this is by respecting all parts and following the flow of the work. Ask it to step aside so you can do that from Self.

Self doesn't push. When you are in Self, you know you are headed toward healing, but you aren't in a hurry. You are respectful of all your parts and their fears that may temporarily block your progress. You are interested in getting to know all the parts involved in the issue you're working on, and you want to hear whatever they need to say, however long that takes. You hold a space for all your parts to be known without losing sight of your goal of healing.

In Self, we recognize that it may be just as important to know a part that seems to be "getting in the way" as the part you are trying to access. We don't label any parts as "resistant." A resistant part is simply a protector that isn't yet ready to let you proceed with the work. It has played this protective role for a long time. Its protection was probably needed when it took on this role in your childhood. We respect the part rather than being impatient with it.

Let's look at an example. Delia is working with a part that gets irrationally angry at people. She gets to know it and



realizes that it is protecting an exile who was abandoned as a child. She gets permission from the Angry Part and starts working with the Abandoned Exile. Almost immediately, she starts spacing out. This is coming from a different protector that is afraid of her being overwhelmed by the exile's pain. Delia focuses on the Spacey Protector and asks it to step aside. She doesn't really take the time to appreciate its fears because they aren't valid in her current life.

It does agree to step aside, but then as soon as Delia goes back to access the Abandoned Exile, a Wall goes up and she can't see or feel the exile. Now she starts to get impatient and tries to get past the Wall, but that doesn't work. This frustrates her. What she needs to do is access the Wall Protector and ask it, in a respectful way, what it is afraid would happen if it allowed her to access the Abandoned Exile. She needs to appreciate its fears and how they were valid in her childhood, and then reassure the Wall that what it fears isn't going to happen in her life now. Then she can ask it to step aside.

If the Wall still won't step aside, instead of getting impatient, Delia should take the time to really get to know the Wall and develop a trusting relationship with it. After all, this probably isn't the only situation in Delia's life where that Wall Part gets triggered, so taking the time to work with it will pay important dividends in her future IFS work. In fact, the Wall is every bit as important as the Abandoned Exile. And the same goes for the Spacey Part. When Delia isn't blended with an Impatient Part, she will take the time to welcome each part that comes up and spend whatever time is necessary with it.

Agenda-Driven Parts

When you are in Self, you aren't attached to an agenda about where the session should go. You aren't completely goalless, because you do want to heal and transform your parts in order to resolve the issues that are important to you to address. However, this goal is in the background. You trust the IFS process and the natural healing powers of Self and your parts. You don't push things in a certain direction.

You may know what you want to work on to get the changes you want. You may have an idea of where you think a session should go or where you think it will go, but if you are in Self, you aren't attached to these ideas. You recognize that a session may go in an entirely unexpected direction. In fact, some of the very best IFS sessions are complete surprises. You end up exploring parts that you never expected to and discovering new and important insights.

When you are truly in Self, you are content to begin at a trailhead of your choosing and see what unfolds. At times in a session, you may need to make a decision about which part to focus on, but you aren't influenced by rigid ideas of what is supposed to happen.

This doesn't mean that you allow your IFS work to just bounce from one part to another. It is useful to choose a target part and then ask other parts that arise to step aside so you can continue to work with that part, as we discussed in Chapter 2. However, if one part won't step aside or if a part arises that clearly needs to be worked with, you are OK with switching your focus. You don't become rigidly stuck on staying with your original target part no matter what.

There is some subtlety in distinguishing between, on the one hand, the natural goals of Self and the need to stay

on track with your session and, on the other hand, being driven by an agenda. Therefore it is sometimes not easy to recognize when you have become blended with an Agenda-Driven Self-like Part.

When an Agenda-Driven Part has taken over, you think you know where the session should go and you try to make it go there. You ignore indications that something else is more important. For example, Dale was working on his Depressed Part because he really wanted relief from depression. In the middle of getting to know the Depressed Part, an Inner Critic Part kept jumping in and shaming him. However, Dale was so focused on the Depressed Part that he ignored this Inner Critic, even though he later realized that this Critic was causing huge problems in his life and was even partly responsible for his depression. It would have been better, in this case, for Dale to switch target parts and work with the Critic. He could always come back to the Depressed Part in another session.

When you are blended with an Agenda-Driven Part, you may think you know why a protector is playing its role rather than being open to learning from it. You may think you know what happened in childhood to wound an exile rather than learning about it from the exile. For example, Daniel had worked with a protector and had gotten permission to access the exile it was protecting. He asked the exile what it was feeling, and it said it was afraid. Daniel immediately assumed that it was afraid of being hit because he remembered being hit a lot by his father. He then proceeded to try to reparent the exile around this abuse.

Daniel was blended with an Agenda-Driven Part and was therefore trying to direct where the session went. He should

have taken the time to ask the exile what it was afraid of or to ask it what happened in childhood to cause it to be so afraid. It might have been a different exile from the one that was hit by his father, and the session might have gone in a more fruitful direction if Daniel had been more open to following the IFS process.

When you are agenda-driven, you may think you know what kind of reparenting an exile needs rather than asking it. If you try to give the exile what *you think* it needs, it may not work, because the exile may really need something else. In the case of Daniel's exile who was hit by his father, Daniel wanted to jump in and protect it from the father by fighting with him. But the exile wanted Daniel to talk with his father and convince him to stop hitting the exile and instead listen to it. It is always more healing to follow what the exile wants for the reparenting step.

The same kind of thing can happen in the retrieval and unburdening steps. You may try to perform the retrieval or unburdening that you think the exile needs rather than asking it what it needs.

When you act from an Agenda-Driven Part, this can lead to a variety of problems. One of your parts may stop talking to you. A part might get angry at you or rebel against you. One of the steps in the IFS process may grind to a halt. The session may proceed but feel flat and disconnected (see Pretend-Therapy Parts below).

Watch out for these clues, and if you find them, look for an Agenda-Driven Part. Ask it to step aside and allow you to be in Self. Then take your time and allow the IFS process to unfold in its natural healing way.

THERAPIST NOTE

Watch out for *your* being blended with an Agenda-Driven Part. As therapists, we are used to looking for a deeper understanding of what is going on with a client, which they may not see. This can be useful in determining how to facilitate a session, but don't get attached to your interpretations of the client's underlying issues. Allow the IFS process to unfold. You may be surprised at what happens.

Since you have experience with the IFS process, you may have an idea of where a session is likely to go. This is fine, but make sure to be open to where it actually needs to go. We IFS therapists know much more about the work than our clients do, but they are the experts on their own psyches because they can experience what is going on from the inside, while we have to rely on what they tell us. Don't allow your agenda to blind you to what is actually transpiring in each moment and where the process needs to go next.

