

No Bad Parts

Healing Trauma & Restoring Wholeness with The Internal Family Systems Model
by Richard C. Schwartz, PhD

Foreword

I would begin to feel the agendaless-ness of the IFS “eight Cs”:

In giving our attention to the parts that need it most, true healing happens.

Introduction

Inherent Goodness

Neoliberalism is based on the belief that people are basically selfish and, therefore, it's everyone for themselves in a survival-of-the-fittest world.

Part One Internal Family Systems

Chapter One We're All Multiple

While it may sound creepy or crazy at first to think of yourself as a multiple personality, I hope to convince you that it's actually quite empowering. It's only disturbing because multiplicity has been pathologized in our culture.

While it may sound creepy or crazy at first to think of yourself as a multiple personality, I hope to convince you that it's actually quite empowering. It's only disturbing because multiplicity has been pathologized in our culture. A person with separate autonomous personalities is viewed as sick or damaged, and the existence of their alters is considered simply the product of trauma—the fragmentation of their previously unitary mind. From the mono-mind point of view, our natural condition is a unitary mind.

A Brief History

The doctrine that humans are innately selfish has a hallowed tradition in the Western canon. Great thinkers like Thucydides, Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Luther, Calvin, Burke,

Bentham, Nietzsche, Freud, and America's Founding Fathers each had their own version of the veneer theory of civilization.¹

Willpower and Shame

in IFS, when parts do take over, we don't shame them. Instead, we get curious and use the part's impulse as a trailhead to find what is driving it that needs to be healed.

Parts Aren't Obstacles

Researchers who interviewed experienced meditators found that substantial percentages of them had disturbing episodes that sometimes were long-lasting. The most common of those included emotions like fear, anxiety, paranoia, detachment, and reliving traumatic memories.² From the IFS point of view, the quieting of the mind associated with mindfulness happens when the parts of us usually running our lives (our egos) relax, which then allows parts we have tried to bury (exiles) to ascend, bringing with them the emotions, beliefs, and memories they carry (burdens) that got them locked away in the first place. Most of the mindfulness approaches I'm familiar with subscribe to the mono-mind paradigm and, consequently, view such episodes as the temporary emergence of troubling thoughts and emotions rather than as hurting parts that need to be listened to and loved. Why would you want to converse with thoughts and emotions? They can't talk back, can they? Well, it turns out that they can. In fact, they have a lot of important things to tell us.

How I Came to Learn About Parts

“IFS helps people become bodhissattvas of their psyches.”

! Some discoveries I made about parts:

- Even the most destructive parts have protective intentions.
- Parts are often frozen in past traumas when their extreme roles were needed.
- When they trust it's safe to step out of their roles, they are highly valuable to the system.

¹ Rutger Bregman, *Humankind: A Hopeful History* (New York: Little, Brown, 2020), 17.

² Brian Gallagher, “The Problem with Mindfulness,” *Facts So Romantic* (blog), Nautilus, March 30, 2018, nautil.us/blog/the-problem-with-mindfulness; and Lila MacLellan, “There's a dark side to meditation that no one talks about,” *Recesses of Your Mind* (blog), Quartz, May 29, 2017, qz.com/993465/theres-a-dark-side-to-meditation-that-no-one-talks-about.

Burdens

Parts Are Not Their Burdens

This distinction between parts and the burdens they carry is crucial because many of the world's problems are related to the error that most paradigms for understanding the mind make: to mistake the burden for the part that carries it.

No Bad Parts

IFS operates from the radically different assumption that each part—no matter how demonic seeming—has a secret, painful history to share of how it was forced into its role and came to carry burdens it doesn't like that continue to drive it.

The Self

Client after client, the same mindfully curious, calm, confident, and often even compassionate part would pop up out of the blue and that part seemed to know how to relate internally in a healing way. And when they were in that state, I'd ask clients, "Now, what part of you is that?" and they'd say, "That's not a part like these others, that's more myself" or "That's more my core" or "That's who I really am."

That's the part that I call the Self. And after thousands of hours doing this work, I can say with certainty that the Self is in everybody. Furthermore, the Self cannot be damaged, the Self doesn't have to develop, and the Self possesses its own wisdom about how to heal internal as well as external relationships.

