

IFS Online Circle Month 1

Toni Blank: Welcome everyone, I am Toni Herbine-Blank and I am your first host for this first month of the IFS Circle Program. With me here I'm up in northern Colorado, Felix is going to be my tech support. I am going to introduce myself to you a little bit, let you know a little bit about me then let you know little bit about the program, tell you what I'm going to be doing today. It's always a little bit of a challenge for me to know that you're out there and I can't see you and I can't hear you. This is our fourth year, so I've been doing this for a while and have gotten used to it, but I always liked to name that we are in a relationship here but I can't see you and I can't hear you. However, there is a Q&A board and as I begin talking and teaching, if you have questions, please feel free to write those questions down and I will get to as many as I can.

So just a little bit about me. I live in Durango, Colorado, which is a little tiny town in the most southwest corner of Colorado with my husband, Jordan and a bunch of horses and dogs and family around me, which is lovely. I discovered IFS in 1999 and became a trainer of IFS in 2004 so I've been teaching and training for a long time. I am the person that has developed the curriculum for working with IFS and couples and most of my training centers around teaching IFS in couple therapy but I was a trainer and for many, many years teaching the basic IFS level one. Being a couple therapist back in, in the 1990s, I began looking for something that would help me help individuals in a coupled deep in, do more internal work and as a way to anchor themselves and love themselves more and be able to stay present in the couple work. After a few tries with other methodologies, I stumbled on to IFS. Although it took me a little while, unlike some people it took me a little while to fall in love with the model I eventually did and then started training in 2004.

Some of the things that I really, really love about IFS and hope to inspire you over the next year is the idea that this is a non pathologizing collaborative methodology that as I began to watch Dick work, in the trainings I saw the power of it. Even before I bought into it entirely in my own system, I started trying on little things with my clients and found some extraordinary movement and deepening of the work with people just simply through this concept of unblending and starting to develop a relationship between self and parts, which I'm going to be talking about much more.

The other thing that I really fell in love with is how we work with countertransference and how we create and build a therapeutic relationship in IFS. I always like to say when I'm teaching, we are them, we also have parts and we also have a self, so one of the concepts here is that I'm creating the therapeutic relationship has, we invite therapists to pay attention to their own therapist parts and understand their own system. Often

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when we're teaching in the basic or we start right away when we're teaching in IFS level one, that understanding your own system is going to help us all as therapists and trainers.

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So that's a little bit about me and I want to just say a few things about the program itself and I'm sure that some of you were on that call with Dick and Pam last week or the week before so you've got a little bit of an overview of it. The circle program covers a lot of the very basic premises of IFS therapy and it does not really replace the training. So if you become interested after you go through this program and want to really learn IFS in depth and have supervision working with your clients the training is a wonderful, wonderful experiential training where you can learn this and deepen your understanding of the model. At end of this yearlong program we'll be talking to you more about what resources are available for you.

Today I am going to do a broad-brush stroke on the basic assumptions of IFS. The PowerPoint that I'm going to be showing you today is also available on the website and all of you should have access to those videos and I encourage you to watch them. I'm among the many people that sign up for webinars and all kinds of things and then wonder when am I going to get to it but it's a great resources resource and now you have them. So I encourage you to watch whenever you can, if you can be before the calls. So I see questions already coming, which is really great and I got some questions ahead of time, which I'm going to get to as well. I love teaching from questions, but we're just going to put up that PowerPoint and I'm just going to say a few things about the basic assumptions. For some of you this is going to be old news, but for some of you this is going to be new news. So I'm going to try to keep a balance of answering some more questions that seem a little bit more sophisticated, but also keep to my agenda, which is introduction to the model. So, Felix, can you put up the first PowerPoint?

If you're already familiar with IFS, you know that there are some very, very basic premises that we work from and I'm just going to go over these with you. It is the nature of the mind to be subdivided and that's the first principle of this model is that it's a multiplicity model and it's not the only multiplicity model of course. As you start to learn more and more about IFS, you'll begin to see how it differs from some of the other multiplicity models.

I always think in the beginning of teaching this methodology that if it's important to first mention Richard Schwartz, who's the developer of the model and how he came to begin to interact with people and their parts. Some of you may have heard this story, but he was a family therapist and he began to be curious about, why some of the clients that he was working with using family therapy strategies weren't shifting and changing in the way that he had hoped. So he did a radical thing, which was to begin to meet with

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the identified patients in these family therapy sessions who were young women with eating disorders, and to start to talk to them about what they thought was going on inside of them. This is when he began to start to hear people talking about different parts or different aspects of their personality.

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Instead of being worried about that in his brilliance, he was curious and kept asking, well, tell me more about this tell me more about this.

What he discovered is that people could comfortably talk about different aspects of their personality and not only were they beginning to identify different parts that will polarized internally, but that these parts were actually interacting among each other and with themselves. So that was a curious thing to and then he started to strategize with these inner parts to see if he could be in relationship with them the same way that he was in relationship with live families, by asking parts to step back or sit down or wait to be heard and known and understood. What he began to experience is that these aspects of personality, we're responding very similarly to families in crisis or families in need, hence the name Internal Family Systems, which doesn't exactly describe because as we get to know parts of ourselves it doesn't always show up just like a family.

