

# *Self-Therapy Workbook*

AN EXERCISE BOOK FOR THE IFS PROCESS

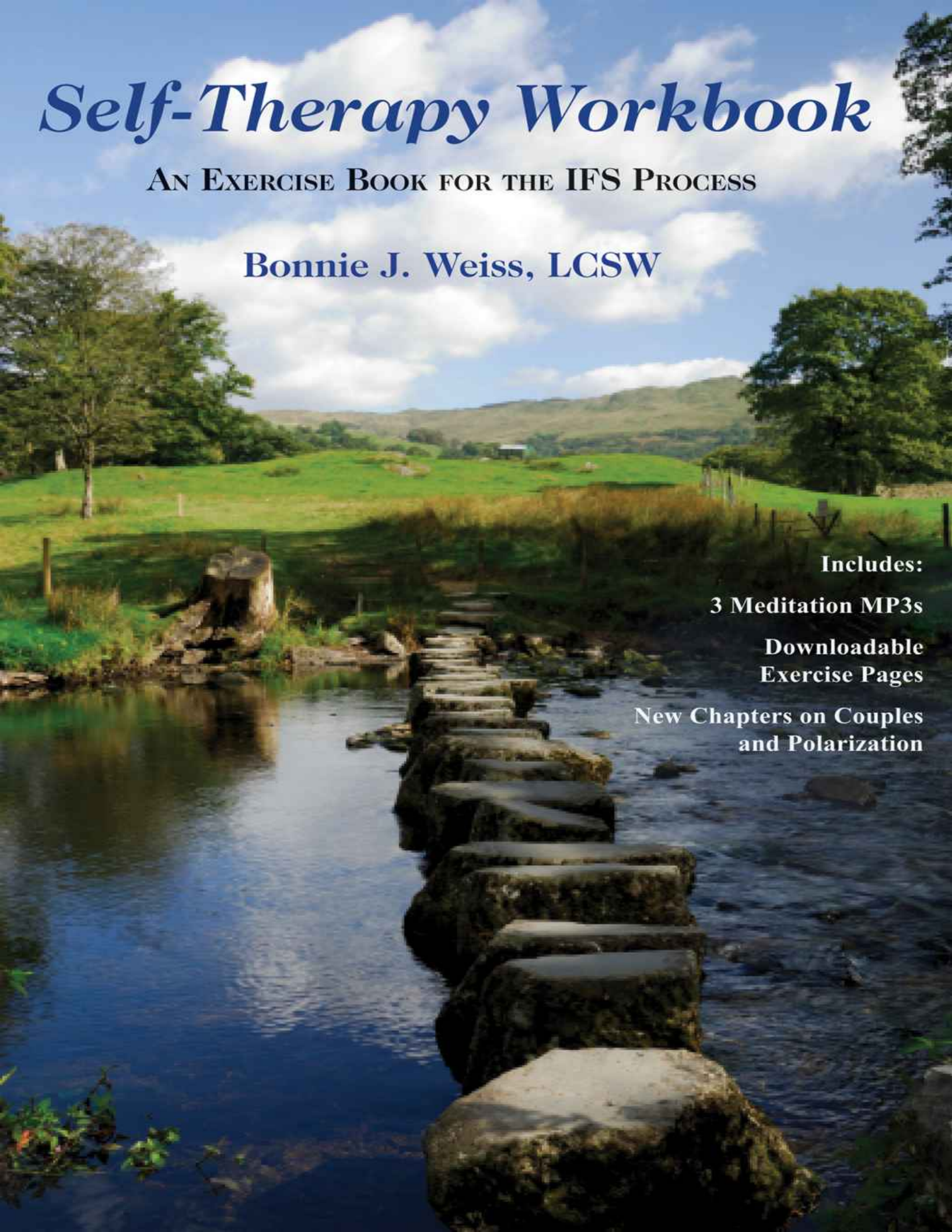
Bonnie J. Weiss, LCSW

**Includes:**

**3 Meditation MP3s**

**Downloadable  
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**New Chapters on Couples  
and Polarization**



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Bonnie J. Weiss, LCSW

 PATTERN SYSTEM BOOKS  
Larkspur, CA

**SELF-THERAPY WORKBOOK:**

An Exercise Book for the IFS Process

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## What Users are Saying

“This book is so much more than a workbook! While capturing the key parts of Jay Earley’s *Self-Therapy* in a workbook format, it also elucidates IFS best practices and will be indispensable to IFS students, teachers, clients, coaches, and therapists.”

—Everett Considine, IFS Instructor and Certified IFS Practitioner

“*Self-Therapy Workbook* by Bonnie Weiss, LCSW, is a comprehensive, thoughtful and well organized accompaniment for anyone working to build the capacities of self-leadership. The workbook is an exemplary introduction to the IFS Model for first timers, yet it also brings enough sophistication in detail and scope to benefit professional-level providers. As usual, Ms. Weiss brings a collection of excellent meditations to open the reader’s inner experience as well as plenty of room to record one’s own reflections and progressive growth. I highly recommend this workbook for individuals and professions as a valuable enhancement to the therapeutic process.”

—Roseanne Keefe, LICSW

“If you want an easy way to understand and effectively utilize the IFS process, this workbook clearly breaks down the steps described in *Self-Therapy* by Jay Earley. The exercises are clear, the images are helpful and well integrated into the text,



and the examples make this workbook easy to use. I appreciate that it has expanded the original work to include chapters on polarization and couples work. I will certainly give this to my clients to both educate them about the IFS process and to empower them to use this process on their own.”

—Nancy Dagenhart, MFT, IFS Therapist

“This workbook is a very useful companion to *Self-Therapy*. It provides thoughtful step-by-step guidance through the IFS process. Its clarity and simplicity allow the reader to turn the theoretical concepts of IFS into practical, useful steps toward healing. A must-read for those who want to use IFS for self-growth and healing.”

—Ilyssa Bass, IFS Therapist, Jerusalem, Israel

“This book is a gold mine. It takes the excellent *Self-Therapy* book to the next level in terms of practicality. I’m convinced that this workbook will help its readers process and work through inner blocks and recurring pains. It is a reference I will use personally as well as recommend to my clients.”

—Ronnie Grandell, Psychologist, Finland

## **Acknowledgments**

I primarily want to thank Jay Earley for his generosity in allowing me to use his material as a basis for this book. I appreciate his support for this vision and his tireless commitment to bringing the healing concepts of IFS to the larger public.

It was great fun spending a weekend writing the couples chapter with my dear friend Marla Silverman. Any time with Marla is treasured time well spent. We always depend on Kira Freed for editing and, in this case, design. We love her sharp eye, open heart, and clear language. Thank you for always making time for our projects.

I deeply appreciate Alexis Zielke's creative input and loving support on this project. I so value her fresh point of view. As usual, Jeanenne Chase Langford and MJ Stern are always there to pick up pieces and move things along. I am grateful for their support. Thanks again to Karen Donnelly for the use of her illustrations. I have always valued the way they make the concepts come alive.

# Introduction

This workbook is a companion book to *Self-Therapy* by Jay Earley, PhD. *Self-Therapy* lays out the step-by-step process of the Internal Family Systems Therapy Model originated by Richard Schwartz, PhD ([www.selfleadership.org](http://www.selfleadership.org)). The book is designed to facilitate learning the basics of the IFS process. The workbook takes you step-by-step from accessing a part by working with Protectors through getting to know and heal the more fragile, exiled parts of the psyche. The format of integrated concept descriptions and exercises is ideal for individual exploration, small groups, or classes. Exercises can be done on one's own or with a partner. The workbook structure allows for journal-style following of your process.

The workbook provides summaries of the steps outlined by Earley and offers expanded exercises to work with and integrate the IFS process. Sample responses to the exercises are provided in order to clarify the ideas being explored. The workbook goes beyond *Self-Therapy* by including chapters on using IFS with couples, polarization, and firefighters. For a fuller explanation of various IFS ideas, transcripts of sessions and case examples refer to *Self-Therapy*.

As clinicians, Jay and I were very excited to discover the IFS Model. It allowed us to integrate our training and clinical experience with our years of spiritual practice. The concept of Self brings into the therapeutic arena the power of higher consciousness as a healing tool. We are deeply grateful to Dick

Schwartz for his unflagging commitment to bring this model into the world.

Over the years of teaching the IFS Model and using it with clients, Jay and I have provided user-friendly materials that enable people to use the powerful tools of IFS in their individual efforts to grow and develop their humanness as well as to transform personal difficulties. Being psychotherapists, we deeply value the importance of the helping relationship and the sacredness of the therapeutic encounter. We do, however, believe that people can benefit from being introduced to this model outside of therapy and can work by themselves or with a partner to further their personal understanding and gain some relief from internal structures that have limited their ability to function in a satisfying way. Our hope is that this workbook will supplement existing material by providing a clear, easy-to-follow structure for doing IFS work.