For me, this is the most significant discovery that I stumbled onto. This is what changes everything. 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, sensations, 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.

When we simply turn our attention inside, we find that what we thought were random thoughts and emotions comprise a buzzing inner community that has been interacting behind the scenes throughout our lives.

Chapter Two Why Parts Blend

Why do 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.

To make the parallel to external families, they become parentified inner children. That is, they carry the responsibility for protecting you despite the fact that, like external parentified children, they are not equipped to do so.

The list of common protector roles in traumatized systems could go on and on. The point here is that these symptoms and patterns are the activities of young, stressed-out parts that are often frozen in time during earlier traumas and believe that you are still quite young and powerless. They often believe that they must blend the way they do or something dreadful will happen (often, that you will die). Given where they are stuck in the past, it makes sense that they would believe this.

whereas some traditions teach that you have to build up the muscle of compassion with specific practices, with IFS, the Self is already buff with compassion.

In this meditation, I had you tell your parts how old you really are. When I have people ask that question (i.e., "How old do you think I am?"), maybe 70 percent of the time the answer is in single digits. Often the number that comes back to you is the age you were when the part was forced out of its valuable state and into the role that it's in now. It's like once the part took on that role, it focused on the outside world and never looked back at you—it didn't notice that you grew. So, many parts believe they are still protecting you as a young child. In many cases, how old you are now is a big revelation to these parts—many don't believe it at first.

More About Parts

When you were young and experienced traumas or attachment injuries, you didn't have enough body or mind to protect yourself. Your Self couldn't protect your parts, so your parts lost trust in your Self as the inner leader.

When you were young and experienced traumas or attachment injuries, you didn't have enough body or mind to protect yourself. Your Self couldn't protect your parts, so your parts lost trust in your Self as the inner leader. They may even have pushed your Self out of your body and took the hit themselves—they believed they had to take over and protect you and your other parts. But in trying to handle the emergency, they got stuck in that parentified place and carry intense burdens of responsibility and fear, like a parentified child in a family.

That's why it really helps them to realize that you're not that young age anymore. They stay stuck, however, 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.

Chapter Three This Changes Everything

In Christianity, the definition of sin is anything that disconnects you from God and takes you off your path. Burdens disconnect Self from parts and give them extreme impulses. Burdened parts either don't experience Self at all or don't listen to Self. So when parts are unburdened, it's not only that they immediately transform, but they also now have much more connection to and trust for Self, which is the second goal of IFS.

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 each of us and each of our parts contains a piece of SELF that longs to reconnect with itself? 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 enlightenment is much brighter and more sustained if all of us is involved and we don't treat the ego as this bad part we have to leave behind in the dust on the way to attaining that enlightenment. Our parts long for connection to our Self—just as much as we long to connect to SELF.”

“If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.”³

Chapter Four More on Systems

The Growth of Systems Thinking

When I first encountered systems thinking in 1976, I was thrilled to find an alternative approach to life that answered many of the questions I had about the failings I was recognizing in psychiatry. Reading Gregory Bateson and other systems theorists produced an epiphany that led me to become a family therapist and later to develop IFS. The big insight was that giving a troubled person a psychiatric diagnosis and seeing that as the sole or main cause of their symptoms was unnecessarily limiting, pathologizing, and could become self-reinforcing.

³ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poems and Other Writings*, ed. J. D. McClatchy (New York: Library of America, 2000).

When you tell a person they are sick and ignore the larger context in which their symptoms make sense, not only do you miss leverage points that could lead to transformation, but you also produce a passive patient who feels defective. Fortunately, more people in the field are beginning to view psychiatric diagnosis as unhelpful and unscientific.⁴

The big insight was that giving a troubled person a psychiatric diagnosis and seeing that as the sole or main cause of their symptoms was unnecessarily limiting, pathologizing, and could become self-reinforcing.

Context is Everything

Systems thinking focuses on the ways members of a system relate to one another. When you approach symptoms through that lens, you often find that they are manifestations of problems in the structure (the patterns of relationship) of the systems in which the person is embedded (family, neighborhood, work, country, etc.), as well as the system that is embedded within them (that is, their internal family). I learned as a family therapist that understanding and improving a family's structure was a far more effective and lasting way to help a child stop acting out than simply diagnosing and treating them without considering their family context.