The second assumption is that everyone has a self and what Dick began to notice is that as parts begin and his clients began to step back and respond to being known, understood and validated. His clients started to notice that there was a different energy starting to happen inside as they had more space, as there was more differentiation internally as they were starting to be able to be in relationship with their own parts. The question became who is being in relationship with these parts? Again in his curiosity started to be curious about that and his clients began to report, well this is the real me, this is me, this is myself. So the language of parts and self actually came from his clients. In IFS what we're doing is we're helping people differentiate internally so that the self of the client becomes the place of healing with the parts of the clients. Of course with some clients that's going to take a longer time and some are shorter time but that is a process that we'll be working with you and talking to you about all throughout this whole year.

So in this model, as I was saying, no parts work in isolation, that they're very interactive among each other. One of the assumptions here is that as things begin to change internally, we start to notice that interactions externally begin to shift as well. That's one of the things that we pay attention to when we're working with clients is the work that's going on internally helping to support and create a shift of change externally. As I said, one of the things that I love about this model is that we're all in this together. We as therapists and we as trainers support the work of therapists to understand their own

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internal systems. I believe also that that supports the ability to strengthen your work in the model is to understand it from the inside out.

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So I'm just going to go through the goals of the therapy and then I will answer some of these questions cause there are lots of questions coming in and I want to get to them. Felix, can we go to the next slide? So the goals in IFS achieve harmony and balance in the system? Well, what I want to say is I think that's probably the goal of any therapy that we work in, right? As I said to help our clients differentiate between parts, aspects of personality and from this energy that we're calling self. The process of differentiating is unblending. The reason that I want to go see these goals is unblending from my perspective is one of the most powerful aspects of this model and it, it does differentiate it from other multiplicity models and it's a key goal and a key aspect which we're going to be about over and over again. Another goal of therapy is as we begin to start working with more vulnerable parts, we start to take clients through a process of unburdening negative beliefs about oneself and to free some of the protectors from their extreme roles.

We use a term self leadership, which I love because we are not in any way suggesting that there anything wrong with these aspects of our personality. We need them, we love them without them, we cannot function. What we're wanting to do is to create more space on the inside. As clients begin to access this idea that there is inner wisdom and all parts have an inherent gift to the system and our relationships with our own internal system begin to shift and change. We might be able to lead more from a place inside of oneself that is calm, that is open that is clear and this becomes a resource ourselves. Energy becomes a resource to the system. Again, we're watching to see how changes and shifts in the inner system also begin to help people shift their external relationships.

I'm actually going to answer a couple of these questions. I'm going to go to the questions that came in to me in the past couple of days first. Some of these questions are very sophisticated but I'm going to go for them anyway. The first question is what if protectors don't want to give up their role even after we've been working with exiles, even after we've done a lot of unburdening. Why might a protect or not want to give up its role?

I'm going to tell you three reasons why this might be and for those of you that are newer to the model, fear not, you're going to understand this question in the first couple of months, I promise you. What I would say about this is one, the exiles not completely unburdened. In IFS, what we say is as we work with the more vulnerable parts in the system that are carrying negative beliefs about themselves, the protective system is going to relax if the protective system isn't actually relaxing there are a couple of reasons why. One, the exile hasn't been witnessed and unburdened

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completely. Two there are other vulnerable parts in the system that this particular protector is protecting.

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Three, the protectors have a pattern response and they need to be attended to because they're not able to let go of the impulse to do the behavior. So I would say those are some of the reasons why.

Another question was about the body and pain and I see that there's a question up here about this. The first question, are they always somatically located? For me, my parts seem to exist outside of my body.

So IFS is a body centered therapy and that emotion, sensations, thoughts are the mind that parts can live in the body. Also what Dick discovered is that parts can exist around the body. So what I would say is there are people who are not in touch with their somatic experience at all. This is something that I think over time in therapy, we start to help people understand that what we actually do know is that emotion comes with a somatic experience, but not everybody is in touch with that and that may come later and we're going to do a whole module this year on the body and how we help people begin to reclaim what's going on in their body. The question that came in yesterday was, in this model do we use pain and sensation as a trailhead as a way to start?

For people that either are experiencing a lot of pain or illness we definitely can begin to explore the parts of us that are in relationship to the pain or the illness. I would say where we want to start with people is to listen to, especially if people are in pain, to listen to the parts that are suffering as a result of the pain. Then eventually begin to focus on the pain itself and to see if there is a part that has information about whatever is going on somatically. So that's a brief answer to a very big topic.