Pretend-Therapy Parts

Imagine that you are doing an IFS session focusing on an Inner Critic. You check to see how you are feeling toward that Critic to determine if you are in Self (see Chapter 6 in *Self-Therapy*). You realize that you are feeling annoyed at it, but you may figure that you know how to be in Self. You know what you are supposed to be feeling—interested, accepting, openly curious—so instead of asking your Annoyed Part to step aside, you just try to create those qualities in yourself. As you get to know the Critic (see Chapter 7 in *Self-Therapy*), it seems a little distant, but you ignore that

and continue getting to know it. You have an idea what is behind the Critic's attacks—it is trying to get you to work harder—and you imagine it giving that response without really listening to it. You also don't check to see how the Critic is responding to you.

Then later in the session, when you ask permission from the Critic to work with the exile it is protecting (see Chapter 10 in *Self-Therapy*), you just imagine that it says yes because that is what is supposed to happen. When you start working with the exile that feels inadequate, it seems somewhat inaccessible, but you assume that is good enough. When you ask the exile to show you what happened in childhood that caused it to feel inadequate (see Chapter 12 in *Self-Therapy*), you don't wait for it to respond. Instead, you search your memories from childhood for what might have caused it to feel inadequate.

When it comes to reparenting (see Chapter 13 in *Self-Therapy*), you rush in to care for the exile rather than checking to see what it actually needs (see Inner Caretaking Parts below). You don't check to see if the exile is taking in what you are giving and how it is responding. You go through the motions of the unburdening ritual (see Chapter 14 in *Self-Therapy*) and imagine the burdens being released even though the process seems a little flat.

When you check with the Critic to see if it can now let go of its protective role since the exile is healed, you assume it says yes. The whole session seems to go just the way it



should, and you ignore the fact that you didn't really feel very much.

Over the next few weeks, the barrage of self-judgment from that Critic doesn't change. This is because you weren't really in Self during the session. You were blended with a *Pretend-Therapy Part*. You were going through the motions of an IFS session rather than really sensing and feeling what was going on. When a part didn't do what you wanted, you (unconsciously) faked it. At other times, you imagined the responses you knew were supposed to be there. You did this in an effort to do a good job and reach your therapeutic goals, or in order to please your therapist or practice partner (if you had one).

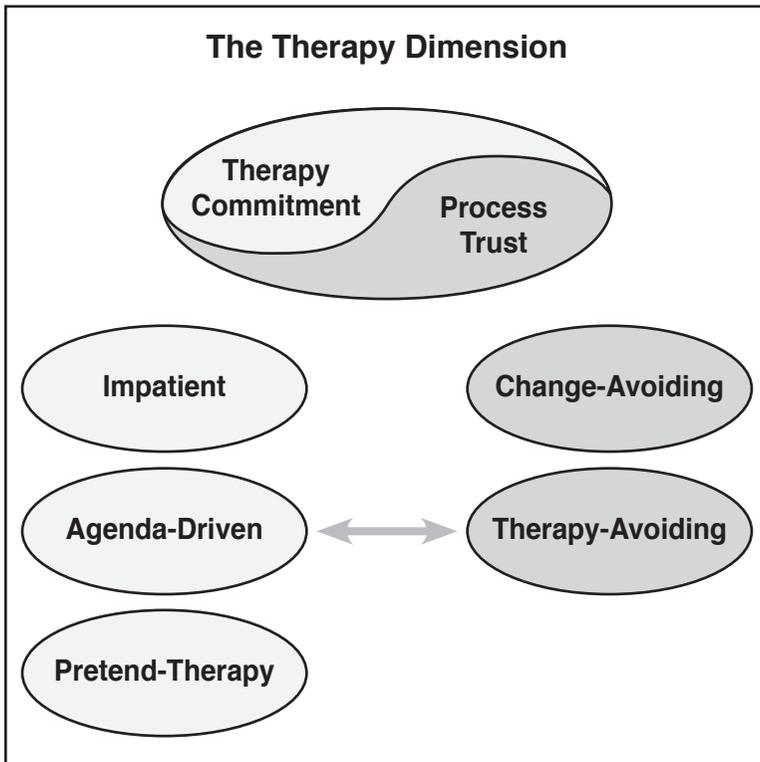
THERAPIST NOTE

Pretend-Therapy Parts are usually difficult for clients to be aware of, especially because clients are often invested in doing a good job, so it may be hard to admit that something else is going on. You may have to recognize when a Pretend-Therapy Part is operating and point it out to the client. Be careful not to do this in a judgmental way since the client is trying hard to do well and perhaps to please you.

Rather than pointing this out, another option is to carefully check with the client at each step of the process to make sure he or she really listened to the part rather than assuming its responses, and to make sure that the part is really feeling the emotion the client says it is, and so on. This way, you can train the client to do real IFS work rather than pretend work.

When you realize that you are blended with a Pretend-Therapy Part, ask it to step aside. Then pay careful attention to what is really going on. Don't try to get into Self. Just ask parts to step aside and notice if they say no or if they don't step aside. If you have any doubts about whether or not you are in Self, pay attention to your parts. If a part seems distant or not very vivid, investigate what is going on to produce this. Make sure you are actually feeling the emotions of your parts.

If this isn't sufficient, you may have to work with the Pretend-Therapy Part directly rather than just asking it to step



aside. Find out what is driving it to fake the therapy. You might even want to do a whole IFS session on the Pretend-Therapy Part. It might be a Striving Part that is trying very hard to be a good therapy practitioner. It might be a People-Pleasing Part that is trying to please your therapist or your IFS practice partner. If your spouse has encouraged you to go into therapy, it might be trying to please him or her.

Impatient, Agenda-Driven, and Pretend-Therapy Parts are all patterns in the *Therapy Dimension* of the Pattern System,⁷ which shows the healthy capacity that will transform them.

All three patterns in the ovals on the left are extreme versions of the *Therapy Commitment Capacity* above them. This capacity involves being committed to doing your inner work rather than avoiding it. Each of these three patterns is a dysfunctional way of being committed to the therapy process. They involve pushing or faking the process instead of trusting it.

The *Process Trust Capacity* is what is needed to transform them. This capacity involves trusting the IFS therapeutic process. You trust that you can take your time, accept all your parts, get to know them, and develop relationships with them. You trust that the process will take you where you need to go without your trying to make it go in a certain direction. You trust that it will lead you to transformation in a reasonable time period without your having to push. When something doesn't go the way you expect, you don't try to coerce your parts into doing the "right thing." Instead,

7. *The Pattern System* is a systematic, comprehensive way of understanding and diagnosing your personality that I have developed. See Appendix C for an introduction to the Pattern System.

you become curious about what is happening. You don't see this as a problem but rather as an indication of something new to be investigated. You recognize that this unexpected occurrence may be just as valuable to explore as the direction you were going in.