“Larger systems are no different. The structures of corporations and countries will usually remain the same despite their dysfunctions and symptoms unless they experience a change in their basic beliefs—their paradigmatic operating systems. In the US, we'd much rather rearrange the deck chairs (taxes, environmental and immigration policy, etc.) on our national Titanic than reevaluate the underlying beliefs (for example, unlimited growth) that drive us all.”

Negative (and Mistaken) Views of Human Nature

“Growth is good. Nature is a stock of resources to be converted to human purposes. Evolution stopped with the emergence of Homo sapiens. One can 'own' land. These are a few of the paradigmatic assumptions of our current culture, all of which have utterly dumbfounded other cultures, who thought them not the least bit obvious.”⁵

!! “Growth is good. Nature is a stock of resources to be converted to human purposes. Evolution stopped with the emergence of Homo sapiens. One can 'own' land. These are a few of the paradigmatic assumptions of our current culture, all of which have utterly dumbfounded other cultures, who thought them not the least bit obvious.”

⁴ University of Liverpool, “Study Finds Psychiatric Diagnosis to be ‘Scientifically Meaningless,’” Medical Xpress, July 8, 2019, medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-psychiatric-diagnosis-scientifically-meaningless.html?fbclid=IwAR07fYCVRQr01rjRQGn6_dfRCHtELXf2bBeWB-J02t2mXYQRBY5fSsK_8ss.

⁵ Donella Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2008), 163.

Most of a society's rules and goals trickle down from its assumptions about whether people are basically good or evil, competitive or collaborative, trustworthy or selfish, isolated or interconnected, hopeless or redeemable, inferior or superior. All of these views affect a given society's members.

As discussed in the introduction, the view of humanity that has dominated the Western world trends toward the pessimistic. In order to justify slavery, white Europeans started to differentiate themselves from other less "civilized" cultures; we might all struggle with primitive impulses, but according to that paradigm, some (typically darker) people were not as skilled at controlling their irrational, bestial parts. This veneer theory of controlling the primitive can be applied not only to impulses but also to people. 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.

The veneer theory suggests that civilization forms the protective layer necessary to contain and hide all our primitive instincts that are constantly wanting to break through. Historian Rutger Bregman asserts that, in contrast to the veneer theory, people are basically good. He debunks the research of notable thinkers such as Richard Dawkins, Philip Zimbardo, and Stanley Milgram—all of whom held extremely pessimistic (and highly influential) views about people. When Bregman took a second look at the methods and data from their famous studies, he found enough rampant distortion and falsification to discredit them outright.

Bregman's argument is that we have organized all our institutions based on this selfish view of people and that if we realized that wasn't true, everything would change. Once we shift paradigms to the knowledge that, at their essence, everyone is decent and kind, we can reorganize our economic systems, schools, and prisons. He offers many examples of successful institutions and programs that are based on the positive view of human nature—the prison system in Norway, for example, that has the lowest recidivism rate in the world.

“What if it was true that there are no bad parts, only burdened ones frozen in the past that needed to be unburdened rather than punished? What if, at their essence, everyone was a Self that could be accessed quickly? How would the world be different?”

Why the Negative View Doesn't Work

Going to war against (coercing, harshly punishing, or shaming, for example) any social problem sets in motion reinforcing feedback loops that have the potential to destroy the system, because they escalate over time and drain the system's resources.

As Charles Eisenstein puts it, “There are so many fights, crusades, campaigns, so many calls to overcome the enemy by force.... Thus it is that the inner devastation of the Western psyche matches exactly the outer devastation it has wreaked upon the planet.”⁶

⁶ Eisenstein, *The More Beautiful World*.

