

No Bad Parts: Richard Schwartz Book Notes

Chapter 1: We're All Multiple

All of us are born with many sub-minds that are constantly interacting inside of us. This is in general what we call *thinking*, because the parts talking to each other and to you constantly about things you have to do or debating the best course of action, and so on. Remembering a time when you faced a dilemma, it's likely you heard one part saying, "Go for it!" and another saying "Don't you dare!" Because we just consider that to be a matter of having conflicted thoughts, we don't pay attention to the inner play-matter behind the debate.

Willpower and Shame

Because this willpower ethic has become internalized, we learn at an early age to shame and manhandle our unruly parts. We simply wrestle them into submission. One part is recruited by this cultural imperative to become our inner drill sergeant and often becomes that nasty inner critic we love to hate. This is the voice that tries to shame us or attempts to outright get rid of parts of us that seem shame-worthy.

Any approach that increases your inner drill sergeant's impulse to shame you into behaving (and make you feel like a failure if you can't) will do no better in internal families than it does in external ones in which parents adopt shaming tactics to control their children.

Thoughts and emotions can talk back, and they have a lot of important things to tell us.

Spiritual implications of this discovery: love is the answer in the inner world, just as it is in the outer world. Listening to, embracing, and loving parts allows them to heal and transform as much as it does for people. In Buddhist terms, IFS helps people become bodhisattvas of their own psyches in the sense of helping each inner sentient being (part) become enlightened through compassion and love.

The big conclusion here is that parts are not what they have been commonly thought to be. They're not cognitive adaptations or sinful impulses. Instead, parts are sacred, spiritual beings and they deserve to be treated as such.

How we relate in the inner world will be how we relate in the outer. If we can appreciate and have compassion for our parts, even for the ones we've considered to be enemies, we can do the same for people who resemble them.

Burdens

Parts carry extreme beliefs and emotions in or on their "bodies" that drive the way they feel and act.

When we are young, we have little discernment regarding the validity of emotions and beliefs and, consequently, they get lodged in the bodies of our young parts and become powerful (albeit unconscious) organizers of our lives thereafter. These we call *personal burdens*.

There is another class of burdens that are called *legacy burdens* because they did not come from your direct life experience. Instead, you inherited them from your parents, who got them from their parents, and so on. Or you absorbed them from your ethnic group or from the culture you currently live in.

Parts Are Not Their Burdens

You could instead help them get to know that part and honor it for its attempts to keep them going and negotiate permission to heal or change what it protects.

Unburdening is another aspect of IFS that seems spiritual, because as soon as the burdens leave parts' bodies, parts immediately transform into their original, valuable states.

The Self

The Self is just beneath the surface of our protective parts, such that when they open space for it, it comes forward spontaneously, often quite suddenly, and universally.

Your Turn

These emotions, sensation, thoughts, impulses, and other things are emanations from parts—they are what we call trailheads. This is because when you focus on one, it's as if you are starting out on a trail that will lead you to the part from which that thought, emotion, impulse, or sensation emanates. And, as you get to know that part, you will learn that it isn't just that thought, sensation, impulse, or emotion. Indeed, it will let you know that it has a whole range of feelings and thoughts, and it can tell you about the role it is in and why it does what it does. Then it will feel seen by you and you can honor it.

Instead of simply observing what most traditions think of as the ego or as more ephemeral thoughts and emotions, in this process you turn toward what you're observing and begin a new relationship with it, one that involves a lot of curiosity.

Exercise: Mapping Your Parts page 26

-Recommend for many contexts. For ex, if you have a pressing issue in your life, go inside and map it out and some of the answers will come to you— either about what decision to make or about what parts are making it so difficult. Mapping your parts is another way to separate from them, as well, because often we're quite blended with more than one.

Chapter 2: Why Parts Blend

Protective parts blend because they believe they have to manage situations in your life. They don't trust your Self to do it.

