Expedition 2: Module 1: Quest for Wholeness

# Expedition 2: Module 1: Quest for Wholeness

# Week

Week 7

# Day

4

# Day Title

# A Family Within: Mapping the Mind with IFS

# Lesson Name

# IFS/Parts Work

# Meme

Quote: *“Your parts are like kids, if you ignore them, they get louder. If you listen with compassion, they calm down.” - Richard Schwartz*

# Summary Edited

Ever feel “torn” inside? **Internal Family Systems (IFS)** may explain why: we all have inner parts that sometimes clash. Protectors shield us, exiles carry pain. But beneath it all, the Self, calm and compassionate, remains whole. Healing begins when parts trust the Self to lead.

# Summary Original

The Internal Family Systems (IFS) model views the mind as a community of different “parts” or subpersonalities. These parts aren’t flaws but natural aspects of being human, often shaped by past experiences. While protectors (like managers and firefighters) work to keep us safe and exiles carry old wounds, the true leader is the **Self**, our calm, compassionate core. Problems arise when parts lose trust in the Self and take over (“blending”). Healing comes from helping parts relax, unblending from them, and allowing the Self to guide. Everyone has this undamaged Self, which brings clarity, confidence, and ease when it leads.

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# Daily Passage Edited

Have you ever felt like different parts of you are pulling in opposite directions? One part wants to take a risk, another part says, “Don’t you dare.” One part wants to speak up, another part wants to hide. That’s the essence of **Internal Family Systems (IFS)**, it helps us make sense of those inner voices.

Think of your mind less like a single voice and more like a busy household, full of “parts.” These parts aren’t flaws, they’re simply aspects of being human. Each part learned its role from past experiences. Some of them still react to life as if it were years ago, even though things have changed.

At the heart of all this activity is something deeper: the *Self.* This is the calm, compassionate, steady part of us, the version of you that can see clearly and lead wisely. The Self is like the inner guide or CEO of your system. And here’s the important thing: no part of you is broken. Even the ones that frustrate you are trying to help, often using strategies that once worked but now feel outdated.

IFS talks about different types of parts. *Managers* try to stay in control so nothing gets messy. *Firefighters* show up when pain breaks through, doing whatever they can to distract or soothe. And then there are *exiles*, the tender, younger parts of us that carry old hurts. The goal isn’t to silence or banish these parts. It’s to help them feel safe enough to trust the Self, so they can relax and show up in healthier ways.

You can spot your parts in your thoughts, emotions, body sensations, even in the images that pop into your mind. When a part doesn’t trust the Self, it tends to take over, like wearing tinted glasses that color your whole view. The work of IFS is learning how to “unblend” from these parts, so the Self can step back into the driver’s seat.

When the Self is leading, people often say they feel grounded, centered, and at ease, as if they’re finally the main character in their own story, guided by clarity and confidence instead of old fears.

And here’s the empowering truth: the Self is always there. It can’t be broken, damaged, or lost. It’s whole, wise, and patiently waiting for the moment your parts feel safe enough to let it shine.

# Daily Passage Original

IFS is like the ultimate mind map of our inner world**.** It reveals that our minds are more like bustling cities, full of subpersonalities, what we call “parts.” Far from being a flaw, this is simply what it means to be human: we all have parts.

In Eastern philosophy, these parts are seen as expressions of the ego or “ego states” that take on roles shaped by our life experiences. Often, they linger in the past, yet get triggered by what’s happening in the present.

At the center of it all lives the **Self**, which is our calm, compassionate core, and is meant to act as the wise CEO of our inner system. Importantly, no part is bad or broken. Each one is like a superhero, working hard to protect us. The problem is that they sometimes cling to outdated strategies that once kept us safe but no longer serve us.

IFS describes different kinds of protectors: managers who try to control things and firefighters who spring into action when pain surfaces. We also have exiles, which are the tender parts carrying old wounds. The goal isn’t to get rid of these parts, but to help them relax, trust the Self, and discover new, healthier ways of showing up.