Feedback Loops

I spoke about legacy burdens in chapter one. There are four in particular—racism, patriarchy, individualism, and materialism—

success for the successful

“ “A system with an unchecked reinforcing feedback loop ultimately will destroy itself.”⁷

stabilizing or balancing feedback loops

If we think of the Earth as a living system or being—as Gaia—then the COVID-19 pandemic could be seen as part of a stabilizing feedback loop. For 99 percent of human history, the human species has not been a dire threat to the health of the planet. Starting with the Industrial Revolution, the world’s human population—and its ability to exploit the planet’s resources—has exploded in the last two centuries. Since the late 1880s, we’ve been riding on different runaway reinforcing feedback loops, and because they’ve improved the lives of most people in tangible ways, we’ve become convinced of the myth of the march of progress. Unfortunately, the march hasn’t been so progressive for the rest of the planet.

We’ve lost our ability to feel the Earth viscerally.

Through our extractive, exiling, and disconnecting attitudes and behaviors, we’ve lost our ability to feel the Earth viscerally. Our receptors are numbed to the feedback the Earth has been offering us for decades, telling us time and again that she isn’t happy or healthy. It’s not that she hasn’t informed us—there have been plenty of signs. It’s that the striving, coercive parts that came to dominate much of our species have been too focused on financial and material gain to heed those signs. We stopped caring about the Earth and instead viewed her as a set of resources to be used however we wanted. But there are consequences to this.

Our fate isn’t in our own hands; it’s in our minds.

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 that are totally different. With the realization that they are interconnected, they become committed to working together better for the well-being of the larger system (the client) they both inhabit.

⁷ Meadows, *Thinking in Systems*, 155.

“No part of the human race is separate either from other human beings or from the global ecosystem.”⁸

“Having a huge poor population either drains most of a country’s resources or creates violent social upheaval. If you exile your vulnerable parts, they will destroy you.”

“If you exile your vulnerable parts, they will destroy you.”

The Shift

Currently, we view ourselves and our fellow humans as fundamentally selfish and flawed, which leads to dog-eat-dog, ruthless economic and social systems. And because we approach our problems out of context (that is, non-systemically), our attempted solutions to those problems often make things worse—namely, harming the planet and creating masses of exiled people. Exiling is toxic to any system. It severs our connection to each other, to our own bodies, to the Earth, and to the divine.

Our inner world is also polluted by this paradigm. Our treasury of parts ends up mirroring the external system—with lots of exiles, lots of protectors who disdain them, and with our burdens as the fundamental organizing principle of our inner system, as opposed to our Self. Clearly, this way of being with ourselves and the world is not sustainable. Here’s the alternative paradigm that I’m proposing:

Exercise: Daily IFS Meditation

At some point, remind them that you’re there with them, that you care about them, and tell them a little more about who you are, because even as you work with parts, they often forget these things until they’ve been unburdened.

Chapter Five Mapping Our Inner Systems

Exiles

For these young parts, that’s just adding insult to injury. The injury came from the event and then you insult them by abandoning and imprisoning them. As a result, they are often quite desperate to be attended to and will try their best to break out of exile any chance they

⁸ Meadows, Thinking in Systems, 184.

get—when we're tired, when we're not getting the accolades that keep them pacified, or when we're hurt or shamed in a way that's similar to the original event.

This is such an unnecessary tragedy. These delightful inner children are hurt and then abandoned, and we no longer have access to their wonderful qualities. Instead, we assume that it's part of becoming an adult to no longer feel intense joy, awe, and love.

These exiles are what Freud famously called the Id, and he mistakenly assumed they were merely primitive impulses. As I discussed earlier, that negative take just added to Western culture's detrimental view of human nature and was highly influential in psychotherapy's disinterest in getting to know those parts of us.

Once you have a lot of exiles, you feel far more delicate and the world seems more dangerous because there are so many things and people and situations that could trigger them. And when an exile gets triggered and bursts out of whatever container we keep it in, it can feel like we're about to die, because it was exactly that scary or humiliating when the originating event happened. Or maybe, as Bly notes, we're terrified because the exiles have become so extreme.

I'll write more on this topic later, but for now I just want to note that 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. Similarly, because of their fear and hurt, we might tend toward forms of worship that are centered around a guru or some notion of an all-powerful God.

Similarly, because of their fear and hurt, we might tend toward forms of worship that are centered around a guru or some notion of an all-powerful God.

Managers

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.

Managers are parentified inner children.

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.