The patterns on the right side of the graphic—the Change-Avoiding and Therapy-Avoiding Patterns—are not Self-like Parts; they will be covered in a later volume in the *Self-Therapy Series*.

Guarded Parts and Self-Compassion

When you are working with an exile who has shown you some of its pain (see Chapter 11 in *Self-Therapy*), if you are truly in Self, you will feel compassion for the exile. Compassion is the natural response of the heart to someone who is suffering, whether it is another person or your own exile. It means that you care about the person or the exile, and you especially care about the fact that it is suffering. Compassion is loving-kindness, which is a form of love. Your heart opens with love for the person (or part) who is in pain.

For the IFS process to be successful, it isn't enough to be curious and open with an exile the way you would with a protector because compassion is vitally necessary for healing an exile's suffering. An exile's pain can be so formidable and full of suffering that it may not open up to you if you aren't feeling the tender, gentle quality of compassion. The compassion itself is part of what is healing for an exile.

When you check to see how you feel toward the exile, sometimes you may just feel "neutral." You may be separate from the exile and not judging it or wanting to get rid of it, but you also may not be feeling particularly caring or connected. If the exile hasn't yet shown you any of its pain, this

is OK. However, if the exile **has** shown you some of its pain and you **still** feel neutral, you aren't in Self. You may not be feeling anything negative toward the exile, so it is easy to assume that you are in Self. But you aren't. You are blended with a Self-like Part that feels guarded about opening up to the exile. It wants to stay distant from the exile or remain intellectual. It is crucial to notice when this happens and not proceed with the exile work until you are truly in Self and your heart is open to the exile.

Ask the Self-like Guarded Part to relax and allow your natural connectedness and compassion to arise. If that doesn't work, ask the Guarded Part what it is afraid would happen if it stepped back and allowed you to feel compassion for the exile. Often it will say that it is afraid that you will be overwhelmed by the exile's pain. It doesn't realize that Self is there, so it thinks that if it allows you to be open emotionally, you will become blended with the exile and overwhelmed by its pain, which may have happened in the past.

It is important not to mistake empathy for compassion. *Empathy* means resonating with someone else's pain (or an exile's pain). *Compassion* means feeling loving-kindness toward someone in pain (or an exile in pain). Empathy often leads to compassion. That is, when you resonate with a person's pain, it is likely to bring up your compassion for him or her. But empathy and compassion are quite different experiences.

The Guarded Part may be afraid that if it steps aside, you will empathize with the exile's pain, which could be problematic if the pain is too intense. Explain to the Guarded Part that if it steps aside, you will be in Self and will feel your natural compassion for the exile. You won't be drawn

too much into the exile's pain. And if the exile starts to flood you, you will negotiate with the exile to contain its feelings so you can heal it. This will probably help the Guarded Part realize that it is safe for it to relax.

Once the Guarded Part steps back, check to see if you now feel compassion for the exile. If so, you are probably in Self and can proceed with the work because you will now be a healing presence for the exile. If you still don't feel compassion, check to see if there is another Guarded Part or some other protector that is blocking your compassion. Sometimes a Guarded Part blocks compassion because it is afraid that if you feel compassion, you will be soft and vulnerable to being hurt. It may think that any gentle emotion is a sign of weakness. You can reassure the Guarded Part that Self is both strong and compassionate, so it would be safe for the part to step aside and allow you to be in Self. You can even let the Guarded Part know that if it thinks you are in danger, it can jump back in to protect you. This probably won't be necessary, but it will help the Guarded Part feel OK about stepping back.

Inner Caretakers

The opposite of a Guarded Part is an Inner Caretaker, which is a part that is overly invested in caring for your exiles. Since it is important and natural for Self to care for your exiles, it is easy to get fooled when an Inner Caretaker is blended with you. You might ask: What could possibly be wrong with caring for my exiles? Why do you say that caretaking isn't coming from Self? How can I distinguish between Self and an Inner Caretaker? Here's how.

When you are in the witnessing step (see Chapter 12 in *Self-Therapy*), it is important to fully witness what hap-



pened in childhood to cause an exile's pain. This opens up the exile for healing in the subsequent steps of the IFS process. However, sometimes a Caretaking Part steps in to care for the exile before the witnessing is complete, even sometimes before the witnessing has really begun.

Let's see how this might happen. Janie was working with an exile who was deprived of the love and caring it needed. She accessed this Deprived Exile and asked it to show her how it was deprived in childhood. The exile began to show Janie how her mother was cold and distant. Then Janie jumped in and immediately started holding and nurturing the exile before she had understood the ways that the exile was deprived and especially before she had really felt its pain.

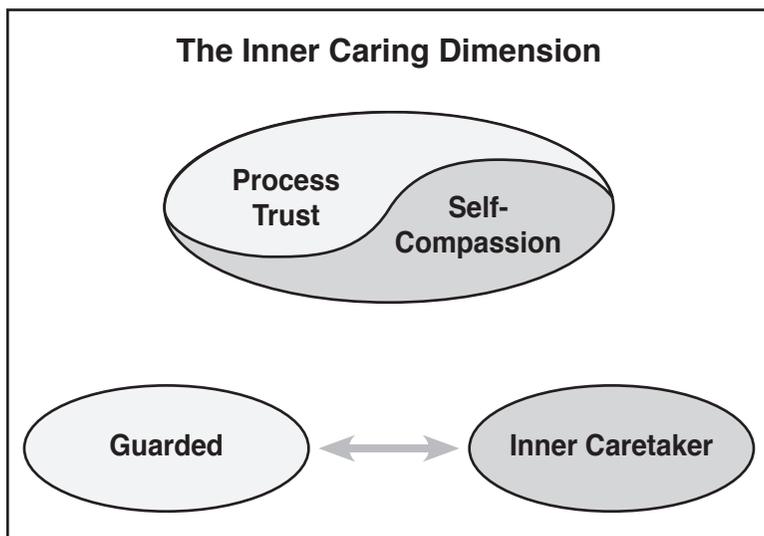
An exile does need to feel your compassion during witnessing, and it is often a good idea to directly convey your caring and compassion to the exile so it feels safe to open up to you. Sometimes the exile may even need some direct nurturing to help it feel safe and connected to you before proceeding with the witnessing. However, this caring should not happen instead of witnessing. Janie's Inner Caretaker jumped in to begin reparenting before the witnessing was complete. As a result, the witnessing didn't fully happen, and therefore the Deprived Exile wasn't fully open for the reparenting, retrieval, and unburdening to follow. Therefore, it wasn't fully healed.