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***Downloadable exercise pages that accompany this workbook are available at <http://personal-growth-programs.com/self-therapy-workbook-bonnie-weiss/>***

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# Chapter 1

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## ***Basic IFS Concepts***

Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a relatively new form of therapy that is compassionate, inclusive, spiritual, powerfully healing, and deeply respectful of our inner life. IFS recognizes that our psyches are made up of different parts, sometimes called subpersonalities. You can think of them as little people inside us. Each part has its own perspective, feelings, memories, goals, and motivations. For example, one part of you might be trying to lose weight, and another part might want to eat whatever it wants. We can all recognize parts like the Inner Critic, the Abandoned Child, the Pleaser, the Angry Part, and the Loving Caretaker.

Parts have motivations for everything they do. Nothing is done just out of habit. Nothing is just a pattern of thinking or behavior that you learned. Everything (except for purely physiological reactions) is done by a part for a reason, even though that reason may be unconscious.

Understanding parts in this way gives you a great deal of power to change your inner system. It means that there is an understandable rationale for your behavior, feelings, and attitudes. It is possible to get to know these parts, develop relationships with them, and help them heal. Once healed, they no longer need to behave in ways that seem at odds with your

intentions, values, and goals. The possibility for harmonious integration is real.

Richard Schwartz, PhD, in developing the IFS method, discovered that every part has a positive intent for you, no matter how problematic its behavior. For example, Bill had a part that was judgmental and competitive with other people in a way that was not consistent with his true values. However, when he really got to know that part, he discovered that it was just trying to help him feel OK about himself in the only way it knew how—by feeling superior to others.

Understanding that a part has positive intent doesn't mean that you give the part power. Bill doesn't want his part to act out being judgmental and competitive. Using the IFS approach, Bill can relate to this part with understanding and appreciation while also taking the steps to heal it.

This approach is fundamentally different from the way we ordinarily relate to our parts. Usually when we become aware of a part, the first thing we do is evaluate it. Is it good or bad for us? If we decide it is good, we embrace it and give it power. If we decide it is bad, we try to suppress it or get rid of it. The truth is, you can't get rid of a part. You can only push it into the deeper layers of your psyche, where it will continue to affect you without your awareness.

In IFS, we do something altogether different and radical. We welcome all our parts with curiosity and compassion. We seek to understand them and appreciate their efforts to help us. We develop a relationship of caring and trust with each part and

then take the steps to release it from its burdens so it can function in a healthy way.

In the IFS system, Protectors are the parts you usually encounter first in exploring yourself. Their job is to handle the world, protect you, and keep you functioning. They interact in a reasonable, strategic way with the people, responsibilities, and situations in your environment. The other main function of these parts is to protect you from the pain of the Exiles. These are young child parts that hold the pain from the past. They are generally exiled, or kept out of consciousness, by the Protectors.

In the above example, Bill had a Protector that was competitive and judgmental toward others. It was trying to help Bill feel superior in order to protect against an Exile Part that felt inadequate. The Exile Part had probably suffered some kind of humiliation or rejection in the past that left it feeling unworthy.

Parts take on these dysfunctional roles because of what has happened to them in the past. Exiles take on pain and burdens from what they experienced as children. Protectors take on their roles in order to protect Exiles or to protect you from the pain of Exiles.



## ***The IFS Process***

IFS has a method of understanding and working with these parts to release the burdens they carry from the past and heal the system so you can function in healthy ways. The key to this healing is the Self. IFS recognizes that each of us has a spiritual center—a true Self. This Self is naturally compassionate and curious about people, especially about our own parts. The Self wants to connect with each part and get to know and understand it. The Self feels compassion for the pain of the Exiles and the burdens of pain that they carry. It also has compassion for the Protectors and the tough jobs they take on trying to keep the Exiles from being reinjured or exposed. The Self is able to stay calm and centered despite the sometimes intense emotions that parts may feel. Everyone has a Self, even though you may feel that yours is not very accessible at times because of the activity of your parts.

The Self is the agent of healing—the true leader of the internal system that can love and heal each part. The first step in the IFS process is learning how to access the Self. Then the Self focuses its energy on the part. In Bill's case, he started out his IFS work by focusing on his Judgmental Part. With some work, he was able to be genuinely in his Self so that he was interested in getting to know the Judgmental Part. He found out that it was trying to protect an Exile Part of him that felt inadequate. Bill had a learning problem as a child, even though he is quite intelligent and

competent. So there was a young part of Bill that had felt inadequate in school. The Judgmental Part was trying to compensate for this inadequate experience by feeling superior to people. Bill had grown up in a judgmental, competitive home, so that was the primary model this part knew. As Bill got to know the Judgmental Part, he understood why this part acted as it did and appreciated its efforts on his behalf.

He then contacted the Exile who felt inadequate. He listened and watched as this part showed him scenes from his childhood when it felt ashamed and inadequate because of his learning problem, and he responded to the Exile with compassion and caring. The young part responded to this by feeling cherished and valuable for the first time. Up until then, it had been hidden away in Bill's unconscious, which only increased its feelings of worthlessness. With love from Bill's Self, this young part was able to release the burden of inadequacy that it had been carrying and feel good about itself. This allowed the Judgmental Protector to relax. It no longer needed to judge people to compensate for the Exile's pain. This enabled Bill to respond to people in the way he always wanted—with openness, acceptance, and a cooperative attitude.

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## **IFS Principles**

The following are some basic principles of the Internal Family Systems Model. These concepts underlie the work described in this workbook.

- All parts are welcome.
  - You never **make** a part step aside or separate—you only ask.
  - You respect the reasons parts have for what they are and aren't willing to do.
  - All parts have positive intent at their core and ultimately want only the best for you. If they appear to have negative intent, they are using strategies that, on some level, made sense at some point in their past but are no longer effective. Getting inside their world and understanding the origin of those strategies is a key step in helping them adopt more effective strategies.
  - Parts will cooperate once their fears are addressed and once they can feel you in Self and understand your intentions.
  - It isn't possible to do it wrong when working on yourself using IFS. Even if your process is completely blocked, it just means that a Protector is stopping the process for some reason. You access that Protector and find out why it is behaving that way.
  - The fastest way to resolve an issue is to work slowly, patiently, and respectfully with all parts involved.
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## Chapter 2

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### ***Guided Meditations***

A guided meditation is an audio journey that evokes an altered state of consciousness during which material from the deeper layers of your psyche is more readily available to you. Three audio recordings of guided meditations are included with this book:

- Getting into Self
- Appreciating Protectors
- Soothing a Triggered Exile

They can be accessed at <http://personal-growth-programs.com/self-therapy-workbook-bonnie-weiss/>. The transcripts for these meditations are located in [Appendix B](#).

When doing this kind of imagery exercise, it is best to sit or lie in a completely relaxed, comfortable position. Never listen to guided imagery while driving or doing anything that requires full alert attention. If you discover that you have a tendency to fall asleep during guided meditations, it is best to maintain an upright sitting position without head support. This will keep you awake while still allowing deep relaxation. It is especially important to use this position after eating a big meal or if you are tired.

The best attitude to adopt for guided meditations is a combination of letting go and staying focused. Letting go allows images from the deeper layers of

your psyche to emerge freely. There is no need to try to control the images or sensations that you feel or the words that you hear. It's important not to doubt or discard whatever spontaneously emerges. You might be inclined to discard something because you don't understand it or you think it is unacceptable. Sometimes it is actually a plus to have something emerge that is not immediately clear. Some of the most important information from our psyche isn't readily understandable. When we allow ourselves to be with things we're initially inclined to reject, new avenues of self-understanding can emerge. Please trust that the image or other information has come up for a good reason and that you don't need to fear your psyche.

The other important ability is staying focused. This means keeping on track with the meditation directions as well as with the thread of your own inner journey. During meditation, it is easy to "space out" or daydream about irrelevant issues. This happens to almost everyone from time to time. If you find that you have lost focus, don't become worried or judge yourself—just gently bring yourself back to the track of the meditation.

Don't assume that all imagery has to be visual. Some people don't visualize very well but are good at body imagery. They can sense body feelings, posture, and movement, and they may also imagine their body in different shapes. This is called kinesthetic imagery. Some people have profound meditative experiences this way. Other people mainly get information through hearing voices, words, or sounds. So if you have

trouble visualizing, just notice what information is coming through these other channels.