(as in a managerial spiritual bypass)

In general, managers don't like anything that takes us out of their control

Firefighters

In contrast to the managers who try to preempt anything that's going to trigger the exiles, these firefighter parts are activated after an exile has been triggered and desperately (and often impulsively) try to douse the flames of emotion, get us higher than the flames with some substance, or find a way to distract us until the fire burns itself out.

Unlike managers, firefighters love going into the higher realms and losing control—the further from your pain the better. In those higher realms you can access a lot of pure Self, which feels great—even though it doesn't heal anything and can make exiles feel even more abandoned.

Unlike managers, firefighters love going into the higher realms and losing control—the further from your pain the better.

Where exiles are often desperate for redemption, firefighters are like babysitters for those younger parts—babysitters who can't get the kids to stop screaming or giving your system waves of anxiety or shame. For this reason, firefighters are desperate to find someone to make the exiles feel 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. Or, if they find one that seems to do the trick, they become zealous advocates and followers. Many people come to spiritual traditions with lots of exiles because of the intense trauma in their backgrounds, hoping for relief. Unfortunately, many spiritualities don't know what to do with people's traumas other than to help them bypass them.

!! For this reason, firefighters are desperate to find someone to make the exiles feel 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. Or, if they find one that seems to do the trick, they become zealous advocates and followers.

!! Many people come to spiritual traditions with lots of exiles because of the intense trauma in their backgrounds, hoping for relief. Unfortunately, many spiritualities don't know what to do with people's traumas other than to help them bypass them.

!!! One last thing about firefighters. For us to live in this culture and not see the suffering of its exiles or feel the outrage of what we are doing to the Earth, we need distractions. We are provided with a plethora of firefighter activities to help us numb the pain of this moral injury. Remember, Self sees, feels, and acts to change injustice, so to not do any of that we need illegal drugs or prescription medications, constantly available media entertainment, all-consuming jobs, and spiritual bypasses.

Returning to the systems ideas of reinforcing and stabilizing feedback and homeostasis, managers are commonly your system's homeostatic mechanisms. Whenever your behavior or inner experience strays from what they believe is safe for you, they act to bring you back.

Many would-be meditators who feel like failures because they struggle with the practice turn out to be carrying that burden. Parts won't let them meditate because they don't think opening the heart is a good idea.

The triggering of exiles often kicks off reinforcing feedback cycles, because attempts to stifle them from either managers or firefighters will make them try harder to break out or get your attention.

The point here is that thinking systemically 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.

Again, traumatized inner systems are delicate ecologies.

The exercises in this book are mainly focused on helping you get to know and appreciate your protectors. It can be quite a bit trickier to open up to your exiles by yourself. If you do begin to feel overwhelmed with exiled feeling, it's important to shift out of the exercise. In most cases it works to get to know who some of your exiles are, but we're not inviting you to actually get close to them and try to help them, because most people, including myself, need to have somebody with them to do that—ideally an IFS therapist (see the directory on ifs-institute.com), or at least someone who can stay in Self while you get emotional.

We don't go to exiles without permission from protectors.

The reason I included this session is probably clear: no matter how much we check with protectors upfront and seem to get permission from them, it's not uncommon for firefighters like Mona's to backlash afterward.

managers preempt the triggering of exiles, and firefighters react after an exile has been triggered.

Is that an accurate memory? We can't know for sure without further evidence.

Part Two Self Leadership

Chapter Six Healing and Transformation

What do we mean by healing and transformation in IFS? As I stated earlier, our culture (in general) and psychotherapy (specifically) have made the terrible mistake of assuming that parts are the way they seem. That is, the part that gets you to eat too much is simply a binge impulse,

or the one that makes you shake in terror is just a panic attack, and that that's all they are—destructive impulses, emotions, thought patterns, or mental diseases. When you understand that you are not sick or defective and instead see that you merely have a part playing an extreme role, you'll feel relieved and comforted.

Recall the four goals of IFS: to liberate parts from their roles and return them to their natural states, to restore trust in the Self, to reharmonize the inner system, and to become Self-led. What we call healing in this work is crucial to achieving these goals, because burdened exiles will keep us feeling vulnerable, anxious, worthless, ashamed, lonely, and empty. And all of that will continue to drive our protectors.

defn healing: Originally, the word heal meant “to make whole” or “to save.” When we heal any level of a human system, we bring its scattered or polarized members back into harmony so as to make the system whole again. The members of healed families or companies do not disappear—instead, they reconnect and harmonize.