So when the external environment is still dangerous, how do we handle protectors? And this is actually a really important question and I'm going to answer it only briefly because you're going to hear and you're going to understand about this more and more and more. I hate to have to keep saying that to you, but this is the first month. What I'm going to say briefly about this is that when we as human beings develop protection and usually this starts very, very young as you know, as defense begin to develop around the external trauma. When we get into adulthood, those parts of us believe that they are the most protective way to operate. This was true in childhood and what we wanting to do is to invite people into the idea that being able to differentiate from a protector and tap into our own internal wisdom is even safer than what the protector can provide. So we're not asking those protectors to go away we're working on them to be less reactive. So there is more wisdom and more choice available to anybody living in

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any kind of circumstance. There is no conversation about stripping people from their protection so I hope that answers that question at least a little bit briefly.

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There's so many questions, I'm going to do my best here. A hard time unblended
and
you know, what do I do when people have a hard time unblending?

So I'm going to say a little bit about unblending, Pam is going to be talking to you much more about unblending next time but what we want to do is we want to help people, we want to create enough safety for people to begin to explore the idea that they can be in relationship with themselves in a different way. I think that unblending can be become misconstrued with asking a part to go away. What we're trying to do is to help people get a little bit of space to get curious about something that's going on inside of them. So when I'm starting with a new client who doesn't have any idea about unblending, I might say as I'm listening and I might use my hands, so I'm hearing a voice or I'm hearing you say over here, I have this issue and I'm curious about this.

Then on

the other hand I'm hearing something else. So I might start like this, oh, I'm hearing this, but I'm also hearing this and what might you make of that, that you're having two different experiences at the same time or you're hearing two different conversations there is some research to suggest that we're always polarized and I for one can acknowledge that about myself.

That if I'm trying to make a decision, I'm always aware of the voice of this and the voice of that. Then we can start to help people and can I be curious about the idea that I'm actually listening to two different things at the same time? The other thing that we do with people who might have difficulty with this, and you know, one of the parts that people have the most difficulty unblending from is that inner critic, right? That part that sometimes is looping and is in a lot of a constant conversation with us about what we're not doing or how we're doing it incorrectly we all know that inner critic is so that one can often be very difficult to unblend with because the very first unblending question

we want to ask as people are starting to get curious about themselves is how do you feel toward the part?

So this is one of those the questions that we start with and we're waiting for people to say some things like, and I'm going to talk to you a little bit about the qualities of self, but I'm interested, I'm curious, I'm available and when we hear things, like when I asked

the question, how do you feel toward this part that we're focusing on? And I here, I hate it, I don't like it, I wish it would go away, these are more parts, right? We're going to begin by seeing if we can soften parts that are pushing against the part that we're

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trying to get to know so that when we keep asking this question over and over and over again, I've been doing this model for almost 20 years. I ask this question over and over again in every session, which is, can you notice how you're feeling toward it now? And I am waiting for some percentage of clarity or curiosity or kindness or interest.

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Another unblending technique is to have people draw. When I was a new IFS therapist, I used clay not clay that you needed water but plasticine and I would have people just create it's called externalizing. So sometimes I just throw a pillow on the floor well let's pretend this is that part of view that you're wanting to get to know. So that's another strategy and you'll hear more strategies from both me, Dick and Pam as we go along about the things that we do to help people start to access some of those qualities of self in relationship to their parts.

IFS with people who are out of touch with themselves emotionally doesn't understand their emotions. So people who tend to process through their mind or through their left- brain are more heavily leaning on the strategy part of their brain. I want to just remind you that this is also part of the body and it is part of the person's makeup. It's also probably a strategy that this person developed early in life to take care of themselves. I think as therapists, we can often get frustrated with these parts because we're really wanting the effect.

So when we're teaching IFS, we ask therapists to watch their own parts who value emotion more than thinking because we can help people understand themselves through those parts in their brain as a way to begin to feel safe and comfortable feeling. I've had many people on this call, but also in my office who feel invalidated for the part of them that thinks. I've really taken that seriously over the years and so I want to help that person get in touch with that part. Who is that? What's its role? What's its function? How has it served them? Did it play a role in taking care of feelings at some point? So get into relationship with it, help your client get into relationship with that part of them and put aside the agenda to have to get to quickly to emotion. If you can do that and that part begins feel very validated, seen, known and understood number in my experience, it starts to soften and allow other experiences to start to be known to the client.

Let's get on the same page about what a part is and I'm Felix, you can leave the PowerPoint off up when I'm answering questions. You don't have to take it down, but what is a part actually, can I have the next slide please? So you see this photograph right here, there it is and another way to think about this is subpersonalities or aspects of personality. If your clients don't like the word part, number one rule in IFS, do not get into a tussle with a protector that doesn't like the language, find a different language. In this methodology, and here's another thing, like this is a theory guys. So when you have parts that come up that are skeptical, listen to those parts and be

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discerning about what in this methodology makes sense to you and what doesn't and stay curious, stay curious, stay curious. I was very skeptical student by the way, and I asked a lot of questions and I'm sure I was quite annoying back in the day. This is a theory that we are born, that we are born sub divided and that our parts are inherent to us, they're manifest or they have the potential to manifest.