Once you have expressed your caring for an exile and it feels good with you, ask it questions so you can understand what happened to it in childhood and witness its pain. Don't move on to reparenting until the exile has shown you everything it needs to show you about its pain and the origins of its wounds. If you find that you want to nurture the exile instead of witnessing its pain, you are probably blended with an Inner Caretaker that can't tolerate the exile's pain and needs to take it away. This is not Self but rather a Self-like Part.

This can also happen in the reparenting step (see Chapter 13 in *Self-Therapy*). Once you (in Self) have gone back in your imagination and entered the original scene where the exile was wounded, you ask the exile what it needs from you for healing. However, sometimes you may start nurturing the exile without waiting to find out what it actually needs for healing. This would also be coming from a Self-like Inner Caretaker, not from Self. This can result in misdirected reparenting, where you give the exile what **you** think it needs, not what the exile **actually** needs for healing.

The Guarded Pattern and Inner Caretaker Pattern are the two opposing patterns in the *Inner Caring Dimension* of the Pattern System. (See graphic on next page.)

The Inner Caretaker is an extreme version of Self-Compassion. The Process Trust Capacity transforms the Inner Caretaker. It involves relaxing and trusting the IFS process rather than rushing into caring. The Guarded Pattern is an extreme version of Process Trust. With the Guarded Pattern, you may think you are flowing with the IFS process since you feel neutral, but in fact you have been taken over by a Guarded Part. And, of course, Self-Compassion transforms the Guarded Pattern.



Seeing an Image of Yourself

Here is another way to tell if you are blended with a Self-like Part. If you see an image of yourself reparenting the exile, it is not the Self. The Self is the inner witness. It is what sees, not what is seen. If you are there in the childhood scene in Self, you won't see an image of Self—you will see out of the inner eyes of the Self. You will see the childhood scene from the vantage point of wherever you are in the scene.

So if you see an image that seems to be Self, it isn't—it is a Self-like Part. When that happens, ask the part that you see if it would be willing to step aside and allow you to enter the scene as Self. If it is reluctant, ask what it is trying to accomplish by caring for the exile. It may say that it can't stand the exile's pain and must make it go away as quickly as possible. In this case, invite it to step aside into a place where it doesn't need to feel the exile's pain. You will take care of the exile and help it release its pain.

This Self-like Part is likely to be an Inner Caretaker, but it could instead be some other kind of Self-like Part, maybe a Guarded Part. By asking the part what it is trying to accomplish, you will find out which type of Self-like Part it is and what its fears are. Then you can reassure the part about its fears and help it step aside and allow you to reparent the exile.

A Critical Mass of Self

While it very important to detect Self-like Parts, don't be rigid about it. It isn't necessary to be 100 percent in Self for your IFS work to be successful. You just need to have a critical mass of Self. So if you detect one of these types of Self-like Parts, it may be mixed with enough Self for the process to be successful. A Self-like Part is only a problem if it interferes with the IFS process.

Exercise: Self-like Parts

Review the types of Self-like Parts in this chapter. Does it seem that you have a part that matches one of these descriptions? If so, ask what it is afraid would happen if it relaxed and allowed you to conduct your IFS sessions from Self. The next time you do a session, be on the lookout for this part arising instead of Self. If you are working with a partner or therapist, ask him or her to look out for this part. If the part takes over, ask it to step aside so your session can be successful.

Which type of Self-like Part did you have? _____

What was it afraid of that made it take over? _____

When you did a session, did it appear? _____

Was it willing to step aside? _____

If the part isn't willing to step aside, do an IFS session on this part and see if you can transform it. If there is more than one type of Self-like Part that seems to fit for you, do the above process with each of them.

Were you able to transform the part? If so, what happened? _____

In this chapter, I have discussed the following types of Self-like Parts:

- Dominant Self-like Parts
- Judgmental Parts
- Intellectualizers
- Impatient Parts
- Agenda-Driven Parts
- Pretend-Therapy Parts
- Guarded Parts
- Inner Caretakers

There may be others. Be on the lookout for one of these parts because it can sabotage your IFS process.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

I hope that this book has enhanced your ability to use IFS to transform your psychological issues or to help your clients do so. Keep it handy to use as an adjunct to *Self-Therapy* as a manual for IFS work. People have found the Help Sheets in the various chapters to be especially useful. I recommend following the Help Sheet when you are first learning to do each kind of IFS process.

IFS has transformed my life, both personally and professionally. It has been wonderful for my clients and course members. Those who take to the IFS process find themselves moving forward quickly in understanding themselves, healing their parts, and transforming their behavior. I hope that IFS does the same for you (and your clients, if you are a professional).

Further Learning

There is more to learn than I could fit into this book, *Self-Therapy Vol. 2*. I intend to publish a series of sequels to *Self-Therapy*. This book will be followed by Vol. 3, which shows how to use IFS to resolve various psychological issues such as procrastination, eating issues, inner critics, depression, perfectionism, the Passive-Aggressive Pattern, and the Victim Pattern. Further volumes will deal with anger and conflict, advanced techniques for working with exiles, and

techniques and insights that are primarily relevant for therapists (or other helping professionals).

If you would like to learn the material in this book and the other volumes in the *Self-Therapy Series* in an experiential way in a safe, connected group, consider joining one of my Advanced IFS Classes, which are taught by videoconference. These are experiential classes that include group exercises and demonstration IFS sessions with volunteers from the class. You also pair up with other class members for practice IFS sessions for homework. These classes are for both therapists and the general public. They are exciting to me because they combine personal growth, professional learning, and heartfelt community among the participants, which is growth enhancing in itself. And for therapists and coaches, the classes give you a chance to become part of a vibrant professional community dedicated to IFS. See <http://personal-growth-programs.com/advanced-ongoing-ifs-class/> for details. See Appendix D for further resources for learning about IFS.

APPENDIX A

Help Sheet from *Self-Therapy*

This is a summary of the steps of the IFS procedure that were covered in *Self-Therapy*, for easy reference.

1. Getting to Know a Protector

P1. Accessing a Part

If the part is not activated, imagine yourself in a recent situation when the part was activated.

Sense the part in your body or evoke an image of the part.

P2. Unblending from the Target Part

Check to see if you are charged up with the part's emotions or caught up in its beliefs right now. If so, you are blended.

Check to see how you feel toward the target part right now. If you can't tell, you may be blended.

If you are blended with the target part, here are some options for unblending.

- Ask the part to separate from you so you can get to know it.
- Move back internally to separate from the part.
- See an image of the part at a distance from you or draw the part.

- Visualize the part in a room to provide a container for it.
- Do a short centering/grounding meditation.

If the part doesn't separate, ask what it is afraid would happen if it did.

Explain to it the value of separating and reassure it about its fears.

P3. Unblending from Concerned Parts

Check to see how you feel toward the target part right now.

If you feel compassionate, curious, and so on, you are in Self, so you can move on to P4.