They carry the responsibility for protecting you despite the fact that, like external parentified children, they are not equipped to do so.

Parts often become extreme in their protective efforts and take over your system by blending. Some make you hypervigilant, others get you to overreact strongly to perceived slights, others make you somewhat dissociative all the time or cause you to fully dissociate in the face of perceived threats. Some become the inner critics as they try to motivate you to look or perform better or try to shame you into not taking risks. Others make you take care of everyone around you and neglect yourself.

Finding blended parts and helping them trust that it's safe to unblend is a crucial parts of IFS.

Exercise: Unblending and Embodying page 32

I'm inviting you to get a felt sense of what it's like for you, your Self, to be more embodied. If you can become somatically familiar with this state, then you can notice when you're there and when you're not as you go through your day. Any departures from that state are usually due to the activity of parts that have blended to some degree and are giving you distracting thoughts, blocking the flow of energy, closing your heart, making you feel pressure in different places, etc. You can notice those activities and then reassure the parts doing them they don't have to.

Four Basic Goals of IFS

- 1) Liberate parts from the roles they've been forced into, so they can be who they're designed to be
- 2) Restore trust in the Self and self-leadership
- 3) Reharmonize the inner system
- 4) Become more Self-led in your interactions with the world

70% of the time parts say they think you are single-digits years old.

More About Parts

They're little inner beings who are trying their best to keep you safe and to keep each other safe and to keep it together in there. They have full-range personalities; each of them have different desires, different ages, different opinions, different talents, different resources. Instead of just being annoyances or afflictions (which they can be while in their extreme roles) they are wonderful inner beings.

They stay stuck, not because they're not sure how old you are, but because they live in the past— frozen in time in the traumas that you experienced. That's why they still think they have to protect other parts who were hurt by those experiences, too, and are carrying the burdens— the extreme beliefs and emotions— from those times. They feel alone with all that pressure and terror. The simple act of turning your focus inside and beginning to listen and talk to them and let them know they aren't alone— because you are there to care for them— is quite radical and so welcome to that inner orphanage.

Five Things to Know About Parts

- 1)Parts are innate
- 2)There aren't any bad ones: After parts unburden, they will manifest their true nature in valuable qualities (like delight, joy, sensitivity, empathy, wonderment, sexuality) and resources (like the ability to focus, clear discernment, problem-solving, passion for serving others and the world) that you have new access to and enrich your life
- 3)You often have to earn their trust.
- 4)They can cause a lot of damage to your body and your life
- 5)They are very important and deserve to be taken seriously

Chapter 3: This Changes Everything

Parts wander around feeling disconnected from each other and from us. Their unburdening not only allows for that reconnection inside, but it also fosters more connection between yourself and whatever you want to call the big SELF.

What if, by helping parts unburden and trust our Self so that we feel our connectedness to other people, to the planet, and to SELF, we are serving this larger project of divine reconnection? I think this is what IFS offers spiritual seekers.

Our parts long for connection to our Self– just as much as we long to connect to SELF.

Exercise: Dilemma Meditation page 51

Check-In

If you stay with it and you keep asking questions that are nonthreatening, these inner enemies will reveal their secret stories of how they got forced into these roles and what they're protecting and how, in many cases, they were really heroes.

They're all good parts forced into roles they don't like, they don't deserve, and they're eager to leave, but they just don't think it's safe enough to do that. Part of why they don't think it's safe is bc they don't trust you as the leader. Your coming to them this way is helping to build that trust.

Chapter 4: More on Systems

In the US, we'd much rather rearrange the deck chairs (taxes, environmental and immigration policy, etc) on our national Titanic that reevaluate the underlying beliefs (for example, unlimited growth) that drive us all.

Applied to human relations, there is ample evidence that our negative expectations of others have a strong negative impact on their behavior or performance. This can initiate vicious reinforcing feedback loops in which negative expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies that further reinforce the negative views, and so on.