## Chapter 3

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### *The self*

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A downloadable guided meditation that facilitates getting into Self is available in MP3 format at

<http://personal-growth-programs.com/self-therapy-workbook-bonnie-weiss/>

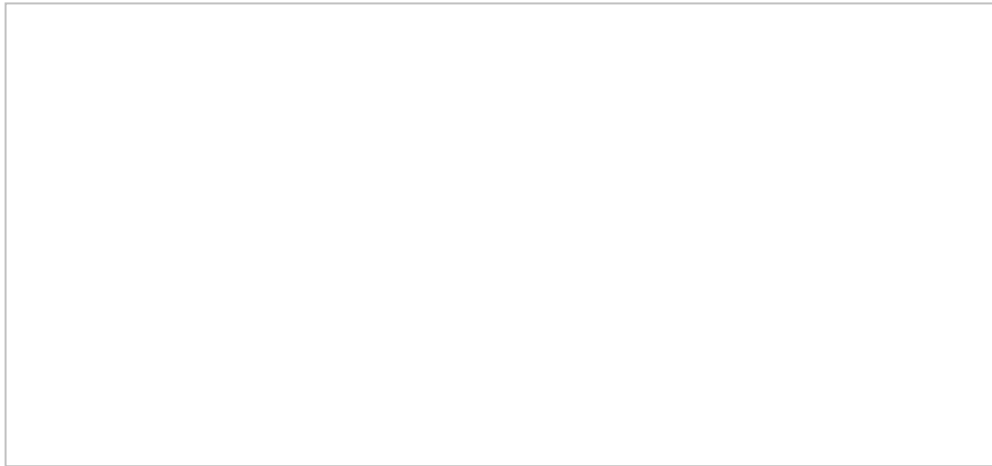
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Fortunately, human beings are not simply a collection of parts. We are so much more than that. Our true Self is mature and loving, and has the capacity to heal and integrate our parts.

We each have a core aspect of us that is our true self and our spiritual center. When our extreme parts are not activated and getting in the way, we have access to this core, which is who we really are. The Self is relaxed, open, and accepting of others and ourselves. When we are in Self, we are grounded, centered, and nonreactive. We don't get triggered by what people do. We remain calm and unruffled, even in difficult circumstances. The Self is so much larger and more spacious than our parts and is not frightened by events that would scare parts. When we

are in Self, we are the shining center of the system that is each of us.

The IFS Model talks about the eight C's that are the principal qualities of the Self. They are: Compassion, Curiosity, Connection, Calm, Courage, Clarity, Caring, and Creativity. The four capacities described below are the most relevant for doing an IFS session.



**1. The Self is connected.** When you are in Self, you naturally feel close to other people and want to relate in harmonious, supportive ways. You are drawn to make contact with them and to be in community. The Self also wants to be connected to your parts. When you are in Self, you are interested in having a relationship with each of your parts, which helps them trust you and opens the way for healing.

**2. The Self is curious.** When you are in Self, you are curious about other people in an open, accepting way. When you inquire into what makes them tick, it's because you want to understand them, not judge them. The Self is also curious about the inner workings of your mind. You want to understand why

each part acts as it does, what its positive intent is for you, and what it is trying to protect you from. This curiosity comes from an accepting place, not a critical one. When parts sense this genuine interest, they know they are entering a welcoming environment, and they aren't afraid to reveal themselves to you.

**3. The Self is compassionate.** Compassion is a form of kindness and love that arises when people are in pain. You genuinely care about how others feel and often feel prompted to support them through difficult times. When you are in Self, you also naturally feel compassion for yourself. When parts are extreme, they're reacting to pain; Exiles feel it, and Protectors try to avoid it. Compassion toward yourself is the most essential ingredient in the inner quest for understanding. It is needed in order to hold, support, and nurture your parts while you explore your system. Your parts can sense the Self's compassion. It makes them feel safe and cared for, so they want to open up and share themselves with you.

**4. The Self is calm, centered, and grounded.** This is especially helpful when you are relating to a part that has intense emotions. Intense grief or shame, for example, can be overwhelming if you aren't grounded in Self. Protectors will avoid a part that has very strong emotions. But when you are centered in the calmness of Self, there is no need to avoid a part that is feeling intense emotion. You remain in Self while the part shows you its pain. The calmness of Self supports you through the difficult work of witnessing and healing the part.

For all these reasons, the Self is the agent of psychological healing in IFS work. It helps you heal and transform your parts so they become free of their extreme feelings and behavior, and can assume healthy roles in your life.



## ***The Structure of the Psyche***

The Self is also the natural leader of your internal system and the natural occupant of the “seat of consciousness.” It has the courage to take risks, the perspective to see reality clearly, and the creativity to find good solutions to problems. The Self is balanced and fair, and it sees what needs to happen in most situations. When you have healed your parts and they trust you, they finally allow the Self to lead. Ideally the Self is the one who makes decisions and moves the system forward. The Self is the conductor of the orchestra, the one who brings in the woodwinds at the right time, tells the musicians when to play softly, and cues the horn solo. It chooses the best course of action in each moment and calls on your healthy parts to contribute their gifts. Your parts trust the Self and rely on its wisdom.

The goal of IFS work is to unburden each part so it has a healthy role and for each part to trust the Self to lead. Because the Self is the leader of the internal system, it can be trusted to move the system toward wholeness. The Self can work with each part to release its burdens and transform.

## ***Self Meditation***

The following guided meditation can be used to access your Self. You can read this meditation, periodically stopping to sit with your eyes closed and allowing the words to evoke sensations and images. You can also record it with your own voice or have a friend read it to you. An additional Getting into Self Meditation that is part of this workbook can be found at <http://personal-growth-programs.com/self-therapy-workbook-bonnie-weiss/> and is transcribed in [Appendix B](#).

A guided meditation is a journey that evokes an altered state of consciousness. When doing this kind of imagery exercise, it is best to sit or lie in a completely relaxed, comfortable position. Always give it your full, undivided attention. Allow yourself time to experience the images on both the physical and emotional levels. Trust whatever comes up for you as being exactly what you need in this moment. There is no right or wrong—just experience and information. Enjoy.

## ***Introductory Meditation Text***

Close your eyes. Go inside . . .  
and begin by focusing on your body sensations . . .  
just noticing wherever your attention goes in your  
body . . .  
in each moment . . . and being with that sensation.  
Whether it's a tingling in your hands . . .  
or a quivering in your closed eyelids . . .  
or a relaxation in your belly . . .  
or tension in your shoulders . . .  
whatever it is, be present with that sensation.  
And then, as time goes on, your attention may move  
to a different part of your body . . .  
and just allow yourself to be present with that  
sensation.  
And as you do that, allow it to relax you . . . and take  
you deeper inside.  
Just continuing to be with your body . . . deepening  
into yourself.  
And now focus your attention on your belly . . . the  
sensations in your belly.  
Whether it's a fullness . . . or a softness . . . or a  
solidness . . .  
or just the sense of the rise and fall of your belly with  
each breath . . .



or something altogether different.

Whatever it is, just be present with the sensations in your belly . . .

and allow them to take you into that center place in your consciousness . . .

anchoring you . . . in your belly . . . coming to a grounded, solid place inside yourself.

Okay . . . now gradually, begin to bring yourself back from this deep place

that you've been . . .

beginning to deepen your breathing . . .

wiggle around a little bit . . . open your eyes . . .

and come back to your regular waking consciousness.

Steps in the IFS Process  
**WORKING WITH PROTECTORS**



- P1. Accessing a Part
- P2. Unblending from a Target Part
- P3. Checking for Self-Leadership  
& Unblending from a Concerned Part
- P4. Getting to Know a Protector
- P5. Developing a Trusting  
Relationship with a Protector



# Chapter 4

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## *Accessing Parts*

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***A downloadable guided meditation that covers the material in Chapters 4-8 is available in MP3 format at***

***<http://personal-growth-programs.com/self-therapy-workbook-bonnie-weiss/>***

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## ***Trailhead***

Let's suppose you have an issue you would like to work on. How do you know what parts to explore? In IFS, issues are sometimes referred to as trailheads. A *trailhead* is an experience or a difficulty in your life that will lead to interesting parts if you follow it. It can be a situation or person that you react to, an emotional or bodily experience, a pattern of behavior or thinking, a dream, or anything else that indicates one or more parts to explore. IFS calls it a trailhead because it is the beginning of a trail that can lead to healing. It usually involves both a life situation and your response to that situation.

## ***Accessing a Part***

You begin an IFS session by accessing a part that you believe will be helpful to work with. It might be related to an important trailhead, or it might be causing you intense feelings in the moment. The emphasis in this chapter is on how to make simple contact with the part. Getting to know the part fully will be covered in succeeding chapters. We are starting with Protectors.

It is best to close your eyes during this process and for the rest of any IFS session. We also recommend doing this work in a private room where you won't be disturbed by people, pets, phones, or computers. This cuts down on distractions and allows you to focus completely on the Protector you are accessing.

## ***Part Activation***

A part is **activated** when its extreme feelings or beliefs are triggered by a situation or person. You can feel that the part is here, present with you.

## ***Target Part***

This is the part you are focusing on or working with.