If you don't, unblend the concerned part:

- Ask the concerned part if it would be willing to step aside (or relax) just for now so you can get to know the target part from an open place.
- If it does, check again to see how you feel toward the target part, and repeat.
- If it isn't willing to step aside, explain to it the value of stepping aside.
- If it still won't, ask what it is afraid would happen if it did, and reassure it about its fears.
- If it still won't, make the concerned part the target part and work with it.

P4. Discovering a Protector's Role

Invite the part to tell you about itself.

The part may answer in words, images, body sensations, emotions, or direct knowing.

Here are questions you can ask the part:

- What do you feel?
- What are you concerned about?
- What is your role? What do you do to perform this role?
- What do you hope to accomplish by performing this role?
- What are you afraid would happen if you didn't do this?

P5. Developing a Trusting Relationship with a Protector

You can foster trust by saying the following to the protector (if true):

- I understand why you (do your role).
- I appreciate your efforts on my behalf.
- I know you've been working very hard.

2. Getting Permission to Work with an Exile

If necessary, ask the protector to show you the exile.

Ask its permission to get to know the exile.

If it won't give permission, ask what it is afraid would happen if you accessed the exile.

Possibilities are:

- The exile has too much pain. Explain that you will stay in Self and get to know the exile, not dive into its pain.

- There isn't any point in going into the pain. Explain that there is a point—you can heal the exile.
- The protector will have no role and therefore be eliminated. Explain that the protector can choose a new role in your psyche.

3. Getting to Know an Exile

E1: Accessing an Exile

Sense its emotions, feel it in your body, or get an image of it.

E2: Unblending from an Exile

If you are blended with an exile:

- Ask the exile to contain its feelings so you can be there for it.
- Consciously separate from the exile and return to Self.
- Get an image of the exile at a distance from you.
- Do a centering/grounding induction.

If the exile won't contain its feelings:

- Ask it what it is afraid would happen if it did.
- Explain that you really want to witness its feelings and story, but you need to be separate to do that.

Conscious blending: If you can tolerate it, allow yourself to feel the exile's pain.

E3: Unblending Concerned Parts

Check how you feel toward the exile.

If you aren't in Self or don't feel compassion, unblend from any concerned parts. They are usually afraid of your becoming overwhelmed by the exile's pain or the exile taking over.

Explain that you will stay in Self and not let the exile overwhelm.

E4: Finding Out About an Exile

Ask: What do you feel? What makes you feel so scared or hurt (or any other feeling)?

E5: Developing a Trusting Relationship with an Exile

Let the exile know that you want to hear its story.

Communicate to it that you feel compassion and caring toward it.

Check to see if the exile can sense you there and notice if it is taking in your compassion.

4. Accessing and Witnessing Childhood Origins

Ask the exile to show you an image or a memory of when it learned to feel this way in childhood.

Ask the exile how this made it feel.

Check to make sure the part has shown you everything it wants to be witnessed.

After witnessing, check to see if the exile believes that you understand how bad it was.

5. Reparenting an Exile

Bring yourself (as Self) into the childhood situation and ask the exile what it needs from you to heal it or change what happened; then give that to the exile through your internal imagination.

Check to see how the exile is responding to the reparenting.

If it can't sense you or isn't taking in your caring, ask why and work with that.

6. Retrieving an Exile

One of the things the exile may need is to be taken out of the childhood situation and brought into a place where it can feel safe and comfortable.

You can bring it into somewhere in your present life, your body, or an imaginary place.

7. Unburdening an Exile

Name the burdens (painful feelings or negative beliefs) that the exile is carrying.

Ask the exile if it wants to release the burdens and if it is ready to do so.

If it doesn't want to, ask what it is afraid would happen if it let go of them. Then handle those fears.

How does the exile carry the burdens in or on its body?

What would the exile like to release the burdens to?

Light, water, wind, earth, fire, or anything else.

Once the burdens are gone, notice what positive qualities or feelings arise in the exile.

8. Releasing the Protective Role

Check to see if the protector is aware of the transformation of the exile. If not, introduce the exile to the protector.

See if the protector now realizes that its protective role is no longer necessary.

The protector can now choose a new role in your psyche.

APPENDIX B

Definitions of Terms

Accessing a Part. Tuning in to a part experientially through an image, an emotion, a body sensation, or internal dialogue so you can work with the part using IFS.

Activation of a Part. When a part becomes triggered by a situation or a person so that it influences your feelings and actions.

Agenda-Driven Part. A part that has an agenda for where an IFS session is supposed to go and is attached to that agenda instead of flowing with the IFS process.

Blending. The situation in which a part has taken over your consciousness so that you feel its feelings, believe its attitudes are true, and act according to its impulses. Blending is a more extreme form of activation.

Burden. A painful emotion or negative belief about yourself or the world that a part has taken on as a result of a past harmful situation or relationship, usually from childhood.

Childhood Origin. An incident or relationship from childhood that produced enough pain or trauma that it caused an exile to take on a burden.

Concerned Part. A part that feels judgmental or angry toward the target part. When you are blended with a concerned part, you aren't in Self.

Compassion. A feeling of loving-kindness toward someone (or a part) that is in pain.

Depolarization Dialogue. A conversation between two or more parts in which each is genuinely trying to hear the other's perspective and cooperate in order to resolve their polarization.

Direct Access. A form of IFS therapy in which the therapist speaks directly to a part, and the client is blended with the part and responds to the therapist as the part. This also can involve two parts speaking to each other as you blend first with one and then the other.

Dominant Self-like Part. A part that is activated almost all of the time in your life and runs the show in your psyche. It believes that it is you.

Empathy. Resonating with someone's feelings or with a part's feelings.

Exile. A young child part that is carrying pain from the past.

External Dialogue. A depolarization dialogue that is done using direct access, in which you sit in a different chair for each part and speak as the part.

Extreme Role. A role that is dysfunctional or problematic because the part carries a burden from the past or because a protector is trying to protect an exile.

Extreme Part. A part that has an extreme role.

Food Controller. An Inner Controller that is concerned about overeating.

Firefighter. A type of protector that impulsively jumps in when the pain of an exile is starting to come up in order to distract you from the pain or numb it.

Foggy Part. A part that causes you to lose conscious awareness of yourself, your thought process, and your connection to your body. You may feel spaced out, sleepy, dull, confused, or overwhelmed.

Guarded Part. A part that is afraid of the pain of an exile and so keeps you guarded so you can't feel your compassion for it.

Healthy Role. A role that is the natural, constructive function of a part when it has no burdens and no exiles to protect.

Healthy Part. A part that has a healthy role.

Impatient Part. A part that is in a hurry with IFS and tries to push ahead instead of trusting the IFS process.

Inner Caretaker. A part that tries to take care of your exiles prematurely because it can't tolerate their pain.