One theme of this book is that how we think about and relate to the inhabitants of our inner worlds translates directly to how we think about and relate to people. If we live in fear of and strive to control certain parts of us, we will do the same to people who resemble those parts.

Feedback Loops

One reinforcing feedback loop that is common in all kinds of systems is called success for the successful. As applied to our country's division of wealth, we find that those with more privilege, accumulated capital, inside information, and special access and influence are able to create more privilege, capital, access, and information. On the other hand, those without those advantages become exiled, and as such, they and their children get worse educations, have trouble getting loans with reasonable interest rates, are subject to red-lining practices, and are discriminated against because of race or class. Their voices are rarely heard by politicians, who are typically more concerned with affluent members of society. "A system with an unchecked reinforcing feedback loop will ultimately destroy itself."

Everything is Connected

I often ask clients to have their polarized parts come together to talk directly to one another. The first question I have the client ask each part is whether they have anything in common. Each part is often shocked to learn that they share the desire to keep the person safe, but their ideas about how to do it are totally different. With the realization that they are interconnected, they become committed to working together for the well-being of the large system they both inhabit.

Here's just a taste of what you have to gain: more love for yourself and others, more access to your inner joy and delight (as well as to your rich sadness and grief), and more meaningful habits and activities with a sense of fulfilling vision.

Exercise: Daily IFS Meditation page 69

Chapter 5: Mapping Our Inner Systems

Exiles

These are often the younger one. Before we get hurt, they are the delightful, playful, creative, trusting, innocent, and open parts of us that we love to be close to. They are also the most sensitive parts, so when someone hurts, betrays, shames, or scares us, they are the parts who take in the extreme beliefs and emotions (burdens) from those events the most.

They move from feeling "I am loved" to "I am worthless" and "No one loves me", and when they blend with us, that belief becomes our paradigm and we feel all their burdened emotions.

Even when they are exiled, their burdens can exert an unconscious effect on our self-esteem, choice of intimate partner, career, and so on. They're behind the overreactions that seem mysterious to us and leave us perplexed as to why certain small things hit us so hard.

As a child, you were almost certainly hurt, humiliated, or terrified multiple times by your family or peers and were then coldly expected to just move on.

In terms of spiritual preferences, our exiles' sense of worthlessness is likely to unconsciously steer us toward spiritualities or gurus that promise redemption or salvation.

Managers

When you have a lot of exiles, other parts of you will have to leave their valuable roles to become protectors.

Some of them take on the role of controlling the outside world so that nothing triggering happens— they manage our relationships, appearance, and performance often by yelling at us the way our parents or teachers once did so we'll try harder or look better. These are the parts that become inner critics. Other parts take another approach and try to take care of everyone else while neglecting ourselves. Others are hypervigilant, and some are intellectual and are skilled at keeping us out of our bodies. There are many common roles these manager parts take. What they all have in common is the desire to preempt the triggering of our exiles by controlling, pleasing, or disconnecting us.

So managers are one class of protectors. These parts carry heavy burdens of responsibility for which they are ill-equipped because they are young too.

Managers are parentified inner children. They are usually very tired and stressed out. They're trying to keep the world safe for our exiles while at the same time keeping our exiles contained. They also have the ability to numb our bodies so we don't feel so much, because if you don't feel, then you don't get triggered. Managers are working all the time— some of them never sleep.

Other managers don't want us to feel good about ourselves for fear that we'll take risks and get hurt. They protect us by tearing us apart. They are the self-hating parts of us who will sabotage anything that might make us feel good. They may let us try meditation or other spiritual practices, but usually just to reduce stress rather to commune with the nondual. If the practice helps them contain the exiles (as in a managerial spiritual bypass), they're all for it. Mainly, they want to keep us small, because the safest place to be is below the radar.

Managers don't like anything that takes us out of their control. Some don't like anything that makes up open our hearts and feel confident and good about ourselves. On the other hand, there are managers who want to belong and to please everyone.

