

IFS Month 5-5.3 Unpacking the Steps of Healing

Part 2

Toni: Okay. Again, I want to reiterate that this witnessing phase of the healing process can take a very short amount of time to begin to flush out the beliefs and the burdens that the exile is carrying. It can also take quite a long time depending on the level of trauma. This is where patients of the therapist is critical. No pushing it. No rushing it. Creating lots of space for whatever needs to unfold. Continuing to build a safe, loving relationship between the self of the client and the young part. The key is this. That the witnessing phase is done when the part says that it's done. Not when we have parts that want to hurry up the process or get to more meat. When the exile believes that the self of the client understands what happened. We ask that question. Does the part believe that you understand what happened?

When he hear a resounding yes, we can move on to the next step of the process. The next step of the process we call, retrieval. Now, the retrieval process is one where we are inviting exile to move from the past into the present. When I first learned this step of the model, this is where my ... You know, I had a quite a critic and a skeptical part, and I remember that Dick saying, "Skeptical parts are welcome. Ask, ask, try, try, and don't believe anything just because I'm telling you to." I [imparts 00:01:44] that really love that. Really love hearing, "Don't believe anything just because I'm telling." Notice what happens in your office. Notice what happens in yourself. Remember that there is a spiritual aspect to this process which says that great and deep healing can occur between the self, the client, and the parts of the client.

Here's where we just trust that inviting a part come from the past into the present is an organic process that can happen without a lot of explanation. There's an invitation. In my experience, protectors can get squarely about this part of the process but the exiles themselves who have been longing for redemption have been longing for healing. Longing to get out of where they live are pretty available. Now, I also think that there is a brain science explanation to this and I remember doing a workshop not too long ago. Where someone in the audience came up to me later and said, "You know, what you're doing in terms of brain science when you're asking somebody to be very present to something that happened in the past, and then speak about it or speak for it is that you are toggling between the limbic system and the cortex."

I thought, this is really true. It was very exciting to me that not only do we have a metaphysical explanation for retrieval but that we may also have a scientific explanation for it, too. If that we're wanting to invite our clients, not only to be in relationship with these parts and bring them home. That's how I like to look at it when I ask people if they're ready to bring their part home. Bring the part out of the past into their body. More into their body. Maybe into their heart, into their life and the present. We're also saying, you can use your cortex to make sense of what happened to you in the past, so that you no longer have to live from that place. That is exciting and we ask the part if it's ready to come into the present and allow that process to happen organically.

The next slide, we're going to be talking about the ritual of unburdening. Once a young part has been witnessed, it's been invited to come into the present. It has

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revealed to us, to the therapist and also to the client what it's carrying that has caused the contraction, the constriction, the beliefs about itself. I listen pretty closely to this. I really want to hear. What am I carrying? Often, what we're hearing are descriptions of shame and shaming. I'm not lovable. I'm not good enough. We start to hear those kinds of things. This is in the unburdening ritual. What we're going to begin to help these young parts release and let go off, with the help of the self of the client.

Again, this is another place that could be a leap of faith for the whole protective system. What does it going to mean to let go of shame? What is it going to mean to let go of shaming? What is it going to mean for my life to let go of feeling really awful about myself? There can be many, many concerns about that believe it or not. As therapist, you probably know that. I work with a lot of people right now who are working with shame. One of the things that I hear from protectors is, "We know how to live the way we are right now. We do not know how to live released from this." That's another place where you might have to circle back to working with manage your fears. To do some negotiating about what it might be like. What are the fears of letting go of the shame? If you can, this is a wonderful time to begin to ask the exile if it would like to begin to release some of what it's been carrying.

Some of the load that it's been carrying that were the lies that it was told and believed so long ago. Some of that language goes like this to invite the exile that's ready to let go. To notice where in or around its body, it's carrying the belief. To invite it to let it go into the air and wind. To use the elements. To use nature into fire, water, earth. To give it some ideas where it would like to release. To release it. Also, sometimes, I just will say, how does at one of let it go to give so much permission to the exile. To choose how it wants to let go. Then, between the self of the client and the exile, this begins a beautiful process of fully releasing the things, the burdens that it has been carrying. Sometimes, it's a partial release but a letting go.