Inner Critic. A protector that judges, shames, attacks, pushes, or doubts you.

Intellectualizer. A part that tries to figure out your parts intellectually instead of asking them questions and listening for their answers. It may also try to solve other problems purely with its intellect.

Internal Dialogue. A form of depolarization dialogue in which the parts speak to each other in an internal space.

Judgmental Part. A part that is critical of other people or of your own parts.

Part. A subpersonality, which has its own feelings, perceptions, beliefs, motivations, and memories.

Polarization. A situation in which two parts are in conflict about how you should act or feel.

Positive Intent. The underlying purpose or intention of a part, which is performing its role in an attempt to help you or protect you, even if the effect of the role is negative.

Pretend-Therapy Part. A part that tries to be a good IFS client by faking parts of the session instead of acknowledging blocks and working them through.

Protector. A part that tries to block off pain that is arising inside you or protect you from hurtful incidents or distressing relationships in your current life.

Puppet-Master Pattern. A part that orchestrates other parts to keep interrupting your flow so you can't move forward with IFS work.

Reparenting. The step in the IFS process in which the Self gives an exile what it needs for a corrective emotional experience.

Retrieval. The step in the IFS process in which the Self takes an exile out of a harmful childhood situation and into a place where it can be safe and comfortable.

Rigid Pattern. A part that ignores any parts that arise while you are focused on the target part.

Role. The job that a part performs to help you. It may be primarily internal, or it may involve the way the part interacts with people and acts in the world.

Scattered Pattern. A part that follows every new part that arises without deciding to.

Self. The core aspect of you that is your true self, your spiritual center, and the observer of events. The Self is who you are when you are not blended with parts in extreme roles. The Self is relaxed, open, and accepting of yourself and others. It is curious, compassionate, calm, and interested in connecting with other people and your parts.

Self-Leadership. The situation in which your parts trust you, in Self, to make decisions and take action in your life.

Self-like Part. A part that thinks it is the Self. When you are blended with such a part, you think that you are in Self, and you don't recognize the limitations of the part you are blended with.

Target Part. The part you are focusing on to work with at the moment.

Trailhead. A psychological issue that involves one or more parts. Following it can lead to healing.

Unblending. Separating from a part that is blended with you so that you are in Self.

Unburdening. The step in the IFS process in which the Self helps an exile release its burdens through an internal ritual.

Updating. An IFS technique that involves helping a protector see that you are a competent, independent adult, not a dependent, vulnerable child, and you have more external support than you did as a child.

Witnessing. The step in the IFS process in which the Self witnesses the childhood origin of a part's burdens.

APPENDIX C

Introduction to the Pattern System

The Pattern System, which I have developed, is a comprehensive way of understanding and diagnosing personality that is oriented toward psychological healing and personal growth. The Pattern System also helps you understand other people—why they respond as they do, what makes them tick. It gives you a much more detailed understanding of yourself than other personality systems.

Once you have understood the Pattern System and explored yourself according to its model, you will come away with a comprehensive map of your psyche. You will be able to see . . .

- Your strengths
- Your defenses
- What drives your behavior
- Why you feel bad about yourself
- Your underlying emotional pain
- How you compensate for that
- Your inner conflicts
- The leading edge of your growth

In the Pattern System, *patterns* represent dysfunctional behaviors that cause problems for us or other people.

Healthy capacities are the ways we feel and act that make our lives productive, connected, and happy. The Pattern System organizes the patterns and capacities according to various psychological *dimensions*, such as intimacy, power, accomplishment, and self-esteem. Each dimension describes an area of psychological functioning that is important for human well-being. The Pattern System includes ten interpersonal dimensions as well as many other dimensions (see below).

IFS and the Pattern System complement each other. The Pattern System provides a theory of the psychological *content* of the human psyche, while IFS provides a powerful *process* for healing and transformation of psychological problems.

Caution: When using the Pattern System, please don't assume that just because you know the pattern of a part that you know the part. For example, just because you realize that a part is a Perfectionist, it doesn't mean that you know very much about it. Each part is unique and can't be understood by simply putting it into a category (a pattern). I recommend that you use IFS to fully get to know each of your parts and not just put them into boxes based on the Pattern System.

The Intimacy Dimension

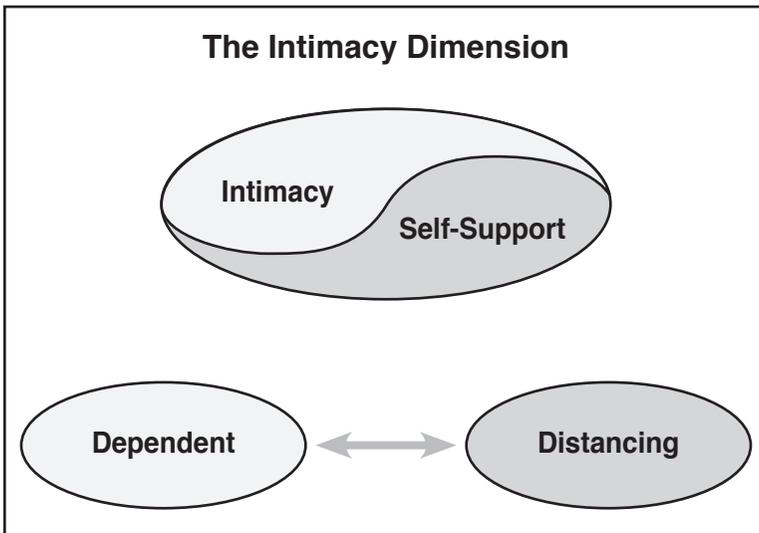
Each dimension contains two or more polarized patterns and two or more integrated capacities. I will show how each dimension is structured by looking at the Intimacy Dimension as an example.

There are two patterns in the Intimacy Dimension—Dependent and Distancing.

- The **Dependent Pattern** involves relying on your partner to take care of you and make you feel OK about yourself. This pattern can make it hard to leave a relationship that isn't right for you.
- The **Distancing Pattern** involves avoiding intimacy. You might do this by remaining distant within a love relationship, by avoiding commitment, or by avoiding intimate relationships altogether.

Two healthy capacities—Intimacy and Self-Support—are related to these two patterns.

- **Intimacy** involves the ability to be close to your partner through affection, sharing, sex, love, and caring.
- **Self-Support** involves being able to take care of yourself and feel solid and good, whether or not you are getting your needs met by your partner or even if you aren't in a relationship.



Capacities Integrate and Patterns Conflict

Self-Support is a complement to Intimacy. For healthy relating, you need both capacities. Intimacy helps you be close to someone, and with Self-Support, you do not lose yourself or your identity in the closeness. If you have Self-Support, you won't become overly dependent on your partner, and you won't try to be overly pleasing or caretaking.