Firefighters: another class of protectors

Depending on how much you fear your exiles, your firefighters will resort to desperate measures with little regard for the collateral damage to your health or relationships.

Firefighters are desperate to find someone to make their exiles feels better, and often become recruiters who search for that special person or practice. They turn us into seekers who move

from one meditation or spiritual leader to another, looking for the one that can permanently make those exiles feel better. If they find one that seems to do the trick, they become zealous advocates and followers.

Managers are commonly your system's homeostatic mechanisms. Whenever your behavior or inner experiences strays from what they believe is safe for you, they act to bring you back.

For ex, if many of your parts carry the burden that the world is very dangerous and it's best to stay invisible, when you start to feel good about yourself, your critic will tear you down out of fear that you'll start taking risks.

The variable your managers are containing within a homeostatic range is your self-worth. In other people it might be anger, sadness, exuberance, or neediness.

We all have burdens that are committed to keeping us safe and homeostatic. They differ in the kind of stabilizing feedback activities they use but not in their intentions.

The point here is that thinking systematically and tracking inner sequences of parts' activities that surround problems allows you to avoid the mistake of, for example, colluding with your managers to further repress your firefighters or exiles— taking an aspirin instead of listening inside to your exiles' pain.

Your protectors have spent a lifetime trying to keep you away from your exiles, so they need to be consulted first and convinced that there is a good reason to let you go there. We don't go to exiles without permission from protectors.

Part II: Self Leadership

Chapter 6: Healing and Transformation

An exile is healed when Self retrieves it from where it is stuck in the past. Then the exile can unburden and begin to reintegrate with all the other parts in the system. When that happens, the system feels far less vulnerable and protectors also feel freed up to unburden and take on new valuable roles. Thus, all the protective energy that went into keeping you from being triggered and keeping your exiles at bay is freed up for healthier endeavors and you have new access to the wonderful feelings and resources of your healed former exiles.

You can begin to ask and learn about the exiles that are driving your protectors, and then maybe go to those exiles that are driving your protectors, and then maybe go to those exiles with the help of a trained IFS therapist or with someone who you can trust can stay in Self with you.

Exiles need you to connect with them until they trust you. Then they need to witness what happened to them and know how truly bad it was. Then you can go back to where they are stuck in the past and bring them out. At that point, they are usually willing to unburden the beliefs and emotions they've been carrying.

When you show them that they don't need to protect their exiles anymore, protectors will sometimes panic. They think you're going to downsize them. Ask them "What do you want to do now?" A lot of protectors become advisors. The critic can become your biggest fan. The one who kept you invisible now wants to help you shine.

Exercise: The Path page 93

When people are fully in Self and ask for a message, something useful often comes.

Unlike the Self, Self-like managers have protective agendas and aren't fully authentic when they convey caring, gratitude, or respect. They're what some people derogatorily refer to as the ego, but they deserve our love rather than our disdain. Just like any other protector, we need to relieve them of their huge burdens of responsibility.

Chapter 7: Self In Action

When we encounter a person who resembles the profile exiles have of their ideal protector, redeemer, or lover, they feel elated, infatuated, and relieved. Through what's called positive transference, our parts put distorted images on such people, who can't help but disappoint those extreme expectations. Then comes the negative transference from angry protectors.

Chapter 8: Vision and Purpose

Your protectors' goals for your life revolve around keeping you away from all that pain, shame, loneliness, and fear, and they use a wide array of tools to meet those goals— achievements, substances, food, entertainment, sex, shopping, obsession with your appearance, caretaking, meditation, money, and so on. Your protectors work tirelessly and valiantly to keep pumping air into your ego so it doesn't deflate and sink in the abyss of exiled emotion.

As the urges of these protectors consume most of your attention, they drown out and keep exiled the more sensitive and loving parts of you.

As you access more Self you shift from being led by your parts' desires to being led by your heart's desires. That is, you begin getting inklings of a different vision of your life's journey that brings more meaning to it.