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They experience a full range of emotion they are not as a result of trauma. We can treat them like people and they respond to being treated like people. This is how we work and this is part of the theory. So as you begin to talk to yourself or you begin to experiment with having your clients talk to parts of themselves you can begin to see and hear how that happens, how parts in the system begin to respond and how they carry feelings, a full range of emotion.

So next slide his may help with clients that don't like this word part or are trying to figure out what a part is, they can be experienced as thoughts. So if you have somebody who's hearing themselves speak, thoughts, feelings, sensations, images, word sounds, felt sense, inner voices, physical symptoms, movement, voluntary or involuntary. So when I'm teaching this to a new IFS therapists that these parts can manifest in all different kinds of ways. Your question to your client is, how are you experiencing this? So if someone comes in and wants to work on an issue and you're listening and you're reflecting back, oh, there's a part, sounds like there's a part of you saying this and a part of you saying that and is there something that you want to focus on? The next question might be how are you experiencing it? So you might want to write that one down. How am I experiencing it?

So let's leave the slides up Felix, and I'm going to go back to a couple more questions here.

How long does the unburdening process take?

Well, that is going to be an entire module talking to you about unburdening but what I would say in this model, that unburdening can take a very short amount of time and it can also be many sessions over time depending on the amount of trauma that your client has experienced. If you watch Dick Schwartz work you will see that it can be very, very quick and most probably as you're just beginning this work, you're not going to be able to negotiate with protectors as skillfully as Dick or some of the most senior trainers. The process might maybe much longer.

Another question, oftentimes when I'm trying to access parts that had earlier been blended with me, I'm unable to find them and this is a great comment actually because your clients will also experience this, that you'll do a session and you as a therapist will think, oh, we're finally on our way and the client will come back the next session and you mentioned to them where you left off last time, they have no

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memory of it. I think this is very common, especially early in therapy and there's lots of reasons for that. The unconscious is a powerful place where parts live and sometimes as people are becoming more conscious of they're suffering their pain, their trauma it's going to become hazy and they will have parts of them that will block the work in the beginning until more trust in you and more trust in their self starts to become available to them.

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Here's what I found over the many, many years I've been doing IFS is that these parts really are not gone and they're going to come back around. This is part of our work in trusting the process and it took me a while but when I began to really trust that the client was the leader of their own work, that if an issue or a part needed to slip away, it would be back.

I'm pretty new to the method, I can get overwhelmed when analyzing every thought I have and asking what part is this? Or talking to my husband and sons thinking what part is this? Do you have tips?

My heart goes out to you for sure. I think once we start to be interested and curious about this, um, we have parts that can overwork it for sure. What I want to say is if you can be curious and ask the parts that want to analyze to just relax, I would say that's another part that in the beginning with yourself or with your clients, it's a process of awareness. Bringing awareness to the idea that I am more than any one thought or feeling and journaling can be really, really helpful. The other thing is, you know, of course, you know, I'm a couple of therapists, so I would say stay with your own parts for now and don't and let it go with other people until you start to feel more comfortable with your own differentiating and your own listening to yourself.

Another question, having worked with parts models for many, many years, it's clear that there's a vast resistance and fear of such a model.

This is true, this is true as the public as well.

What can we do to make this common knowledge and commonly accepted?

I'll tell you what my experience is actually in the world of psychotherapy is that the idea of multiplicity, particularly with the amount of neuroscience and brain science that is becoming much more accessible to not just therapists but also to the public, that this is actually becoming more and more common language, that the brain is subdivided we actually know that and we know that there are different areas of the brain that carry different thoughts, feelings, sensations, and experiences from trauma and from early childhood. So when I have clients who get scared about the language of parts, I talk about the brain because I think this is a gap that can be bridged with

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neuroscience. There are people who have parts that want to know, how do you know this.

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There aren't going to be clients of yours that just want to boom, get right into the work and then they're going to be clients that have parts that need to know. So we have books and we have articles. Also there is an ifs trainer who is starting to introduce the brain and trauma so we're starting to fold this in. Also if you talk about your own subdivision with your clients too, you can acknowledge. When I talked to people who have parts

that are worried about this, I talk about myself. I don't talk to them about my issues, but I for sure join them in this idea that we are never all of one thought, feeling sensation or idea. So it's a way to kind of soften the language a little bit.

Somebody acknowledging practice the skill of unblending with a client today and it resulted in a big shift today. Today we briefly identified four parts. How many parts can be expect to find? Is the number limitless?

That would be a great question for each one of us. What I would say is I would encourage you not to worry about how many parts there might be. Some people keep working with the same few parts over and over again and some clients have busloads of parts so your client is going to tell you and as you begin to unblend more, it's going to be come a parent to you. Um, and I don't think I, you know, what I want to say is let go of worrying about it. I also noticed that when we start a session, often we're starting with protection and there might be many roads to roam that somebody might start with. I have a client that I'm working with right now and we're both amused by it, but starting with an issue of something that happened during the week and landing on the same vulnerable part that we had been working with the week before. I also do believe that

I'd be, you know, I've learned over the years to really trust, trust the process that my clients are in and whoever shows up at the beginning of the session may lead right back to the very deep work that you have been doing.