This is the nature of healthy capacities: they naturally integrate with each other rather than opposing each other. They work together, both helping you flourish. In this dimension, they help you thrive in a love relationship. If you have both capacities, you enjoy love and intimacy while at the same time being solid inside yourself in a way that doesn't depend on this closeness. Furthermore, true intimacy involves a relationship between two individuals—people who are self-supporting and solid in themselves.

The patterns on the left and right sides of the graphic don't integrate with each other in the way the healthy capacities do. If you have both a Distancing Pattern and a Dependent Pattern, they will be *polarized*, which means they battle each other to determine how you relate to others. You have an inner conflict in which these two parts of you are fighting each other to determine how much intimacy you will have. One pattern reflects a desperate need for connection and nurturing, while the other involves trying to avoid closeness out of fear.

If you have just one capacity in a dimension and not the other, it isn't really a capacity. For example, if you have Intimacy without Self-Support, it isn't really Intimacy—it is Dependency. And if you have Self-Support without Intimacy, it is really Distancing. For this reason, the nature of capaci-

ties is that they include or integrate their polar capacity—for example, Intimacy integrates with Self-Support.

The Capacity Is the Healthy Version of the Same-Side Pattern

Self-Support is the healthy version of Distancing—the pattern on the same side of the graphic. A frequent motivation for distancing is to become Self-Supporting by cutting off your intimate connection with your partner so you aren't Dependent on him or her. You might even stay away from relationships altogether to cut off your needy longings so you can feel self-sufficient. However, when you have the Self-Support Capacity, you can be autonomous and solid even while being really close to your partner. Another way to say this is that Distancing is a dysfunctional version of Self-Support.

A similar correlation applies on the left side of the graphic. Intimacy is the healthy version of Dependence, which involves having the closeness you want without being too needy. A common motivation for Dependence is to get Intimacy by merging with your partner or receiving excessive amounts of caring. However, Dependence often involves losing yourself in the relationship, which makes it virtually impossible to have true Intimacy because that requires both people to be present with a sense of themselves (Self-Support). Another way to say this is that Dependence is a dysfunctional version of Intimacy.

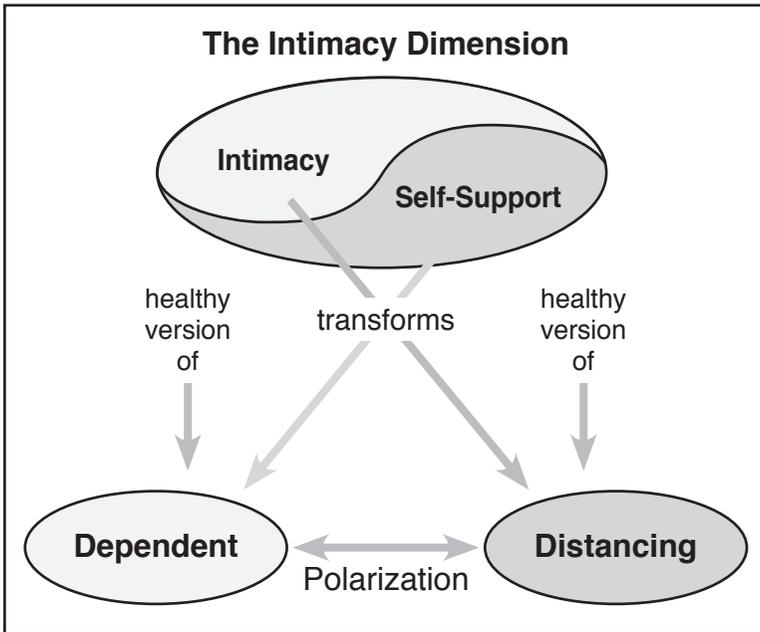
So on each side of the graphic, the capacity is a healthy version of the pattern, and the pattern is a dysfunctional version of the capacity.

The Capacity Transforms the Opposite-Side Pattern

If you have the Distancing Pattern, you need to focus on developing Intimacy in order to resolve or transform that pattern. Thus, the capacity on the opposite side of the graphic is the one needed to transform a pattern. In order to develop Intimacy, you will need the courage to work through your fears of closeness, reach out to your partner, allow yourself to be vulnerable, and work through other difficulties that may arise.

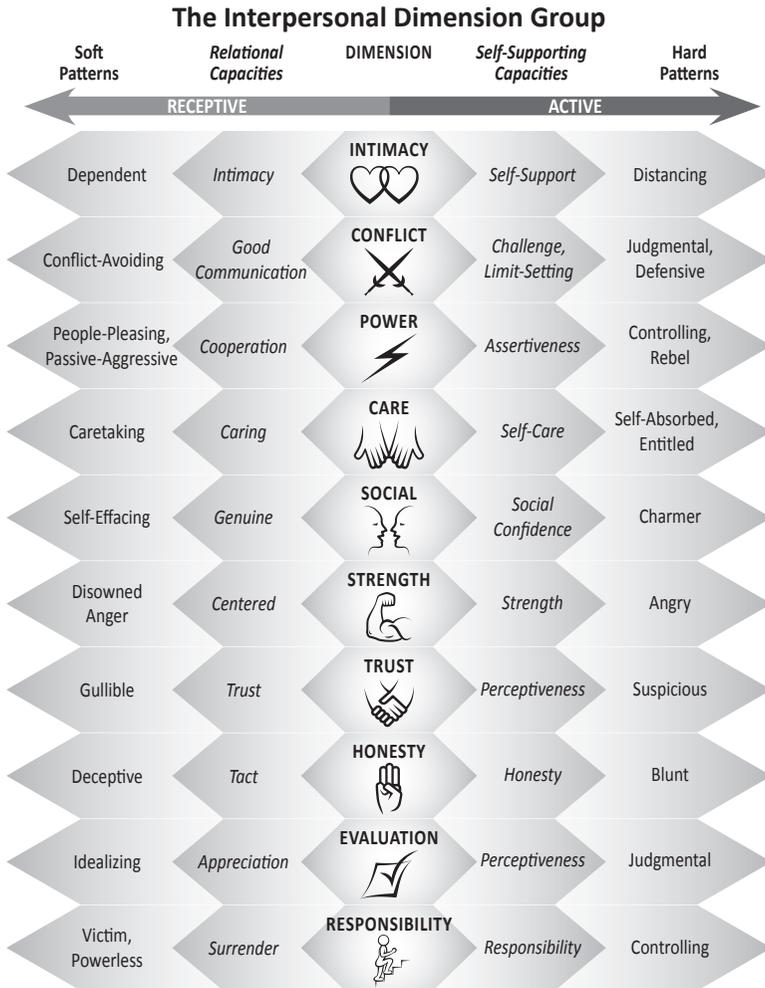
The same applies on the other side. If you have a Dependent Pattern, you need Self-Support to transform it, which is the capacity on the other side of the graphic. When you are Self-Supporting, you have the internal sense of solidness and inner nurturing to keep you from falling into Dependence.