Exiles need you to connect with them until they trust you. Then they need you 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.

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.

Again, that's the negative view on human nature at play. To be clear, what I mean by compassion is the ability to be in Self with somebody when they're really hurting and feel for them, but not be overwhelmed by their pain.

critical mass of Self....

Spirituality and the Self

Rather than making me care less about what happens in this world, that kind of nonattachment actually helps me act to improve the world with less concern for my image or lifestyle.

My Spiritual Dawning

defn awakening: When I say you become awakened by doing this work, I don't mean that you turn into a guru who lives up on a mountain somewhere and dishes out wisdom to visitors. Nor do I mean that you'll be Buddha-like all the time. What I do find is that this simple shift in the

sense of who you actually are starts to pervade your life in a number of positive ways. It may not change the actual day-to-day operation of your life enormously, but it's a drastic shift in your sense of groundedness, well-being, and your sense of having a right to be here. For me, that's awakening.

The more you become familiar with it, the easier you can detect when you depart from that state—when you're having a “part attack.” It stops becoming such a big deal, because you know it's temporary and that you can unblend from the part and help it out. And even if you can't unblend, you trust that your Self is still there and will return at some point. Many of our troubles come not so much from the part attack itself, but more from our panic about it, because we believe it defines us and won't end.

Chapter Seven The Self in Action

if you can become what I call the primary caretaker of your own parts, then you free intimate partners (or therapists, children, parents, etc.) from the responsibility of taking care of raw and needy exiles. Those people then can act as the secondary caretakers of your parts, which is a much more enjoyable and feasible role.

“We see again and again, within environmental organizations, within leftist political groups, the same bullying of underlings, the same power grabs, the same egoic rivalries as we see everywhere else. If these are played out in our organizations, how can we hope that they won't be played out in the world we create, should we be victorious?”⁹

Becoming Self-Led

P: patience, persistence, presence, perspective, and playfulness.

Chapter Eight Vision and Purpose

defn: healing This is what healing means in IFS—wholeness and reconnection, and a Self who wants to facilitate that at all levels of a system. As Wendell Berry writes, “Healing complicates the system by opening and restoring connections among the various parts, in this way restoring the ultimate simplicity of their union.... The parts are healthy insofar as they are joined

⁹ Charles Eisenstein, *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2013).

harmoniously to the whole.... Only by restoring the broken connections can we be healed. Connection is health.”¹⁰

In addition to connecting to neglected parts, as you access more Self you shift from being led by your parts’ desires to being led by your heart’s desires.

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.

I find there to be too much striving in Maslow’s early writings to “be all you can be,”

It’s that simple, and that important. A system that is integrated is in a flow of harmony. Just as in a choir, with each singer’s voice both differentiated from the other singers’ voices but also linked, harmony emerges with integration. What is important to note is that this linkage does not remove the differences, as in the notion of blending: instead it maintains these unique contributions as it links them together. Integration is more like a fruit salad than a smoothie.”¹¹

Life Changes and Backlash

These days, people can hardly earn a living doing the most meaningful kinds of work, whereas some of the most meaningless kinds are the highest paid. That being said, Self-led people do have less need for material things, and that helps a lot.

“ “These days, people can hardly earn a living doing the most meaningful kinds of work, whereas some of the most meaningless kinds are the highest paid. “

As people become more Self-led, they find themselves acting altruistically without effort and without so much inner debate, because it just feels natural to them to want to help others. This is because Self recognizes that you and the others are part of a larger body of humanity.

Immanence and Transcendence

To begin with, once you retrieve your exiles and liberate your protectors, you feel more. This is not just because you become more embodied, it’s also because you reexperience many of the emotions you felt in childhood but thought you’d left behind when you became an adult.

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.

¹⁰ Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Avon Books, 1978).

¹¹ Dan Siegel, *Aware: The Science and Practice of Presence* (New York: TarcherPerigree, 2018), 10.