## ***Ways to Access a Part***

Emotion: How it feels emotionally

Visual: An image of the part

Body: Sensing the part in your body

Verbal: Listening for what the part says to you

Name for part: A descriptive phrase, person's name, character, animal, and so on

The body sense is often the most direct route for accessing a part, but it is not completely necessary for making contact and getting information. A part can show up as a sensation in or around your body. It can be a chronic sensation, like a stiff neck, or a habitual way of holding your arm, or it can be a sensation that arises in the moment as you pay attention to the part, like an emptiness in your chest, a queasy feeling in your belly, or a sudden headache.

When you access a part, try for as many channels of information as you can because they each have value, but you only *need* one of the above.

Once you have accessed a part through one or more channels, allow a word or phrase to arise that describes the part as you are experiencing it. You might ask the part how it would describe itself.

## ***Three Ways to Begin a Session***

1. Having a specific part in mind
2. Working with a trailhead
3. Starting with your current experience

## ***1. Working with a specific part***

Think of a part that you are interested in getting to know. Check to see if the part is activated at the moment. You can tell if the part is present in the moment by noticing if you can see or feel it. Do you easily see the world from its point of view and feel its emotions?

### ***When a part isn't activated***

If that part isn't activated, think of a recent situation when the part was activated. Imagine yourself in that situation right now.

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***Downloadable exercise pages that accompany this workbook are available at <http://personal-growth-programs.com/self-therapy-workbook-bonnie-weiss/>***

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**EXERCISE**

## ***Accessing a Part That Isn't Activated***

Choose one of your parts that isn't activated right now. Take a moment, close your eyes, deepen your breath, and imagine that you are in a situation in which the part is activated. Notice how it feels to be there. From that place, try accessing the part using each of the channels—feeling, image, body, and internal voice. Write down what you experience.

Name of part: \_\_\_\_\_

The situation that activates the part: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part feels emotionally: \_\_\_\_\_

What it looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels like in your body: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part says: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Remember that it isn't necessary to achieve access through all channels.

SAMPLE

## ***Accessing a Part That Isn't Activated***

Name of part: Perfectionist

The situation that activates the part: Finding a rip in my backpack

What the part feels emotionally: I feel safer when things are perfect.

What it looks like: A perfect box, all sides completely the same, with right angles all equal in size

What it feels like in your body: Tension in my chest

What the part says: I like to be safe, and I feel safe when everything is the way that it should be. I feel safe when there is a sense of harmony, wholeness, and evenness, and everything is the same.

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## ***2. Identifying the Parts at a Trailhead***

Think of an issue or situation that you are interested in exploring.

Imagine yourself in that situation or with that person or having that experience.

Notice a part that is activated and access it.

Now ask that part to step aside so you can see what other parts are there.

Notice another part that is activated and access it.

Repeat until no new parts are activated by that trailhead.

## ***Trailhead Questions:***

Here are a few questions you can ask at a trailhead to identify the parts:

- What is the main feeling or part in this situation?
- Is there another part that feels differently or opposes that part?
- Are there any feelings of self-judgment or critics that are reacting to the situation?
- Is there any other part that would like its voice to be heard on this issue?

## **EXERCISE**



## ***Identifying the Parts at a Trailhead***

Choose a trailhead that you are interested in exploring. If it is not current in your life, take a moment to close your eyes and imagine you are in that situation now. Ask yourself, "What parts are here as I connect with this situation or look at this issue?" List the parts at this trailhead one by one as they arise. For each part, write as much of the following information as you can. Remember, you haven't fully explored these parts, so don't be concerned if you don't know much about them. Just fill in what you know. You can add more information later.

Name of part: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part feels emotionally: \_\_\_\_\_

What it looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels like in your body and where: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part says: \_\_\_\_\_

How it makes you behave: \_\_\_\_\_

What it wants: \_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE

## ***Identifying the Parts at a Trailhead***

Situation: Someone elbowed me on a bus.

Name of Part 1: Anger

What the part feels emotionally: Disrespected, fiery

What it looks like: Smoky-nosed dragon

What it feels like in your body and where: Face, tight jaw, burning eyes

What the part says: I hate you.

How it makes you behave: Mean and grouchy

What it wants: To protect itself

Name of Part 2: Judgment

What the part feels emotionally: Self-righteous

What it looks like: Snarky old man pointing a finger

What it feels like in your body and where: Tension in midsection, raised shoulder

What the part says: You idiot. How could you be so thoughtless? You are so selfish. Pay attention to what you are doing.

How it makes you behave: Shaking my head, scoffing, name-calling.

What it wants: The other person to feel small and stupid, and go away.

Name of Part 3: Fear

What the part feels emotionally: I am not safe here.

What it looks like: Someone cowering.

What it feels like in your body and where: Shivering all over

What the part says: I am not safe here. It is unpredictable. Anything could happen. I could get

hurt.

How it makes you behave: Shrinking away, looking around warily

What it wants: Safety, protection, help

Name of Part 4: Physically hurt

What the part feels emotionally: Sad, pained

What it looks like: Child crying

What it feels like in your body and where:  
Contracted where struck, face contorted

What the part says: Oww, that hurts.

How it makes you behave: Crying and letting it out

What it wants: Someone to comfort it

### ***3. Starting with your current experience***

The third way to access a part is by staying present in the moment and exploring what parts are there. Turn your attention to your current experience and see what parts you notice. What emotions are you feeling, what internal messages do you hear, and what body sensations or tensions come into your awareness? Assume that all of these are from parts. Feel into an emotion or body sensation and see what gradually emerges.

#### **EXERCISE**

## ***Identifying the Parts in Your Current Experience***

Take a moment to close your eyes, deepen your breath, and focus inward. Ask yourself, “What parts are here in my current awareness? What emotions am I feeling? What thoughts or messages am I telling myself? What body sensations are present?” One by one as they arise, write them down. For each part, write as much of the following information as you can. As before, you haven’t fully explored these parts, so don’t worry if you only know a little about them.

Name of part: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels emotionally: \_\_\_\_\_

What it looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels like in your body and where: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part says: \_\_\_\_\_

How it makes you behave: \_\_\_\_\_

What it wants: \_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE

## ***Identifying the Parts in Your Current Experience***

Name of Part 1: Anxiety

What it feels emotionally: Worried about upcoming meeting

What it looks like: TV static

What it feels like in your body and where: Jazziness in chest and belly

What the part says: You're not prepared. They're not going to like you.

How it makes you behave: Hyperactive, distracted

What it wants: To run away

Name of Part 2: Critic

What it feels emotionally: Angry at me

What it looks like: Harsh mother

What it feels like in your body and where: Tight jaw, tension in arms, contracted chest, pointing finger

What the part says: You didn't prepare. You wasted time. You're lazy!

How it makes you behave: Agitated, disorganized

What it wants: For me to focus and get something done

Name of Part 3: Scared child

What it feels emotionally: Afraid of being found to be inadequate and then rejected

What it looks like: Five-year-old cowering in the corner

What it feels like in your body and where: Hands over head, crying

What the part says: I'm sorry I'm not good enough.

How it makes you behave: *Scared and withdrawn*  
What it wants: *To feel safe and accepted*

## EXERCISE



## ***Noticing a Part in Real Time***

This is an exercise you can do during the week as homework practice.

Choose a part that gets activated with some frequency in your life that you want to learn more about. You might take a moment and let that part know in some way that you're interested in getting to know it better.

Name of part: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels emotionally: \_\_\_\_\_

What it looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels like in your body and where: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part says: \_\_\_\_\_

How it makes you behave: \_\_\_\_\_

What it wants: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Noticing the Part***

Over the next week, practice noticing when this part is activated. It will help to know what cues will tip you off that it is activated. What body sensations, thoughts, or emotions will let you know it is up—for example, a tight stomach, revenge fantasies, or feeling teary like a child? \_\_\_\_\_

What behavior will cue you that this part has taken over—for example, withdrawing from your partner, taking over a conversation, or eating too much?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What situations or people tend to activate this part—for example, meeting someone you are attracted to, giving a talk, or being disobeyed by your son?  
\_\_\_\_\_

When are these likely to occur during the next week?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Set an intention to be especially aware of whether this part becomes activated during those times. Each time you notice that the part is triggered, access it briefly and take a few notes about it. If you can't stop in the moment to take notes, do it at your next break or as soon as you can so it will be fresh in your memory. At the end of each day, take a few minutes

to review the day for moments when the part was activated. Add to your notes at this time. This daily review will also help you keep this exercise in mind the following day.

Notes to take each time it happens:

Situation:\_\_\_\_\_

How you experience the part:\_\_\_\_\_

What about this situation triggered the part:\_\_\_\_\_

Don't expect perfection. You probably won't catch all the times this part is activated or be clear about what is going on each time. That is very difficult to do. You may be driving or trying to get a project finished or talking with someone, for example, so it may be difficult to be aware of much else. That's fine—just do the best you can.

SAMPLE

## ***Noticing a Part in Real Time***

Part: Indulger

What it feels emotionally: Wild and out of control

What it looks like: A big mouth

What it feels like in your body and where: Like an empty hole in my belly that needs filling.