Here is another graphic showing these additional relationships:



Each dimension has the same structure as the Intimacy Dimension, with two (or more) patterns and two (or more) capacities in the same relationships with each other.

There are four groups of dimensions in the Pattern System. On the next page is a graphic for the Interpersonal Dimension Group.



There are three other dimension groups in the Pattern System:

- Inner Critic Dimension Group
- Personal Dimension Group
- Intrapersonal Dimension Group

For more information, see my book *The Pattern System*, the Pattern System website,⁸ or the Pattern System wiki.⁹

8. https://selftherapyjourney.com/Pattern/Beginning/Pattern_System.aspx

9. <http://thepatternsystem.wikispaces.com/>

APPENDIX D

Resources

Websites

My IFS website¹⁰ contains popular and professional articles on IFS and its application to various psychological issues.

The Center for Self Leadership¹¹ is the official IFS organization created by Richard Schwartz. Its website contains IFS articles, trainings, workshops, and a list of IFS therapists.

My Online Store¹² contains books, ebooks, audiobooks, guided meditations, IFS demonstration sessions, recorded courses, and webinars.

*Self-Therapy Journey*¹³ (STJ) is a web application for psychological healing and personal growth based on IFS and the Pattern System.

The Self-Therapy Online Community¹⁴ is a place to connect with people using IFS or STJ, ask questions, and share your process.

10. <http://www.personal-growth-programs.com>

11. <http://www.selfleadership.org>

12. <http://personal-growth-programs.com/products/>

13. http://www.selftherapyjourney.com/?utm_source=electronic-book&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=Prof-Guide

14. <http://www.personalgrowthconnect.com>

The Pattern System website provides the basic information about it.¹⁵ The Pattern System wiki¹⁶ contains the latest version in outline form.

Quiz Central¹⁷ contains a range of quizzes to help you understand which patterns and capacities you have.

Join my email list¹⁸ to receive articles, offers, quizzes, notifications of webinars and courses, and much more.

Books

Self-Therapy. How to do Internal Family Systems (IFS) sessions on your own or with a partner. Also a manual of the IFS method that can be used by therapists.

Self-Therapy Workbook, by Bonnie Weiss. A workbook to go with *Self-Therapy*.

Self-Therapy, Vol. 3: A Step-by-Step Guide to Using IFS for Working Through Eating Issues, Procrastination, the Inner Critic, Depression, Anger, Perfectionism, Passive-Aggressive, Victim, and More. Upcoming book in the *Self-Therapy Series*.

Self-Therapy, Vol. 4: A Step-by-Step Guide to Advanced IFS Techniques for Working with Exiles and Other Parts. Upcoming book in the *Self-Therapy Series*.

Self-Therapy, Vol. 5: A Step-by-Step Guide to Advanced IFS Techniques for Therapists. Upcoming book in the *Self-Therapy Series*. Even though this book is intended primarily for therapists, others may learn quite a lot from it.

15. http://www.patternsystem.com/?utm_source=electronic-book&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=STJ-booklet

16. <http://thepatternsystem.wikispaces.com/>

17. http://www.selftherapyjourney.com/Pattern/Beginning/Quiz_Central.aspx?utm_source=electronic-book&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=Prof-Guide

18. <https://selftherapyjourney.com/Register.aspx>

User's Guides to Self-Therapy Journey. Three booklets that show how STJ works—*The Professionals' Guide to Self-Therapy Journey*, *Self-Therapy Journey: An Interactive Online Tool for Psychological Healing and Personal Growth*, and *Using Self-Therapy Journey to Stop Overeating*.

Pattern Books. Five books that deal with specific patterns from the Pattern System—*Embracing Intimacy, Taking Action (Procrastination)*, *Letting Go of Perfectionism*, *Beyond Caretaking*, and *A Pleaser No Longer*.

Activating Your Inner Champion Instead of Your Inner Critic, with Bonnie Weiss, describes the types of Inner Critics and allows you to profile your version of them in detail. Each of the types has an Inner Champion that is the magic bullet for transforming that particular type of Critic. From this book, you can also profile your unique Inner Champion for any of the Critics.

The Pattern System. An overview of the entire Pattern System, intended both for people who want to work on changing their patterns and professionals who want to use the Pattern System in their work.

Conflict, Care, and Love: Transforming Your Interpersonal Patterns describes in detail four of the interpersonal dimensions in the Pattern System—Intimacy, Conflict, Power, and Care.

Freedom from Your Inner Critic, with Bonnie Weiss. Applies IFS to working with Inner Critic parts.

Resolving Inner Conflict. How to work with polarization using IFS.

Working with Anger in IFS. How to work with too much anger or disowned anger using IFS.

Negotiating for Self-Leadership. How to work with an IFS protector to allow you to act in a healthy way in your life.

All of these books are available at our online store.¹⁹

Audio Products

Inner Champion Meditations. Each healthy capacity has a corresponding Inner Champion that supports you in developing and manifesting that capacity. For each Inner Critic, there is an Inner Champion that supports you in the face of that Critic. There is a recorded guided meditation for activating each Inner Champion.

Pattern Meditations. We have a guided meditation for working with most of the Pattern System patterns using IFS.

Demonstration IFS Sessions. Recordings of IFS sessions with explanatory comments.

Recorded Courses. Recorded versions of the IFS Basic Course, IFS Exiles Course, IFS Polarization Course, and Beyond Eating Course.

All of these audio products are available in our online store.²⁰

Courses, Webinars, and Groups

Webinars. I offer free webinars on IFS, *Self-Therapy Journey*, the Pattern System, and specific patterns, capacities, and wounds. Past webinars are available for purchase in our online store.

19. <http://www.personal-growth-programs.com/store>

20. <http://www.personal-growth-programs.com/store>

IFS Courses. I offer videoconference courses on using IFS to work on yourself and also courses for therapists and coaches on how to use IFS with your clients.²¹

Advanced IFS Courses. I offer ongoing videoconference courses that teach advanced IFS techniques and understandings such as those in this book and in later volumes in the *Self-Therapy Series*.²² Some are for therapists and other helping professionals. These are experiential courses that include demo sessions with volunteers in class and pairing for practice sessions for homework.

IFS Consultation/Training Groups. I lead consultation groups for IFS therapists that include demonstration IFS sessions for additional learning.

See my schedule of courses, webinars, and groups.²³

21. <http://personal-growth-programs.com/ifs-courses/basic-course/>

22. <http://personal-growth-programs.com/advanced-ongoing-ifs-class/>

23. <http://personal-growth-programs.com/ifs-courses/schedule/>