Let's go to the next slide. I'm going to just do a little bit of this and I want to just say that another thing that was so moving to me when I began learning this model is the idea that all of our parts have a positive intention for the system. I had a very, very, very extreme critic came out of my childhood experiencing a lot of shame and had a lot of critical protectors that's swarmed around me in many ways. It wasn't until I started doing this work and starting to have a relationship with some of these very, very strong protectors in my system and understanding that as difficult as it was to live with such a critic, that this part was trying desperately to help me. This was a very moving part of my early process and I really do believe it, if we stay with a part long enough and we're able to validate it and invite it to give us some more information they will begin to tell

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and show how they got the job or the role that they had that they were probably forced into the extreme role. Protectors being more dominant and exiles being more vulnerable.

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They're all trying to work in service of the system. That is an exploration and that's one of those things that you will need to build trust about over time.

The other thing about parts that are interacting with each other is, especially in the protective system, they become polarized very easily. An example of that is when we have to make an important decision and those of us that are working with clients or with ourselves know that, I have to make a decision and I've got some opposing energy inside of myself and we're going to be talking about how to work with polarizations a little bit down the line. These parts are trying to get you know, the yes is trying to empower you and to know is trying to empower you. So we want to begin to listen to that as well.

Going back to some questions. Last week when I was in an IFS process with my client, but then a part of me jumped forward and I drew a big blank, I can relate to that. I paused and told my client this and that I was going to check in, but I could not get my mind back like I usually can. I was transparent and actually ended the session early. Have I ever had this?

I have had for sure the first part of this paragraph, I haven't experienced yet in my life, you know, my body taking over and having to really shut down or shut down a session but I can definitely relate to, and I think everyone can relate to freezing in a therapy session. What we would say in IFS is something is starting to happen for you and some part of you doesn't believe that you can handle the situation. So what I would say is that that is a trailhead for you and something that you might want to take to a consultant to work with what was going on in the session that a part of you began to freeze. We call this a u turn and we encourage all IFS therapists to really pay attention to something like that because it indicates that a part was feeling something and I'm not even going to suggest what it is, but was feeling something big potentially and a protector came in and shut you down.

I was planning on attending in the fall now I wonder if I should continue the ifs
online
circle. If I'm going to attend a training, I'd appreciate your thoughts.

What I would say is both, do both go to the training and it depends on how quickly you want to start feeling more and more competence in the methodology. The training is where you will learn the model and much more intensively than you are going to be learning it here. You also have a large staff that is with you while you're practicing so you get a lot more supervision of course in the training itself.

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What does it look like and feel like to have a part unburdened? How does this work actually take place?

I'm going to be a little bit brief here because you're going to get this information, I promise you. The unburdening process is about helping parts let go of negative beliefs about themselves. So when I'm working and we begin to do that depth work that the protective system is relaxed and we start to make it safe for the parts in the system that have been traumatized overtly or covertly to tell their stories and reveal what meaning they made about themselves as a result of an experience. We begin to work with

helping the part let go of the negative beliefs about itself. Often times we're hearing the language of shame, I'm not enough, I'm unlovable, etc. So the unburdening process is about witnessing what happened that a part took on a belief about itself. Of course this is about the limbic brain, the limbic system here. As this begins to release, the part then is freed up from that negative belief and has more access to self-energy and which creates a lot more space in the system. From my perspective, and I remember when I said this to Dick Schwartz in my level one training, this is about choices, isn't it? So as we begin to free up the internal system and we start letting go of constraining beliefs, there's a lot more space inside for choices, for responding instead of reacting for parts

to bring their inherent wisdom to the system. I believe we begin to live the way that we would have lived had we not been hurt as young children. In brief, I think that's what I would say to you.

If someone talks about a memory about when they were six that something painful happened. Is it okay to work with Tina when she was six as a part?

Absolutely, that's what we're doing, that's exactly what we're doing. The question is can you be present with that six year old. So what we're wanting to do remember, is to continue to work on that differentiation, which is can the kind and loving self of your client, be in relationship with the six year old part and then begin to develop a relationship there and witness what happened to the six year old.

One more question then I'm going to go back to the PowerPoint. This is great to see this kind of enthusiasm thank you so much. I'm trying to do these in order guys, but sometimes they move around. Following last week's suggestion, I asked a part a couple of questions including how old do you think Paul is? I got no answer suggestions?

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When you try something on and it doesn't work, move on. That is absolutely going to be my suggestion. If that question doesn't make sense to the part don't keep after it. My favorite question to a part, especially when you're start after, how do you feel toward it and you get this sense that there is self available.

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What is it that the part is available to let you know in this moment. It is such an open ended, beautiful, holding like what information is the part available to give you and then just keep seeing if your client can make some sense of it. If you feel like you as the therapist or your client is starting to put pressure like there's an agenda to get something from the part. Oftentimes it'll shut down the part. I always think of open, lots of space, lots of curiosity, lots of invitation, when you're beginning with a client with this methodology, it's a new kind of process potentially. So lots and lots of space for the parts to you, the information that they want you to have in this moment.