What the part says: I won't stop. I need more and more.

How it makes you behave: It eats out of control. It eats foods that are not healthy for me and doesn't stop when I am full.

What it wants: To keep filling up an empty hole so I don't feel any emotional pain

## ***Noticing the Part***

What behavior will cue you that the part has taken over? Finishing a meal and taking seconds, even though I am not hungry anymore. Snacking between meals right out of the refrigerator. Buying junk food when I know I shouldn't eat it.

What situations or people tend to activate this part? Family members, holidays, stressful situations where I am afraid I will be judged. Being alone.

When are these likely to occur during the next week? Pressure at work. Having no plans for the weekend.

STEP P2

## **Chapter 5**



### ***Unblending & Conscious Blending***

## ***Unblending from the Target Part***

A part is blended with Self when you are flooded with the feelings of the part in such a way that you aren't grounded. You are caught up in the beliefs of the part and see things from its point of view. You are not separate enough from the part to be able to witness it or be with it. To access a part in a useful way, you want it to be activated but not blended.

The Self is the natural occupant of the "seat of consciousness" ([click here](#)). When you are blended, the part rather than the Self resides in the seat. In order to make productive contact with the part, you want the Self to be in the seat and the part to be the focus of its attention.

As mentioned earlier, the part you are currently focusing your attention on is the Target Part.



A part in the  
seat of consciousness



Self in the  
seat of consciousness

## EXERCISE



## ***Blending***

Choose a part of you that you are blended with in this moment. Take a moment to close your eyes and see what is here. Ask yourself, “What am I aware of thinking or feeling in this moment?” How strongly are you feeling the part’s feelings right now?

It will probably be a part that you identify with as part of your personality. It could be a part that motivates you to do things in your normal day, a part that criticizes you or judges others, or a part that gets angry or reactive when things happen, such as spilling your coffee or losing your keys. It could be a part that organizes you, or worries you, or needs something from someone else, or any other regular part that shows up in your life.

**What does it feel like in your body when that part is here?**

What is tense? \_\_\_\_\_

What is relaxed? \_\_\_\_\_

What sensations are you aware of? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your visual focus open or closed? \_\_\_\_\_

What parts of your body are you unaware of? For example, are you only in your head? Only feeling your belly? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your breath like? \_\_\_\_\_

What emotions are here? (For example, anger, frustration, impatience, loving, kindness, generosity, urgency, others) \_\_\_\_\_

What are your thoughts? \_\_\_\_\_

What are you saying to yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

What is held as true from this part's point of view? (For example: I have a lot of responsibilities to fulfill and I have to keep working to fulfill them, or I never get what I need from this person, or There's never enough time.) \_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE

## ***Blending***

What is tense? Jaw, upper chest

What is relaxed? Legs

What sensations are you aware of? Shortness of breath, shoulder up

Is your visual focus open or closed? Narrow, intense

What parts of your body are you unaware of? Midback, genitals

What is your breath like? Constricted

What emotions are here? Anger, frustration

What are your thoughts? Feeling resentful and obsessing about a hurtful act against me

What are you saying to yourself? I don't deserve this. Who do they think they are?

What is held as true from this part's point of view? I have been wronged!

## ***Unblending***

Unblending happens when you create space between you and a Target Part. You are asking the Target Part to cooperate with you to make some emotional space so you can be more present with it. You want the part to understand that you are interested in getting to know it and that the most effective way to do that is if you have a little distance from it.

You can decide to unblend when you become aware that a part is seated in the “seat of consciousness” rather than the Self. You are attempting to bring the Self into the seat of consciousness and have the Target Part be the focus of its attention ([see illustration](#)).

### **EXERCISE**

## ***Unblending from a Target Part***

You may use the part that you explored in the previous exercise ([found here](#)), or you may want to get to know a different part. If so, go through the steps previously outlined until the part you are interested in is present. Let the part know in some way that you are interested in getting to know it.

Name or role of part: \_\_\_\_\_

How you know you are blended: \_\_\_\_\_

Here is a list of questions or actions that can help the unblending process.

- Ask the part to separate from you so you can get to know it.
- Ask the part to move out of your body.
- Ask the part to contain its feelings and not flood you while you focus on it.
- Move back to separate from the part.
- Notice how you feel toward the part.
- Get an image of the part at a distance from you.
- Do a short centering/grounding meditation to support your separateness from the part.

How you asked your Target Part to separate: \_\_\_\_\_

When a part separates, you will notice a shift. This can be any of a number of possible subtle changes in your awareness of it.

- You may feel an opening in your body and a sense of space and openness.
- You may see it move, for example, the image of the part moves farther away from you.
- You might hear it agree to your request.
- You might feel emotionally lighter or freer.

What you noticed when you asked your Target Part to give you a little space: \_\_\_\_\_

What you noticed if your part agreed to unblend: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part said: \_\_\_\_\_

Bodily changes: \_\_\_\_\_

Visual shifts: \_\_\_\_\_

Emotional changes:\_\_\_\_\_

Anything else:\_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE

## ***Unblending from a Target Part***

Name or role of part: Procrastinator

How you know you are blended: Feeling antsy and distracted, avoiding work that has to be done by cleaning kitchen or surfing the Internet

How you asked your Target Part to separate: I told it that I recognized it was here to make me avoid my work. I asked if it would work with me so that I could accomplish something, and then we could play.

What you noticed when you asked your Target Part to give you a little space: At first it was resistant, pretending it didn't exist with a "what—who, me?" attitude. Then it became interested in my promise to spend time with it later.

What you noticed if your part agreed to unblend:

What the part said: "You'd better keep your promise to give me time later."

Bodily changes: I was able to settle down a little. I felt calmer, and my breathing deepened.

Visual shifts: I was better able to focus.

Emotional changes: I felt the fear underneath the distraction.

Anything else: Once I felt and recognized the fear, it subsided a little.



## EXERCISE

## ***Reluctance to Unblend***

(extension of previous exercise)

Sometimes parts are reluctant to separate. They may be confused about what it means to unblend, or they may be frightened or stubborn. A good question to ask a hesitant part is, “What are you afraid would happen if you did separate?” It can be useful to reassure the part that you’re not trying to get rid of it or make it go away—that you want to be able to listen to it better, and a little separation will allow you to do that.

Here are some typical reasons that parts are reluctant to separate. If the part that you have been working with in the previous exercises is hesitant to unblend, you can check off any reasons that apply or add your own.

\_\_\_\_ Fear that you will push it aside and not need it anymore.

*Possible answer:* I’m asking you to step aside for a short time while I explore this issue. I want to get to know you, and I need some separation from you to do that. You can come back in your old way, if you like, when we are done.

*In addition:* You may need to validate that you *have* pushed the part away in the past and that this time *is* different.

\_\_\_\_ Fear that you will do something unwise that it is protecting you from doing.

*Possible answer:* Reassure it that you are only asking for a defined period of time. Remind it that you are here and that you will make sure that nothing bad happens.

Other fears: \_\_\_\_\_

Your responses to your part: \_\_\_\_\_

What you said to your part to help it feel more comfortable with unblending: \_\_\_\_\_

How the part responded: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part said: \_\_\_\_\_

Bodily changes: \_\_\_\_\_

Visual shifts: \_\_\_\_\_

Emotional changes: \_\_\_\_\_

Anything else: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXERCISE

## ***Daily Parts Check-In***

For the next week, take a little time each day to check in with your parts. Notice which parts are activated at that moment, as you learned to do in this section. By doing this regularly, you will get used to paying attention to your inner family. Plan a certain time each day to do this exercise. Some people prefer to do it first thing in the morning, others at night before they go to bed. Make a list of each part that is activated at that time. For each one, fill in the following answers, if you know them:

Name of part: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels: \_\_\_\_\_

What it looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

Where it is located in your body: \_\_\_\_\_

What the part says: \_\_\_\_\_

How it makes you behave: \_\_\_\_\_

***\* Don't be concerned if you don't know all this information about the part. Just fill in what you can.***

SAMPLE

## ***Daily Parts Check-In***

### ***Monday morning***

Name of part: Anxiety

What it feels: Fear that I won't be able to face the day

What it looks like: Shaking, quivering little boy

Where it is located in your body: Pounding in my chest, stomach tension, hiding my head

What it says: I won't be able to do this or that. I won't have the energy. I won't be able to figure it out. Life is overwhelming.

How it makes you behave: Not move, frozen, just stay under the covers

## ***Thursday night***

Name of part: Relieved

What it feels: Grateful I got through the day. Relaxed and at peace. Thankful it's over.

What it looks like: Peaceful child sleeping.

Where it is located in your body: Lack of tension all over

What it says: I did it. I got through it. I got through the day.