There's more need than ever for Self-led people to not withdraw, but engage in the world. However, to be Self-led, people have to spend time inside themselves. Many leaders I know, including myself, find an inner/outer rhythm that works well for them. When you can balance immanence and transcendence, you can bring healing to the inner and outer worlds simultaneously.

!!! "As David Dellinger writes, "Do you change people first or do you change society? I believe this is a false dichotomy. You have to change both simultaneously. If you're changing only yourself and have no concern for changing society, something goes awry. If you're changing only society but not changing yourself, something goes awry, as tended to happen in the late 1960s. Now, simultaneously may be an overstatement, because I think there are periods when one has to concentrate on one or the other. And there are periods in a society, in a culture, when the emphasis is appropriate only on one or the other. What I'm trying to say is, never lose sight of either the internal world or the external world, the peace within and the peace based on justice on the outside."¹²

Servant Leadership and Contagion

defn servant leadership: Started by AT&T executive Robert Greenleaf, servant leadership "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.

Too many leaders have exiled so many other parts of themselves that they become overextended and burn out.

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. In a sense, they temporarily dissolve, and you are in the nondual wave state—even though you are still operating in this world.

From my perspective then, these are what Ken Wilber calls "peek experiences," in the sense that we are getting a peek or glimpse of the pure Self that is always there.¹³ It's just that it's usually obscured by our parts and their burdens. We are indeed communing with God, if you consider Self to be God within us.

Ralph De La Rosa suggests that at least his version of Buddhism aligns with this position. "It might seem that we have to generate the sense of openness, freshness, joy, revelry, or stillness we touch in such moments. From the Buddhist perspective, however, such a state of being is already there within us and has been so since the beginning. It's tantalizing to think that perhaps

¹² David T. Dellinger, *Revolutionary Nonviolence: Essays by Dave Dellinger* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970).

¹³ Ken Wilber, *The Essential Ken Wilber: An Introductory Reader* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1998).

expansiveness lies waiting to be uncovered within us while we go searching for it everywhere else. It's not something we go toward so much as it is what we are left with when all our running around ceases. Our deeper nature is simply what's left when we put down the endless task of trying to be somebody."¹⁴

Part Three Self in the Body, Self in the World

Chapter Nine Life Lessons and Tor-Mentors

"We are here to learn a particular set of life lessons, and the lesson plan is already within us."

!! We are here to learn a particular set of life lessons, and the lesson plan is already within us. Each of us carries legacy burdens inherited from our families and cultures, and each of us also accrues plenty of personal burdens along the way. So our lesson plan begins with unloading those burdens, and that sets the stage for the most important lesson of all—finding out who we really are.

! First, we find out who we aren't. That takes identifying the extreme beliefs and emotions our parts carry that have (often unconsciously) governed our lives, and determining that those don't belong to us. Along the way, we come to know our Self and become Self-led. Needless to say, the journey isn't always unidirectional or smooth.

You can reassure those parts in the moment that your mistake doesn't make you bad and you won't be punished the way you were as a child.

! "The way we relate to our parts translates directly to how we relate to people when they resemble our parts."

" "The way we relate to our parts translates directly to how we relate to people when they resemble our parts."

By tormenting you, they mentor you about what you need to heal.

Tor-mentors are so valuable because often you aren't aware of those parts until they or their protectors are activated. Your managers had buried them so far inside that you had no idea.

AFGO Another Fucking Growth Opportunity

" "Too many interactions are protector wars."

¹⁴ Ralph De La Rosa, *The Monkey Is the Messenger: Meditation and What Your Busy Mind Is Trying to Tell You* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2018), 6–7.

Chapter Ten The Laws of Inner Physics

Inner law #1 It turns out that whenever a part agrees to not overwhelm, it won't overwhelm.

If a client becomes overwhelmed—has a panic attack in my office, for example—it's because we hadn't made that agreement with the terrified exile in advance. When that occurs, I don't ask the client to take deep breaths, look into my eyes, or feel their feet on the floor. I simply say something like, "I see that a really scared part is here now, and I'd like you to let me talk to it directly." Then, as I talk to that part, I'll let it know that it's very welcome and I'm happy it's been able to break out. I also let it know that it will be a little easier for us to help it if it wouldn't mind separating its energy just a little bit, so that my client can be with it too. Most of the time, the panicked part believes me, and suddenly my client feels grounded, accesses their Self again, and experiences compassion for the panicked part. And they can be with the part rather than becoming it.