Could you please elaborate some on specific aspects of the level three training that are particularly needed to facilitate the IFS therapy?

Level three is the most advanced level of training and that program is open to people that have gone through all the basic levels. It focuses on working with the more challenging aspects of IFS, the nuances and also a lot on the therapist and the therapist parts.

All right let's go back to this PowerPoint here. I know there were some questions about couple therapy and of course I have a part that would want to just jump right on in to that, but I'm not going to in the context of this program but it's powerful for couples, I can tell you that for sure. So self or self energy, I'm thinking that most of you have coming into this program have this concept, but I just to reiterate, it exists in everyone and of course it is recognized in most esoteric religions. This idea of self is not new to human beings, you know, this idea that we are healthy and whole. In this methodology, this theory we're born with a self. So it's not extinguished by trauma more is it developed as a result of relationship. I do believe that it is fostered in relationship, but in this theory it is they're waiting to be manifest at birth and does become revealed and nurtured in relationships. Of course, between zero and two when we're in that attachment, phase of relationship. This also has an impact on whether a child is encouraged to access their own inner wisdom. I'm very lucky to have two little grand nieces and some parenting that is profoundly beautiful to watch how these children are being encouraged really to be themselves, it's very moving actually.

The idea of self or self-energy, we also say it connects us to each other. It's a thing that we all have and to all living things. So when I was learning about this and for me, I had to experience it myself rather than being told about it. So when I'm working with people, I'm not instructing them about this, I'm waiting to see what happens as they

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begin to unblend and start to have a different relationship with themselves because that was my journey. My journey was, finding ways for me to access my own self-energy. And for me it was through nature and eventually through meditation, but different people including you are going to have different experiences with this as they begin to experiment with this idea of I can be a little bit separate from strong and reactive emotion but in relationship with it in a loving way and that is a very powerful experience for people to have.

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I can have a different relationship with my reactivity, I can have a different relationship with my vulnerability and there is a way to heal from the inside out. Some of these big t little t traumas that people have experienced. Of course we believe in this theory that deep inner healing occurs in the presence of the client's self-energy and this is held by the self-energy of the therapist, which is really a critical piece here.

They're 30 questions still, I have 20 minutes let's see what I can do. Let's see what I can do here. have a client who really struggles with meditations due to the visualizing, imagining nature of it. His response is, I am not creative like that now number one, and then number two, it is not necessary to have people try on guided meditations or visualizations if you're guiding you don't have to do it that way, I just want to say. I'm not creative like that sounds like a part and it sounds like a part that's either afraid, critical feels badly for some reason. How can you help him have this experience without doing those guided meditations?

I would say if somebody has a part that's not comfortable with something that we're introducing, put it to the side and find your own creativity. What would feel safe for this client to play around with this idea of unblending. I think I talked about it early on, you know, earlier on, you know, drawing and writing clay pillows, a shoe on the floor. If this person has a rational intellectual part during the meditations, perhaps that part is trying to figure out or help him figure out how to be more successful with this and that would be a wonderful inquiry. So when we're, when I start to guide you inside, what do you notice happens? What do you hear yourself saying? And then the person might say, I'm not creative or I can't do this, or other people do this better. You get curious about that voice. Oh, okay. So let's listen to that voice for a little while. So it has a belief that you're not creative or it's not creative. So tell me more about that, if you can wrap your mind around this idea that we treat parts like their people it really helped me to begin to understand this model and to work it. You could imagine I have a person who believes they're not creative let's find out why does that person believe they're not creative? Let's get curious about that voice. Curiosity is the easiest aspect of self for people to access. Compassion I have found is the most difficult in the beginning curiosity, the easiest so let's help people get curious about the things they're hearing themselves say. That's a perfectly legitimate trailhead for people to go in.

I have a part that I call got it part and it's a very intelligent part who gets all the new theories I learn and start mimicking what it understands to be right thing to do or say.

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This is a very smart part of yours.

It's so subtle that can fool me and pretend to be self.

This is a really great inquiry that we could spend probably a year talking about, which is the parts of us that have developed beautifully actually as a way of taking care of us that believe they are us. Helping these parts unblend and as you're seeing here, it can fool you. It's probably very wise, it's probably learned it's a learner. Right. When I was a new IFS therapist, we had to practice in front of each other of course in the trainings. I had a part that memorized all the questions, I am going to be so good at this and I'm going to ask every single question and you know, it really worked. So it a process over time to help that part understand that there were actually more resources, that it wasn't alone as the only resource in the system that it's really, really helpful. I mean that those parts of me have served me very well in my life and then they overwork, it's an overworking part. So I needed to get curious about why that part worked as hard as it did. I won't go into all my issues at this point, but there were lots of reasons why that part felt like it was me and needed to be me and needed to jump in and come in and lead and drive the bus as it were. Way more often then it was actually necessary. So get curious about it, that's what I would say about that.