How it makes you behave: Can relax and recover



## ***Conscious Blending***

We've discussed how blending interferes with being in Self and discussed ways to unblend from a part. However, there are times when it can be useful to consciously blend with a part. This is done purposely and with the permission of the Self. It is only safe when you are solidly in Self. Here are three ways:

## ***1. Accessing a part by speaking as it***

If you are having trouble accessing a part or you want to get a fuller experience of the part, you can consciously blend with the part by speaking as the part—just the opposite of what was suggested before. This allows you to become the part for a while and feel it more fully. You can negotiate with a part to modulate or tone down its feelings when you blend with it.

## ***2. Accessing a part using body expression***

You can also access a part more fully by becoming the part and expressing it through body movement, expression, and sound. This allows you to more fully embody the part and therefore understand it more completely.

### ***3. Feeling a part's emotions***

As discussed under Unblending from an Exile ([Chapter 12](#)), it can foster fuller witnessing of a part to allow yourself to feel its emotions as long as this doesn't take you out of Self. This can lead to a deeper level of healing.

#### **EXERCISE**

## ***Conscious Blending***

This exercise is best done with a partner or small group. Each person works for ten minutes. After everyone has had a turn, spend some time giving each other feedback about your experience while each person was exploring a part. Make sure your feedback is about your own experience. It is helpful to use parts language when giving feedback. This means speaking for the parts of you that came up as you saw each person work.

Choose a part to work with that you feel comfortable blending with.

1. Speak as the part: "I am . . . and I feel . . ."
2. Act out the part's feelings or its nature without words. Do so through body movement, facial expression, and sound.
3. Check with the part to see if you represented it well.
4. Speak for it: "The part feels . . ."

Use the space below to make notes on your experience.

Part: \_\_\_\_\_

What it had to say: \_\_\_\_\_

Nonverbal ways it expressed itself: \_\_\_\_\_

How it felt I represented it: \_\_\_\_\_

STEP P3

## Chapter 6



### ***Checking for Self-leadership & Unblending from Concerned Parts***

## ***What Is Self-Leadership?***

As described earlier, being in Self means that you are experiencing one or more of the Self qualities as your present state. If you feel compassionate, curious, or caring, you are experiencing Self-leadership, or are “in Self,” as IFS calls it. In other words, the real you is sitting in the “seat of consciousness.” From this place, it is safe to proceed to get to know the Target Part.



## ***Why Check for Self-Leadership?***

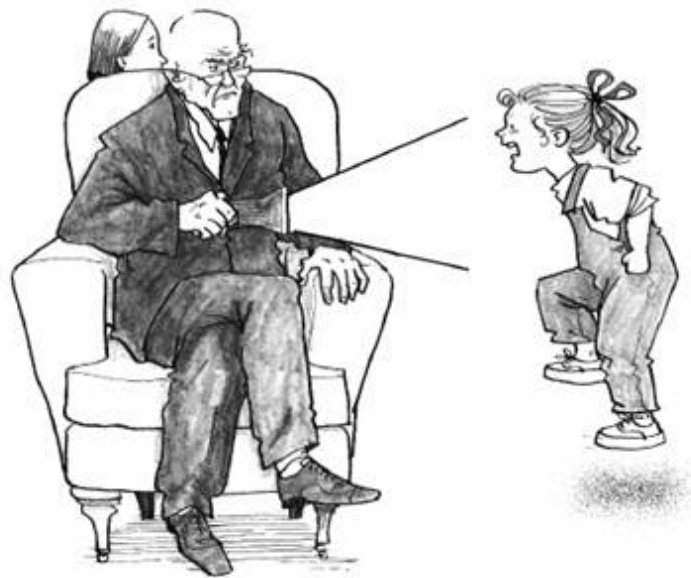
Usually when we are aware of parts of ourselves, we evaluate them. We embrace the parts that we like and approve of, and we often identify with parts that we see as positive. We reject the parts that we see as problematic. IFS encourages us to do neither but instead to be open and interested in getting to know each part of ourselves. To do this effectively, we want to be in Self.

## ***Concerned Part***

A Concerned Part is a part that is blended with Self that has concerns about the Target Part. It interferes with your ability to be in Self with respect to the Target Part (see illustration below).

Concerned Parts have agendas and opinions. If, for example, you feel angry or judgmental toward the Target Part, or scared of it, or if you want to get rid of it, that attitude is coming from another part. It is important to identify these parts in order to make open contact with the Target Part from Self.

❶ Concerned Part in the seat of consciousness



## ***How Do You Check for Concerned Parts?***

In IFS, you ask the magic question “How do I feel toward the Target Part now?”

Then you allow space inside and see what comes up. The question is not meant to elicit an evaluation of the part or your opinion about it. The purpose is to find out how you feel emotionally toward the part. You’re not asking how you feel toward the part in general or at other times when it is activated—only how you feel toward it right now as you are making contact with it.

② Self in the seat of consciousness, focusing on the Concerned Part



## ***Unblending from a Concerned Part***

Before you can work effectively on the Target Part, you need to unblend from the Concerned Parts so that you can be in Self with the Target Part.



③ Self in the seat of consciousness,  
focusing on the Target Part

## ***Being in Self with the Target Part***

You are in Self when you feel open, curious, compassionate, or appreciative toward the Target Part. Examples of these experiences might be:

- **Open:** I feel nothing special. There is a spaciousness where my Concerned Part used to be. I am neutral and ready to engage.
- **Curious:** I feel separate from the part and genuinely interested in who it is and what it has to tell or teach me.
- **Compassionate:** I can see more clearly who this part is, what it has been holding, and why it has behaved the way it has.
- **Appreciative:** I see how hard this part has been working for me. I understand in this moment why it is here and the job it has been doing.

### **EXERCISE**

## ***Unblending from a Concerned Part***

For this exercise, choose a Protector that you don't like or have some strong feelings about. For example, you might have a part that gets angry easily and interferes with your relationships with friends, or you might have a part that eats too much even though you're trying to be healthy or watch your weight. You would naturally have reactions to parts like these. You might judge them or be angry at them and want to get rid of them. You might also feel distant from them or scared of them. Any of these attitudes that arise are coming from a Concerned Part of you.

Take a moment to choose a Protector Part that you are interested in knowing more about. First, access the Protector ([Step P1](#)) and then unblend as much as you can from it ([Step P2](#)). This Protector will be your Target Part.

Take note of what is going on in your body and how the part is responding to you as you come in contact with it. \_\_\_\_\_

Ask the magic question, "How do I feel toward the Target Part now?"

What do you notice—anger, frustration, wanting the part to go away? Any of these responses is a Concerned Part. Fill in the chart with your answers.

**Self**

<b>Concerned Part</b>	<b>Concerned Part</b>	<b>Concerned Part</b>
Name: _____	Name: _____	Name: _____

**Target Part**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

If you happen to feel open, curious, or compassionate about the part, you are probably in Self. Since the exercise asked you to choose a part that you have difficulty with, coming from Self at this point in the exercise is unlikely.

**SAMPLE**   **Unblending from a Concerned Part**



**Concerned Part**

Name: Anger

Feeling: I hate it.

**Concerned Part**

Name: Frustration

Feeling: I wish you  
would go away.

**Concerned Part**

Name: Needy

Feeling: I can't live  
without it.

**Target Part**

Name: Perfectionist



## ***Asking Concerned Parts to Relax***

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. The Concerned Part may agree or disagree.

**1. Concerned Part Willing to Relax:** If it agrees, you may feel a shift in your body such as a relaxing or an opening. You may see an image of the part moving away. You may hear the part's voice saying that it will relax, or it may do some negotiating about its willingness to step aside or relax.

As each part in your original list relaxes, ask again, "How do I feel toward the Target Part?"

Sometimes it's helpful to say something like, "Now that the anger and frustration have stepped aside, how do I feel toward the part?" If you find another Concerned Part, repeat the process until you are in Self and you feel a sense of open space, curiosity, or compassion.

From here, you can begin to get to know the Target Part from a place of Self.

**2. Concerned Part Unwilling to Relax:** If a Concerned Part isn't willing to step aside, you can explain to it the value of stepping aside. You might say something like:

"I sincerely want to help this part (Target Part). I see that it needs healing. I want to get to know it. I recognize that the only way to do that effectively is

from an open, curious place. I would appreciate it if you would allow me the space to make contact with it from this place of Self.”

Listen carefully to the Concerned Part’s fears and reassure it. See [this exercise](#) for parts’ typical fears.

**Switching Target Parts:** If the Concerned Part still won’t step aside, make the Concerned Part the new Target Part and work with it as above. Go through all the steps (Steps P2–P5).

Once you have cleared the way, you may decide to return to the original Target Part or continue to work with the new Target Part. This is often a decision for your entire internal system. You may want to stop and ask all the parts you have been working with what is the best way to proceed. Wait a moment for an answer. The truth of what is best for you now will usually emerge.

**Sitting on the Sidelines:** It is OK for the Concerned Part to watch from the sidelines and step in if it thinks there is danger. If you make this promise to the part, make sure to notice if it returns, acknowledge it, and find out its concerns.