I'll sometimes invite the client to use their own breath, use their own body. Allow it to become somatic as a way to begin to move off the beliefs and the burdens. Remember, at this point, patience is a key. This is beautiful, beautiful part of the process I found where I get to sit back and really trust the healing self of the client. That my job at this point is holding self for the client, so that the client can do the healing work inside. The relationship between me and the client is critical and essential because I am also holding while they're holding. There is a double dose of attachment behaviors happening, and a double dose of self energy going toward this exile and toward the healing process. It's a lovely time to sit back and say, "I don't have to work so hard. I can enjoy this process. I can fill up."

Sometimes, extremely emotional. Really beautiful to watch when a client is being this present and this healing to part themselves. The next slide, you'll see invitation and you look at the face of that child if you would. Let's say for the sake of argument that that is an exile that has just unloaded a burden of shame, and this is what it feels like. If you just look at the face of this child. I am free. I am released from this constriction.

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This constricting beliefs that I've had about myself for all of time. When the part feels like it has really let go, we begin to ask it, what qualities would you like to invite back that you lost so long ago? This is another really beautiful process. In my experience, what you begin to hear are qualities of self that got obscured when a child was so wounded.

You might hear love or creativity or freedom. That's mine. Mine is always freedom. I want to be free. You start to just hear the longing to reclaim the wholeness that was once or could have been. The other question that I sometimes ask at this time is to ask a part, what it would have done had it not become so hurt, so wounded, so burdened? This is another very moving question to ask because you begin to hear what the potential would have been for this child had it not been so wounded. What life would have been like for this child had it not taken on all of these burdens. We invite the part to reclaim the qualities, and this is another leap of faith maybe for you as therapist that somehow, this question does invite the part to begin to fill up with what it lost.

That's another beautiful process of just asking the client, to just allow themselves to be filled up and to really get that reference. I might ask, "Can you feel this in your own body?" Ask this part as filling up. What's the reference in your own body at this point as this part is beginning to fill up? Then, once the exile was full, we ask, and this is the integration moving to the next slide. This is the integration question which is not, can you become one. Can this part dissolve into a one? How is this part going to fit into the entire system and be welcomed by the rest of the parts in your system. We ask the question, what does it want to do now? Sometimes, it's, I want to rest. I just want to rest.

If you can imagine that, a young child is releasing beliefs about himself or herself that they've been carrying for years, and years, and years. Rest would be a great thing. People say other things. They want to play. They want to be free. Again, that would be me. Nature often in my experience these young parts wouldn't be out in nature, or they want to play. They want to do things that children do. Many people feel like they have lost their childhood, so they get to reclaim some of that. We invite that. That process, too. Then finally, and I think this is a really important aspect of this whole unburdening and healing process. Is to, I think Pam use the phrase, "Circle back." We want to go back and appreciate all of the protectors who were willing to step back, relax, trust the self in the system and allow this healing to occur.

To whatever extent that it did and sometimes, it's subtle and small, and sometimes, it's big and the ceiling blows off your office. It doesn't matter. Regardless of what kind of healing is occurring that our belief is that the protectors that made room to allow this to happen, really need to be recognized. Or it's not a need to be recognized. It's just a wonderful thing to recognize. Often, people will say they're so relaxed right now. They were able to be present to this whole process and they can see that help is available. To go back and appreciate. Then, at some point, to make sure that these protectors have an opportunity to tell their own story. Because if you think about

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how Pam was talking about these protectors pick up their roles and their jobs very, very young in life.

Think about what it has been like to live your whole life in a role that has sometimes gotten you in a lot of trouble. I believe that these parts also have their own burdens. They have their own stories. Some protectors, some exiles carry a lot of shame themselves. They've been shamed inside and outside for the role that they've taken on. We're not ever going to forget that the protectors also may have their own stories and may need their own unburdening. Let me just go back through these steps really quickly. Once protectors have relaxed, we're helping the client. We're determining whether the client is unblended by asking how do you feel toward the part? We're witnessing the entire story of the exile. However that exile needs to communicate.

Whether it's pictures, stories through the body. Once that witnessing is complete, we invite the exile to come into the present. We go through in whatever way is intuitively right to help that exile release, unburden, unload beliefs and feelings about itself. We invite qualities into ... We ask the exile if you would like to invite qualities into their body that they'll need now or in the future. Then, we do an integration process. I know this is a lot of information and in the next segment, I'm going to present a case and all the cases on PowerPoint and in pictures. I'm going to talk you through this whole process. Look forward to seeing you then.