While there are countless approaches out there that coach you to articulate and pursue a meaningful vision for your life, too often those attempts come from your managers rather than your Self. In my experience, it's best to wait until your protectors have relaxed so that the vision emerges— in this way, you receive your vision rather than create it.

Life Changes and Backlash

When you begin glimpses of a Self-led vision, it's common for parts to react homeostatically. The grander your vision, the bigger their backlash. Like the ever popular "You can't make a living doing that."

Self-led people do have less need for material things, and that helps a lot.

Self-led visions are frequently based on an increased sense of connection to humanity and the Earth, and people begin embodying the desire to help both. In addition, when you are Self-led, these activities are more satisfying, because you are actually present in your body while you are experiencing them, vs. a life of doing something more productive or pleasurable. When Self-led, you actually can live in the present because you no longer have so many parts that are hurting and stuck in the past; you are no longer trying to protect them by worrying about or planning the future.

Exercises: Fire Drill page 134 Sad Person Meditation page 136

As you enter triggering situations, it's interesting to notice what happens in your body and your mind. You'll start to notice trailheads, which will enable you to learn about the parts that feel a need to protect.

Self-leadership means standing willingly and consciously in both dimensions— feeling the intense emotions of your parts while remaining connected to your transcendent, wave-state awakened mind. If you can hold both in yourself, you can be with both in others.

Flow

I believe that flow states are examples of when all your parts are fully aligned with the purpose or pleasure of the activity so their Selves meld with yours. They temporarily dissolve, and you are in the nondual wave state— even though you are still operating in the world.

Our deeper nature is simply what's left when we put down the endless task of trying to be somebody.

Part III Self in the Body, Self in the World

Chapter 9: Life Lessons and Tor-Mentors

The main challenge is not so much in mastering a particular skill as it is in convincing the managers, who make you self-conscious and afraid of failing, to trust your Self to lead.

So many of the obstacles in our relationships are because we fear the mayhem that someone else's behavior will create in our inner systems. When Self leads, the mayhem is gone.

Chapter 10: The Laws of Inner Physics

Parts can control how much they overwhelm.

Parts overwhelm when they believe— often with good reason— that they have to totally take over or we'll lock them away again.

If one of your exiles or protectors takes over during an exercise, it's possible to talk them into separating again.

There's nothing inside of you that has any power if you are in Self and not afraid of it.

One central tenet of IFS at work: going to war against inner beliefs or emotions of any kind will often backfire. Listening and healing them is the better way to go, all while relating to them with firm yet loving Self-led discipline until they unburden.

Chapter 11: Embodiment

When protectors keep you at least slightly dissociated, numb, or in your head, you never have to feel the exiles' emotions, which means they're less likely to get triggered. That's why it's often a tough sell to get permission from protectors to re-embody.

It's always valuable (and often surprising) to inquire among your parts as to whether a medication or meditation is more or less embodying of your Self. Are you using it to promote healing or to bypass your exiles?

Obsession with your body's size and appearance— our legacy burden of body shame and appearance consciousness— leads to more dieting and constant self-scrutiny, which is also disembodimenting.

Once we heal our exiles and become more self-led, we don't have to work so hard to do things that are good for us— we just naturally enjoy them.

While you're out of the driver's seat, your parts run rampant.

For ex, your managers' fear will make your muscles chronically tense, particularly in your back, shoulder, forehead, and jaw. They're struggling to control how you look, behave, speak, and feel, just as they're struggling to keep your exiles and firefighters contained.

One way to practice a new relationship with your body. Whenever a sensation or symptom comes up, pay attention to it. What message is it trying to send you?

Closing Thoughts

To summarize: here's what I'm suggesting:

1) We lead our lives from Self as much as possible and find ways to help increasing numbers of people to do the same

2)We heal (unburden) ourselves and one another

There are ways to help large groups uncover and unburden cultural legacy burdens like racism, individualism, consumerism, materialism, and sexism.