**Not Sure if Concerned Part Stepped Aside:** If you’re not sure whether it stepped aside, proceed with getting to know the Target Part and see what happens. You may later realize that you need to unblend some more or work with this or another Concerned Part.

## ***How to Know That the Concerned Part Hasn't Stepped Aside***

1. The Target Part isn't responding to questions, is stonewalling, or can't be accessed. When you ask about its behavior, it says it doesn't trust you.
2. You are using your mind to figure out the Target Part rather than asking it questions.
3. The questions you are asking have a judgmental or accusatory tone.
4. You don't understand why the Target Part is doing what it is doing.
5. You aren't succeeding in developing a trusting relationship with the Target Part.

### **EXERCISE**

## ***Mapping Your Parts***

Many people find it very helpful to map their parts. Mapping can clarify relationships between parts, flesh out the number of parts at a trailhead, illuminate the protective system, illustrate which parts are central to the system and which are peripheral, show where parts stand in terms of their relationship to the Self, and much more.

Mapping can be done when you are just beginning to get to know your system. You can check in periodically with the original map to see how things have changed as you keep working. You can also use parts mapping as an ongoing tool for visually tracking your internal work and deciding where to focus your attention.

There are many ways to map your system. One way is to use a large sheet of paper and write down the names or images of the parts as you know them. You can draw lines or arrows to illustrate the relationships. Here is my favorite way to map your system:

- Start with a large sheet of newsprint paper.
- Put a heart in the top center and write your name in it. This represents the Self.
- Work with at least two colors of sticky notes. I like to use one color for Protectors and a different color for Exiles. If you have a heart-shaped sticky note for the Self, all the better.

Start by writing the names of parts on sticky notes as you think of them or feel them and put the notes randomly on the paper. If you have a sense that a part is a Protector and another is an Exile, use the appropriate colors. As things become clearer, you can change colors.

Once all the parts are on the paper, sit back and look it over. I recommend doing a centering exercise to get into Self so you can view the parts from that place. If it feels right, take a few deep breaths with your hand on your belly.

Now begin to move the sticky notes to reflect the relationships between the parts.

- Which parts are allied and work together?
- Which parts are polarized and fight each other?
- Which parts hide?
- Which parts protect other parts?
- Which ones are Concerned Parts that would block the Self from getting to know a Target Part?

Once you have rearranged the parts, sit back again and reflect. Have you become aware of any other parts? Add them. Now how does it look and feel?

Notice any shift in your emotional state or body awareness once you have the map in front of you. Do you see a clear entry point where you want to begin your investigation? Do you see parts that need the help and resources of the Self?

## Chapter 7

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### ***GETTING TO KNOW A PROTECTOR***

Normally in therapy, when people work with a part, they either analyze it intellectually or dive into it emotionally. IFS encourages us to do something different from either of those. When using the IFS Model, we stay in Self and make contact with the part from there. We get to know the part by asking it questions and listening to its responses. The part may give us information in the form of words, images, body sensations, emotions, or a sense of direct knowing.

#### **EXERCISE**

## ***Getting to Know a Protector***

Choose a Protector Part that you are interested in getting to know. It might be one that is present right now in this moment, or you may access it as described in [Chapter 4](#). See what information is readily available about this Protector: how it feels in your body, what it looks like, and what it says.

Below is a list of possible questions to ask the Protector. See which questions are appropriate for this part at this time. You can fill in the part's answers on a separate piece of paper. There is also space for you to write other questions that flow naturally from your discussion or that feel important to you.

When the part gives an answer that piques your curiosity, follow it up. For example, if the part says, "I want to keep safe," you might ask, "What do you want to keep safe from?" or "Who do you want to keep safe?" Be gentle and don't interrogate the part. Allow time for its answers to unfold naturally and just insert questions to facilitate the process.

Name of the part or role that it serves: \_\_\_\_\_

**Naming a Part:** It may be useful to have a name for the part, which could be a descriptive phrase, a person's name, name of a character, or anything else. Make sure the part names itself. The name can change at any time in the future as your understanding of the part evolves.

***Questions to help you get to know your part:***

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your role in my system? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you like me to call you? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

What makes you feel so (feeling)? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you relate to people? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you interact with other parts? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel about (an external event or feeling)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you want for us? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you hope to accomplish by (doing your role)?  
\_\_\_\_\_



What are you afraid would happen if you didn't (do your role)?\_\_\_\_\_

What are you afraid we would feel or do if you didn't (do your role)?\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been (doing your role)?\_\_\_\_\_

What caused you to take on this role, and when did you start?\_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel about your role?\_\_\_\_\_

What would you like from me?\_\_\_\_\_

Other question\_\_\_\_\_

Answer\_\_\_\_\_

Other question\_\_\_\_\_

Answer\_\_\_\_\_

## ***Getting a Felt Sense of a Part***

This part might not answer your questions with clear, explicit descriptions. Allowing a felt sense of the part or an image of the part to emerge can be particularly important and informative. It's fine if you start out with vague images or body sensings, such as "folded over on itself," "a sense of poignancy," "narrowing in the chest," or "an empty sack." Greet these sensory pieces of information with an open heart and sincere curiosity. Let the part know what you see or feel. For example, "I see that you are collapsed and empty" or "I notice that you're tense and seem anxious." As you stay with the part or ask more questions, the part's unique nature will become clearer. Take your time and don't push for clarity. It will emerge.

Note any subtle images or vague sensations that you notice when getting to know this part. \_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE

## ***Getting to Know a Protector***

Name of the Part or role that it serves: Angry Part  
When someone unjustly criticizes me, or  
misinterprets my behavior, I get angry and attack  
them.

Questions to help you get to know your part:

What do you do? Protect you

What is your role in my system? Keep bad people  
away

What would you like me to call you? The White  
Knight

What do you feel? Angry, mad, frustrated

What makes you feel so angry? Stupid, heartless,  
thoughtless people

How do you relate to people? I keep them away.

What do you say? Get out of here!

How do you interact with other parts? Protect them

How do you feel about this current situation? When  
other don't take responsibility for their behavior or  
feelings, I get angry.

What do you want for us? To be safe, happy, and  
free

What do you hope to accomplish by using anger to  
protect?

That we will stay away from bad people

What are you afraid would happen if you didn't use  
anger to protect?

We would get hurt.

What are you afraid we would feel or do if you  
didn't use anger to protect?

Be friends with the wrong people

How long have you been using anger to protect?

Since I was a little girl

What caused you to take on this role, and when did you start?

Being criticized as a child

How do you feel about your role? I like it, and it's important.

What do you want from me? Love and acknowledgment and appreciation

STEP P5

## Chapter 8

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### ***Developing a Trusting Relationship with a Protector***

The protective role that parts take on can be considered extreme. Protector Parts have a narrowly focused view of the world and hold specific beliefs that support their attitudes and behavior. Parts take on extreme roles because they think they have to handle situations on their own. They either don't know that the Self is there, or they don't trust the Self to handle the situation. A major aspect of the goal of IFS is for parts to trust the Self. This may not fully happen until after unburdening, but a good deal of trust can (and needs to) be gained while you are still working with a Protector.

## ***Enhancing Trust***

If you take the time to get to know a Protector and it feels understood and appreciated, it will tend to trust you and relax.

Statements that foster trust in the Self:

- I understand why you (do your role).
- I get why you think that is important.
- It makes sense to me (what you do or say or feel).
- I see the pressure that you are under.
- I appreciate your efforts on my behalf.
- I appreciate what you originally did for me.
- I appreciate what you have done for me throughout my life.
- I appreciate what you are doing for me.

Other statements you think of or ones that any of your Protectors specifically want to hear: \_\_\_\_\_

**EXERCISE**

## ***Developing a Relationship with a Protector***

Choose a Protector to work with. You may decide to choose one that you have been working with, or you may want to choose a new one. Spend as much time as you need to go through Steps P1-P4. Access the part, unblend from the Target Part, and unblend from any Concerned Parts so that you are in Self with the Protector. Here we are getting to know the Protector more deeply and making sure that the Protector can feel your presence as you engage it. Remember to keep checking that you are still in Self during this process.

Protector's name: \_\_\_\_\_

What it feels: \_\_\_\_\_

What it looks like: \_\_\_\_\_

Where it is located in your body: \_\_\_\_\_

What it says: \_\_\_\_\_

How it makes you behave: \_\_\_\_\_

What situations activate it:\_\_\_\_\_

What Concerned Parts react to it:\_\_\_\_\_

What its positive intent is:\_\_\_\_\_

What it is protecting you from:\_\_\_\_\_

You know quite a bit about the part now. You will probably have noticed a significant shift in your bodily sensations as you went through the above process.