As we grow, our parts grow with us, forming a kind of inner family system. The real work is in helping this family reorganize so that the Self takes the lead.

We can notice our parts through thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and images. When they lose trust in the Self, they tend to “blend” with us, taking over our perception and reactions. Our task is to gently unblend, so the Self can return to the driver’s seat.

When the Self leads, people often describe it as feeling centered, grounded, and at ease, like the main character in a story defined by confidence, clarity, and calm.

And here’s the most empowering truth: everyone has a Self. This core is never damaged, never lost. It is whole, wise, and always present, waiting to shine once the parts feel safe enough to let it lead.

# Alternate View Edited

Not everyone agrees with the idea of calling our inner experiences “parts.” Some psychologists feel it can make things more complicated than they need to be. From their view, thoughts, feelings, and impulses aren’t separate personalities—just natural ups and downs within one self.

IFS (Internal Family Systems) invites us to name and interact with these parts, but critics worry that people might start clinging to labels like “my inner critic” or “my wounded child.” Instead of softening those patterns, the labels could end up reinforcing them.

Other perspectives focus on wholeness—seeing ourselves as one unified being rather than a collection of subpersonalities. They argue that too much focus on parts might actually fragment identity instead of bringing it together.

And in many Eastern traditions, like Buddhism, the approach is different still. The goal isn’t to organize an “inner family” but to dissolve our attachment to the ego altogether—seeing thoughts and feelings as temporary, passing, and not truly who we are.

# Alternative View Original

Some psychologists argue that labeling aspects of the mind as “parts” can overcomplicate things. They might say that thoughts, feelings, and impulses don’t need to be treated as distinct personalities but as natural fluctuations of a single self. IFS encourages naming and engaging with parts, but some critics caution that people might cling to parts identities (“my inner critic,” “my wounded child”) in ways that reinforce those patterns rather than soften them. Some perspectives stress that wholeness means seeing ourselves as one unified being, not a collection of subpersonalities. They’d say too much focus on parts risks fragmenting identity rather than integrating it. Finally, in many Eastern traditions (like Buddhism), the goal is dissolving attachment to the ego altogether. Rather than organizing an “inner family,” these traditions emphasize seeing thoughts and feelings as impermanent and not-self.

# Activity

Connecting with Self Tool: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FuqHzXOttEBZZ_Ak8AjiwHxnhMoHaGTD0KWom-VsjBs/edit?tab=t.p4kzgnvrd7t5>

**Journal Prompt**: Reflect on the parts of yourself that tend to ‘take over’ in stressful situations. What do you imagine each part is trying to protect you from? How might it feel if your Self—the calm, centered core of you—was able to take the lead instead? Describe what being Self-led would look and feel like in your daily life.

Sources

Richard Schwartz:

**Internal Family Systems Therapy** (1997, updated 2019 with Martha Sweezy) – the foundational clinical text.

**Introduction to the Internal Family Systems Model** (2001) – a concise overview, very beginner-friendly.

**You Are the One You’ve Been Waiting For** (2010) – IFS applied to couples and relationships.

**No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model** (2021) – the most accessible, popular book for the general public.

**Sounds True – Introduction to IFS** (with Richard Schwartz) – a self-paced course.

Other Authors:

**Parts Work: An Illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life by Tom Holmes** – simple and visual, great for self-guided practice.

**Self-Therapy by Jay Earley** – a practical workbook for applying IFS to your own life.

Module B--Realm 2: Connection

# Expedition 1: Module B **–** Introduction to Integration – Realm 2: Connection

# Week

8

# Day

6

# Day Title

Releasing Limiting Stories

# Lesson Name

What is resistance?

# Meme / Quote

*“You are not your story.”* — Byron Katie

# Summary Edited

What if the stories you tell yourself aren’t even true? What if they’re the very thing holding you back? The Work by Byron Katie, 4 simple questions and a turnaround, helps unravel limiting beliefs, dissolving stress and opening the way to clarity, authenticity, freedom, and peace.