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

Until you can unburden your racist parts, it's far better just to be aware of them. If you find one, you can actively remind it, in a compassionate way, that you know it carries those beliefs, but what it says and thinks isn't right. The problem arises when you go to war against your inner racism. As I've said a number of times in this book, going to war against a part usually just strengthens it. When you exile it and pretend it's not there, usually you're just doing it to feel better about yourself, making it much harder to unburden it and counter the potential harm it might do.

As I've said a number of times in this book, going to war against a part usually just strengthens it.

Chapter Eleven Embodiment

When your parts start to trust your Self, they open more space for you to be in your body. When that's the case, you feel sensations and emotions more and, consequently, you become increasingly interested in keeping your body grounded and healthy. With this enhanced sensitivity to your body's feedback comes increased knowledge about what foods or activities are beneficial and which can be damaging. This leads to corresponding changes in your behavior. In addition, your exiles no longer have to use your body to try to get your attention or punish you for ignoring them, because they can get through to you directly.

Another reason that protectors keep you disembodied is that being in your body gives your exiles more access to you. 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.

Additionally, your protectors have more power to dominate your life when your Self isn't embodied, and they'll resist your embodiment attempts if it means giving up that power to protect.

Indeed, it's the protectors who often convince you to medicate. Medications often have a disembodiment effect, which is why they can reduce certain symptoms. When you're medicated, your firefighters calm down, because you aren't as triggered—you don't feel as much. However, since your Self is less embodied, it is harder to do much healing. This is not to say that psychotropic medications aren't helpful, and there are clearly times when your system just needs to chill out for a while. That being said, try not to be disappointed if you can't do much inner work when you're on them.

Are you using it to promote healing or to bypass your exiles?

We're sold on any number of solutions that tell us to get more exercise, eat healthier, slow down, and meditate more. These can all be beneficial practices to help us re-embodiment more, but unless our parts are fully on board, they will ultimately sabotage our healthy solutions. 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 (and sometimes even kicked off the bus), your parts run rampant. They have access to your body for their purposes, and the extreme emotions that they carry will affect your body.

It's also important to keep in mind that parts still impact your body in their nontriggered states, because they remain frozen in triggering places in your past. Many firefighters retain the ability to take over so thoroughly because you've relied on them in the past, you've established the habit of letting them take over, and they've become associated with the powerful hormones you needed during the originating event. Your sexual firefighter, for example, can always flood your system with testosterone and make you think of nothing but sex. Even when your exiles are so locked away that you have no conscious experience of them, the pain, shame, terror, and desperation they hold is still in your body, as are the stress hormones like cortisol they're aligned with, so there is still the need for the firefighter. You likely think you're just a highly sexual person, not realizing how hard that part is working to protect you.

!! "In other words, when you refuse to listen, you can turn your parts into inner terrorists, and they will destroy your body if necessary. Unfortunately, our medical system—in much the same way as a repressive political system—too often is designed to kill the messenger rather than help us get the message."

Closing Thoughts

If you don't take your parts seriously, you won't become an effective inner leader or parent. Various forms of psychotherapy can help you connect with the deep-seated emotions of your exiles, and that can be healing to some degree. But if you think of that process through the lens of expressing a repressed emotion, you won't follow up—and following up is crucial.

If, on the other hand, you understand that you have exiles who really need to trust you, you'll be more likely to visit them for as long as it takes.

“ “When you can love all your parts, you can love all people.”

Unfortunately, having many personalities is still highly stigmatized and pathologized.

the Self being contagious

protector parts are contagious too.

“ “And once there is a critical mass of self energy in any system, healing happens spontaneously and quickly.”

It's not enough to simply address specific problems—green energy initiatives, for example—because as long as we continue to view human beings as selfish, separate, and disconnected, we will continue relating to our parts in ways that make them increasingly extreme, and the host of problems we now face will find other ways to manifest.