What feels different in this moment as you sit with the part in Self? (Openness in your heart? A sense of rising compassion? A loosening of bodily tension? More space?) Make note of these changes.\_\_\_\_\_

SAMPLE



## ***Developing a Relationship with a Protector***

Protector's name: Angry Part

What it feels: I don't want to be criticized for who I am. I don't trust people to accept me.

What it looks like: A white knight. Strong, shiny, with lots of weapons and tools like curses and name calling.

Where it is located in your body: Covering the chest area. Tension in my shoulders.

What it says: Get away from me, stupid people. Take responsibility for yourself. Get away from me.

How it makes you behave: Cursing and yelling.

What situations activate it: When people are mean or criticizing

What Concerned Parts react to it: Ashamed, frightened

What its positive intent is: Wants me to be myself and to be around people who will accept me

What it is protecting you from: Trying to protect me from bad people who are unsafe

## ***Appreciating Parts***

When you appreciate a part, you focus on its positive aspects, not necessarily its behavior. You can understand the part's motivation and its positive intent for you. You can have compassion for the job that it tried to do and how hard it worked to protect you from the danger it perceived. Sometimes it's hard to "appreciate" a part that has given you a hard time. Inner Critics, for example, often say terrible things to us to protect us from possible failure, danger, or the judgment of others. When you are in Self, you can let the part know, "I get you. I see what you have been trying to do for me. I understand the rationale behind your behavior. I see how hard you have been working for me and how you have often had to go it alone in taking care of me."

What do you understand or appreciate about your Protector? \_\_\_\_\_

Let the part know what you see or understand. You might tell it in words what you appreciate about it and what you see that it has been trying to do for you. You might let it know you understand how hard it has been working, how lonely it has been, and what it has been up against. You might just open your heart and let flow a fountain of gratitude for its efforts and its situation.

How does the Protective Part respond to your understanding and appreciation?\_\_\_\_\_

## ***Helping a Protector to Relax in Real Time***

Once you have gotten to know a part and developed a trusting relationship with it, you are likely to be able to work with it whenever it arises in real time in your life. Here is a way to do this that may help it relax and allow you to lead from Self.

When you notice that a part is activated at some point during your day, access it briefly and see if you are blended with it. Often, you are. The part is blended with you because some situation in your life has come up that frightens the part and makes it believe that it must take over. When you become aware of the part, take a moment to get in Self. From this place, acknowledge the part and ask it to relax and allow you to lead from Self. You may want to promise that you will spend some time with it later to deal with its concerns.

### **EXERCISE**

## ***Helping a Protector to Relax in Real Time***

Think of a situation in which a Protector gets triggered that causes you to behave in a problematic way. \_\_\_\_\_

Following Steps P1–P5, do a session with yourself or with a partner in which you get to know the Protector that is causing the difficulty. Use the questions below to help you get to know the Protector and begin to form a trusting relationship with it.

Name of Protector: \_\_\_\_\_

Situation(s) that activate this Protector: \_\_\_\_\_

How it behaves: \_\_\_\_\_

If you were able to act from Self, how would you like to behave in that situation? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have the life skills necessary to accomplish the positive behavior you are aiming for? \_\_\_\_\_

If not, what kind of support would you need to be able to act in the way you desire? \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have unblended from the Protector and your Concerned Parts, and you are in contact with the Protector from Self, ask if it will let you lead the next time you are in a similar situation.

What is its response? \_\_\_\_\_

List the Protector's concerns and your thinking **from Self** about how to handle them.

Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Response: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential support: \_\_\_\_\_

Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Response: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential support: \_\_\_\_\_

Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Response: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential support: \_\_\_\_\_

Think about when this situation is likely to occur over the next few weeks. \_\_\_\_\_

Set an intention to be aware of whether this Protector takes over at those times. When it does, work with it as described above to help it relax and let you lead. If this works, take notes on what happened as soon as you can.

What did your behavior look like when you were leading from Self? \_\_\_\_\_

What were the results? \_\_\_\_\_

Continue to track this kind of situation over the next few weeks, doing this exercise each time the part is activated. Each evening before you go to bed, review the day to see if the situation arose, and take notes (or expand your notes) on what happened when you did this exercise. If the Protector allowed you to

lead and things turned out well, check to see if it now trusts you more. If you didn't notice the situation at the time or you didn't do the exercise, explore what got in the way. If this is a situation that doesn't come up very often, it wouldn't make sense to do this review every night. You might decide to review once a week. Choose whatever time frame is appropriate.

Day	Situation	Protector	Self-Led Behavior	Part's Response

SAMPLE



## ***Helping a Protector to Relax in Real Time***

Name of Protector: *The Distractor*

Situation(s) that activate this Protector: *Loss*

How it behaves: *Tries to distract with activities or fantasies*

If you were able to act from Self, how would you like to behave in that situation? *Feel my feelings a little at a time*

Do you have the life skills necessary to pull off the positive behavior you are aiming for? *Yes, I have self-compassion and faith.*

If not, what kind of support would you need to be able to act in the way you desire? *Help from friends and loved ones—people who understand*

Once you have unblended from the Protector and your Concerned Parts, and you are in contact with the Protector from Self, ask if it will let you lead the next time you are in a similar situation.

What is its response? *No*

Protector's concerns and your thinking FROM SELF about how to handle them.

Concern: *You won't be able to handle the feelings.*

Response: *We can feel them a little bit at a time.*

Potential support: *Therapist, friends, family*

Concern: Doesn't have any tools or resources

Response: Yes, we do. We have patience, intuition, good ideas, and the ability to explore and research.

Potential support: Lots of smart friends

Concern: We don't have anyone.

Response: Yes, we do have friends and the ability to meet new people.

Potential support: The people I love and trust

Think about when this situation is likely to occur over the next few weeks. A good friend is going on extended travel abroad

What did your behavior look like when you were leading from Self? Stop and be aware of the feelings. Let myself recognize and feel the feelings. Let myself reach out and receive help, love, and support from friends. Come up with solutions. Envision positive change.

What were the results? Living more in the present moment. Being more engaged in life.

## Chapter 9

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### ***When a Protector Doesn't Trust You***

Every Protector has its own unique history that is made up of experiences with both the outside world and the inside world. These experiences result in a set of beliefs and expectations. In general, Protectors have not dealt with Self directly, as we are trying to do here. Protectors often have good reason to be cautious and careful. They are trying to prevent reinjury or a repeat of past disappointments. It's important to be respectful of these cautions and deal openly with a Protector to gain its trust.

You will know that a Protector doesn't trust you if it is not responsive to your questions or other efforts to get to know it. You might feel as though it is being uncooperative or have a sense that it is turning away from you or tuning you out. A Concerned Part may arise that starts to doubt the process or criticize you.

If a Protector isn't answering questions or is otherwise not cooperating:

- Ask the part if it is aware of you. Can it feel you here, trying to make contact with it and get to know it?
- Ask the part directly if it trusts you. Does it feel that your efforts are sincere and well meaning?

If the part lets you know that it doesn't trust you:

- Check to see if you are really in Self or whether a subtle Concerned Part has gotten in the way. The Target Part may be sensing one or more Concerned Parts and not trust you because of that. If that's the case, unblend from the Concerned Part(s) and try to make contact again.
- If you are in Self, ask the part why it doesn't trust you. Assume that something in your history has caused its concerns about your awareness of it or your capacity to take care of it. If that's the case, reassure the part as much as possible about who you are today. It may be useful to explain that you didn't have much access to Self when you were younger but that you've learned how to reliably access Self since then, so you can now be counted on as a supportive resource.

Sometimes a part needs more time. You might have an Impatient Part that's trying to rush the process. You might have a Pleaser Part that's trying to appease someone else by pushing this work along, or you may have a part that has an outside goal about the resolution of this issue. Parts can be very sensitive to these subtle pressures. They may have been created in situations in which trust was an important factor. So as you tease out the possible underlying parts that are creating the distrust, be sure to view them with compassion. They are Protectors, too, and are invested in their own goals for your system. Ask for their cooperation in the larger effort to heal the system and create wholeness.

If the part is still hesitant to trust:

- Ask it what happened in the past to make it not trust people. Again, listen from Self. Being with the part in a compassionate way often allows it to take in your sincerity. As you do your best to reassure the part about its fears, remind it that you are here in Self today and that this is not the same as the past.
- Remember that if a persistent Concerned Part keeps asserting itself into the process, it may be appropriate to make that part a new Target Part.

Note here any history that may be affecting your part's ability to trust you at this time. \_\_\_\_\_

([Click Here](#) for parts' typical fears.)

If you are working with a distrustful part, note on the next page any fears or concerns that your distrustful part has as well as the answers that feel appropriate to you at this time.

Fear: \_\_\_\_\_

Your response: \_\_\_\_\_

Part's response: \_\_\_\_\_

Fear: \_\_\_\_\_

Your response: \_\_\_\_\_

Part's response: \_\_\_\_\_

Fear: \_\_\_\_\_

Your response: \_\_\_\_\_

Part's response: \_\_\_\_\_