# Summary **Original**

We hold onto old stories because our brains seek safety and efficiency. These narratives, though once protective, eventually become limiting, keeping us stuck in fear, doubt, and self-fulfilling cycles. They can feel hard to release since they provide identity and predictability, but over time they weigh us down more than they help. By questioning and reframing these beliefs, we can move from limitation to freedom. *The Work* by Byron Katie offers a simple process: four questions and a turnaround, that helps dissolve stressful stories and open the way to clarity, authenticity, and peace.

# Daily Passage

We often cling to old stories about ourselves and the world because our brains are wired for survival and efficiency. These stories, such as “I’m not enough” or “People can’t be trusted,” become deeply ingrained neural pathways. They feel familiar, predictable, and even protective, despite the pain they cause. Many of them once served an important purpose: helping us navigate rejection, earn approval, or stay emotionally safe. But over time, what once kept us secure can turn into a prison, locking us into patterns of fear, doubt, and limitation.

Our minds also look for evidence to confirm these beliefs, reinforcing them again and again. Letting go can feel like losing part of who we are. Yet eventually, the burden of carrying the old story becomes heavier than the fear of writing a new one. A helpful reframe is: *“This story protected me then. But now I am safe enough to choose a better one.”*

Beliefs shape the way we see ourselves and the world. Some empower us, while others, rooted in past wounds or negative thought patterns, hold us back. These limiting narratives act like cautious guardians, trying to protect us from pain, but in doing so, they keep us from taking risks that could lead to growth. By becoming aware of these old scripts and consciously choosing to let them go, we can replace them with more empowering narratives that expand our self-awareness and possibilities.

There is what actually happens in life, and then there is the story we tell ourselves about it. When we cling to a limiting script, we often create self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, if you believe “people don’t like me,” you might interpret a coworker’s distracted silence as proof, react with withdrawal, and unintentionally create distance that confirms your fear. But if we learn to question these stories and see events more clearly, we stop casting ourselves or others as villains. We free ourselves to create more authentic connections and live with greater openness.

Achieving this kind of objectivity means acknowledging and challenging our limiting stories, reassessing the “truths” we’ve accepted, and choosing new perspectives that empower us. When we step into the role of active authors of our lives, we open the door to growth, authenticity, and deeper freedom.

One powerful method for this is *The Work* by Byron Katie, a process of self-inquiry that dissolves limiting beliefs. It begins with four questions:

1. Is it true?
2. Can you absolutely know that it’s true?
3. How do you react when you believe that thought?
4. Who would you be without the thought?

The practice ends with a “turnaround,” in which the original thought is reversed to the self, to the other, or to the opposite, uncovering fresh perspectives and unexpected truths. By engaging this process, we move from stress and struggle into clarity and peace, reconnecting with freedom, self-awareness, and authenticity.

# Alternative View

While Byron Katie’s *The Work* emphasizes questioning and releasing limiting stories, some alternative views suggest a different approach. Certain stories provide meaning, continuity, and resilience rather than being prisons. Trauma-informed perspectives emphasize honoring and integrating old stories instead of discarding them. Philosophical views argue that we cannot fully escape storytelling since perception is always filtered, so the task is to choose stories consciously. Cognitive approaches like CBT favor actively restructuring negative thoughts rather than turning them around. Others caution that focusing only on internal beliefs risks overlooking real social and systemic issues.

# Activity

Byron Katie’s The Work Tool

**Journal Prompt**: Think of a story you tell yourself that feels limiting or painful. When did you first start believing it, and how has it tried to protect you? What might life feel like if you released this old story and chose a new, more empowering one instead?

Sources

**Loving What Is: Four Questions That Can Change Your Life** – the foundational book, co-authored with Stephen Mitchell.

**The Work – Byron Katie** (thework.com)