Let's just go to the last slide here. Just the qualities of self, I just want to say a little bit about this and then I will get back to these questions. When Dick started talking to people about this thing that wasn't a part and they started naming that this feels more like a true me or a self, this is me. He started to get curious about the qualities and the qualities that he heard. We talk about the C's, curiosity, courage, compassion, clarity, creativity, connectedness. Over the years, some things that I've noticed in my clients or even in myself has that presence is a big one for me. When I start to get the sense either in myself or with my clients, that there's an open and availability and an ability to be very present with suffering, without having to have an agenda to get the client out of it. I'm waiting for my clients to have a sense of presence here and that they can stay open to whatever is happening on the inside. That is not always easy when somebody has been suffering for a lifetime.

The other thing is when I start to get a sense that my client's heart is softening toward an aspect of themselves that perhaps has not been welcomed, a part of themselves that have not been welcomed. Sometimes a question that we ask is, are there any parts in the way of you being openhearted or are there any parts in the way of your

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heart being open to this part of you? That's a way I start to get a sense of whether someone is beginning to have a little bit of space and ability to be present with maybe a part of them that's complicated or complex. Then of course, awareness one of the things that we're fostering here is conscious awareness and helping people be welcoming of things that have been exiled or shut off in them for a long time.

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So when I asked the question, how do you feel toward a part, we're looking for some of this and remember, as I say, when I'm teaching IFS, we're not asking people to be the Buddha, we're not asking people to not have any parts around that this idea that we can be totally in itself is not what we're asking. What we're looking for is opening, what we're looking for is some percentage of a shift toward how you feel in relationship to a part of you.

I'm going to answer some more questions here and I'm sorry if I've missed your very important question. Remember you get a call with Dick this month unless you had it last week maybe you did. Then next month you'll have a call with Pam and you'll have a call with Dick too so you get two calls every month to keep bringing these really amazing questions.

So can you clarify what you meant by parts are not a result of trauma? Is it the trauma that creates the extreme burdens and beliefs?

The answer to that is yes, that's what we're talking about is that parts are not born traumatized and self is not developed in relationship with another human being. As we as human beings begin to experience life, some of it little t, some of it big t, we begin to make meaning out of these experiences and these parts take on burdens as a result of the meaning that we're making about an experience. We're going to be talking more and more about that so fear not.

Do you begin with a new client with the labels, protectors and exiles?

I do not, if I'm going to begin to talk about this with my client, I use the language of protection because people do understand that. Some people who have some more experience with therapy might have the language of defenses. I don't love that word because even though it is descriptive of what we're talking about it doesn't feel that inviting to me. So I might talk about this idea that we all as human beings experience life coming at us from the moment we are born. We begin to have experiences and as a result of those experiences, we have feelings and eventually we have thought about that and we have somatic experiences and we have implicit and explicit memory.

I might talk to people about the idea that when bad things happen, the human system finds ways to protect itself and that's how I start talking about it. Sometimes I have this

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little drawing where I have a drawing of an umbrella and two little feet coming out from underneath the umbrella and I explain that we all have vulnerability, we all have gotten hurt and then we all have ways we've learned to protect ourselves.

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That's the beginning of the conversation that I have. I rarely use, categories of protectors, so we call firefighters and managers and then we have these exiles, I don't generally use that language unless somebody is coming to me who has the language already. This is just me, I tend to use the language of vulnerable parts of ourselves or protective parts of ourselves.

In my experience people do start to understand that pairing that when there's protection, there's always something that needs to be protected. I might even use my hands like some part of you got hurt and another part came in to try to take care of it and we're going to try to separate these two out and get to know them both. I try to use less language than more language unless somebody really needs to talk it through and then I'm perfectly happy. I'm a teacher so I have many parts that are happy to talk it through with those parts that need to know. Now of course, if somebody keeps needing to know, you know, week after week after week, then we're going to get curious about that because that now starts to feel like I just don't really want to go inside but everything is up for conversation and this methodology I believe.

As primarily couple therapists do you recommend consultation with you?

Well, thank you.

In addition to IFS programs, you know, I think if you get serious about IFS consultation is great. Not with me because I don't have any more time to do that, but there are lots of other people who are available for that. If you're interested in couple therapy, my website is Tony, her bind blank.com, and there's lots of resources for couple therapists on that website.

wake up with sadness, no specific clue of its source, not related to any present event. Is that a part or protector? What can I do to unblend?

Remember that protectors are all parts and you might need somebody to help you unblend from that sadness so you can really listen. If you feel like you can just stay present with some of these, look at some of these qualities of self, some bringing some awareness, bringing some curiosity, see if you can help it separate from you a little bit so that you can listen to it. This is what has always worked best for me, but I'm only one person and lots of us unblend in different ways. I use my body a lot because I'm

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very aware, I'm extremely kinesthetic. So usually when I'm having a strong feeling, I can feel it somewhere in my body and of course not everybody can and I'll focus on the whatever sensation feels like is associated with the feeling and I'll just hang out, I'll just breathe and hang out.

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Over the years I've been doing this for a very long time please remember so I have a way to invite my parts to be in communication with me about what's going on and what they need. What do you need from me? What do you need from me is a big question of unblending that I do or I lie in the grass and try that. So you're going to want to just start to experiment with how can I be in relationship with this feeling, this sensation, this voice that I have known for a long time, but I haven't known it from an unblended perspective for sure.

If we're born with all of our parts, do we tend to have a similar number of parts? This is a question that I tried to answer it early, I don't think so that's not how I hold it. How I hold it is we don't know how many parts we have or how many voices or feelings we have to be in relationship with until we start to ask those questions internally and trust that your system is going to give you the information that you need about this. The big assumption of this model is that the client knows better than you. So your system has the answer to these questions if you can create enough, here we go again, curiosity, presence, awareness, openness to begin to ask yourself these questions. In the beginning it's going to be overwhelming because you're going to hear so many things and you're going to see so many things and you're gonna feel so many things. Then there's going to be parts of you that want to like pull it all apart and of course that's normal why wouldn't you have parts that would want to do that as you're learning this? So again, I'm not a journaler. I really wish a journaler but I am an artist, so I draw or I doodle or I might even just write a word or two down or I meditate, I do lots of things to see how much awareness can I bring and curiosity about who's in there and what kind of information do they have for me and what do they need from them. That's one answer.

How our parts are not a response to trauma this is counter to everything I've studied?

That's right this is a huge paradigm shift in terms of trauma work. I'm going to encourage you, given that I only have five minutes that would be a great question to ask Dick Schwartz the next time you're on a call with him. The idea of dissociation and ego states, it's very complicated question, which I don't have time to answer right now. In this methodology, what we say is parts respond to trauma they don't manifest or they're not there as a result of trauma, but they do respond to trauma and how they

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respond to trauma is all different kinds of ways and that's what we're working with actually. We're working with the response to the trauma and what happens to a system that is repeatedly traumatized. The work although not completely different is somewhat different and if you are interested in Bessel van der Kolk trauma book, the body doesn't lie he does talk about this as well, he's a big proponent of IFS. The trauma is Dick's actual expertise so I really encourage you to bring this kind of question to him the next time you get be with him.

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How do I differentiate between an angry exile versus an angry protector? What client is saying could be either, I don't understand that what client, but when somebody is presenting themselves with anger and they want to work with it and they can differentiate enough to be a little bit curious about it and you find out where it is in and around the body and you start to help them focus on it and then invite the part to speak. I don't think in the beginning you need to worry about who it is, but once you start to get some differentiation and your client is really available to understand it the question to ask is this part protecting another part? That's the question. The part will tell you I am or no I'm not and then you can just keep staying with it and you can get curious about the age of the part and you can get curious about is there another feeling other than anger and who's carrying it and how old is the part, what does it look like? Just to get more curious and what we say here is somebody in your system is going to have the answer to this when you can stay curious.

I'm going to answer one more question, but I love the fact that you are asking all of these questions, it's moving to me actually so thank you so much it's indicating that you're interested. How do we know if our parts of creating healthy personal boundaries or are overreacting because of their past experience? I think that's such an excellent inquiry. I think the inquiry is, is this reaction or response? When I'm talking to people, because this is something that comes up in couple therapy a lot, is this idea of it's okay for me to say no and from where inside is it coming? And that's the inquiry. Does it feel like it is coming from a reaction or does it feel like it's coming from a response? So to get curious does it feel like the part has to do it or does it have a choice to do it?

That's another thing is it an impulse that I can't stop myself from or do I have a choice about this? Because remember, boundaries are malleable and they can change, they are not brick walls. A healthy boundary means that it can shift and it can change and I have choices and I can listen and I can stay in relationship with the person that I am making boundaries around or not but I can do it from my core wisdom. And you know, when I'm working with people around boundaries or you know, you know, back in the day when I was in that inquiry in myself, I noticed that my boundaries would come from an angry place and with words like never and always and that kind of thing. I came to appreciate that having been boundaryless for so long, I needed to kind of

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swing on the pendulum out. Then begin to come back and be more discerning about what is the boundary I need to make from, where is it coming? How am I going to deliver it?

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Also how am I going to take care of myself in the process? Very, very different than no, a mean no and I had that part that kind of a mean no.

Is it possible to work with these parts somatically and not just verbally?

Yes, I just want to answer that absolutely yes there are people that the verbal processing, especially for working with parts that are nonverbal we do need to find other ways to work with these parts. Over time in this course or if you decide to take the trainings and you move on and you go into advanced trainings, you will get all of this information, I promise.

Thank you for these amazing, wonderful questions. If I didn't get to your question, which is clear, I didn't cause there's so many here, please write them to Pam please there's a Q&A board that you can find on the website and you can ask these questions ahead of time and if she can have them ahead of time or Dick can have them ahead of time, then they can get to even more. Then I will look forward to seeing you not next month, but the month after and have a wonderful couple of months. Thank you so much for your participation be well.