

IFS Online Circle Month 2

Live call with Toni Herbine-Blank

Toni : Okay. So good morning. Good afternoon, good evening, wherever you are in the world listening to this Webinar. I'm Tony Herbine-Blank and I'm your host for today's call. Okay. And I just want to say a couple of things to you all before I j p right in. One is that if you're new to these calls, if you haven't done a call with us in this format yet, if you would like to ask a question and I hope that you will, to the right of your screen, you'll see an indicator where you can ask the speaker questions. You want to click on that, write your question and then I will get the question. The other thing is that there's a help tab there's something to click on if you're having trouble viewing or hearing me and we'll get some technical help for you.

And those are two things are very different if you, because if you ask me for technical help, I won't be able to get to you. So but there is somebody with me who will help technical questions. There's also the person that's going to be helping me with the PowerPoint's name is Sara. So we're going to be going over this a power point for the month three material and I'll be talking to her about advancing those slides and know that she's on the other end helping me with that. So, again, welcome and I know that some of you will have been able to view the videos beforehand and some of you have not which is fine. I'm going to be basically going over the same material that was, that was available for you on the you know on the membership site.

So we're going to be talking today about really we're going to dig in to working with and understanding the protective system and how we see defenses and coping strategies and how we work with those parts also how, how we sort of, how we label, I don't like that word label, but how we differentiate between different kinds of protectors and how we might work with those different protectors. I'm also going to answer questions that came in beforehand. And thank you so much. Those of you that sent those questions because I had a ton, had some time to look at them and review them and think about

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how I might answer them. So I'm going to do a couple of slides. We're gonna, I'm going to do a little bit of teaching and then I'm gonna move to those questions and I'm going to teach a little bit more. And then as your questions begin to come in, I'll start to answer those as well. So I'm going to be going back and forth between teaching the material and answering your questions. And again, just a reminder that we are still at the very beginning of this seminar of this course. And so my, I'm going to focus on primarily on those questions that come in about the basic understanding of the basic protocols of the model, which you'll be learning some of today. So, Sarah, why don't we start with that next slide.

So, I always like to start with this, that all beings are multiple and we have many, many parts and many aspects of our personality and not all of them are wounded. So a question did come in about that, which I will be answering a little bit more later, but I think it's important to say that, we're not differentiating Self as good parts as bad. We are, we're paying attention. Usually when people come into the office to see us, to see a therapist are working with parts that are struggling or they're working with issues that they want to change, but people are also very resourced as we know. So I just wanted to make that clear before we go on. So let's go to the next slide. And again, it sounds like from the questions that are coming in and also if you've been watching these webinars, you understand what a protector is and that we see the, these protectors as a set of parts that are in service of helping people in all different kinds of ways.

Some that that often don't work very well. So in other, in another language we might refer to them as defenses, adaptations, strategies or coping mechanisms. And we see them as we've said to you about, you know, we, excuse me, we treat parts like they're people. And so we see these as loyal protectors in the system that are doing all of these things. They're defending against their adapting to, they've

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developed strategies to try to take care of the client or other parts and they are trying to cope with the internal and external environment. Next slide.

So to just differentiate between two sets of protector parts. We've got two categories. One we call managers. And if you even just think about the word manager, these are proactive protectors that think ahead. So they're proactive. I'm going to be talking a little bit more about them and asking you to think about some of your own. And then we have another category of protector parts called firefighters. And these are the parts that employ when the managers are ineffective in any certain kind of situation. And they are reactive. But both of these sets of protectors are dedicated to safety and homeostasis, keeping the system in balance by their definition. So we might have a different definition of what balance in the system looks like. And these parts are often very polarized about what are the best strategies for maintaining safety inside and out.

So I'm going to talk about the difference between the two. So let's go to the next slide and then I'm going to answer a couple of questions. So, if you think about managers who are proactive, they're thinking about how to, they're thinking ahead about how they can strategize to keep the more vulnerable parts locked away in the system. And they want to lock them away either for their own safety. So basically, if we start, when we begin to talk to managers, they're saying, well, you know, I don't want this part to feel shamed anymore, so we're going to lock it away. We're going to put it on an iceberg, we're gonna put it in a jail. We're going to stick it in a, you know, we're gonna stick it some place where it's not going to be in the crossfire from external stimuli. The other thing that they think about is how can they keep the system safe from exiles, from parts that carry shame or wounding.

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So, you know, what we hear from their motto, which you'll see at the bottom here is never again. And I have lots of those managers. I came out of childhood with a lot of never agains. So I think of myself as having extremely strong managers that think ahead. They think ahead, they strategize into the future about preventing something bad happening. So, I have worked, I've learned to really love my managers and have worked a long time to help those parts of me relax so that I can be more in present and less thinking about what's going to happen next. These parts often admit to being tired of their role. So when we start to get into relationship with them and we begin to ask, what do you need? We often hear, I need help. I'm exhausted, I need help. They can carry burdens of fear and responsibility and really like to maintain control.

: Control is a big one for managers. I see it says, and like to maintain control. So at the "L" is missing there. So anyway, they're hardworking. They do get exhausted and they're available to admit their exhaustion and admit that they need some help. On the other hand, firefighters are reactive as I said, and they deploy when managers are unsuccessful. And if you think about what a firefighter is, I wasn't around back in the day when these were being named, but I think firefighter is a great descriptor. If you think about what happens when a house is on fire and, the firefighters come to the house to put out the fire, they're not thinking about the rose bushes and the beautiful flower garden or even the windows of the paintings or carpets that are in the car. I mean in the house they smash through to get the fire out no matter what.

So it's a, it's a good analogy or good metaphor is thinking about that these are the parts that will do whatever they have to do to get the fire out. They claim they like what they do and don't want to stop. They appear to care less about the consequences about the carpet

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and the paintings and the flowers in the windows. And you know, the things that are around are the people that are around that are getting, you know, getting the effect of putting out the fire. In my experience over many, many, many years of working with these kinds of parts with clients. I believe that these parts can also feel rejected, isolated and carry their own shame about the role that they have in the system. They're often hated by everybody. You know, people, parts within the system don't really love firefighters cause there's always a backlash in an aftermath. Firefighters that take action against other people in the external world don't usually receive the love.

They're not usually embraced by anybody inside or out. And in my experience, if we can really begin to know these parts in a relational way, they do eventually when they feel safe enough begin to admit what it's like to behave it inside and out. So those are, that's the difference between the managers and the firefighters and what I would say, especially for this, you know, at this stage of learning the method that you don't have to worry too much about this. We are going to be, I'm going to be talking a little bit more about their different roles and what they do, but they are protectors and often they need the same thing. And you know, how we work with them is not necessarily, the interventions are not necessarily different, but the speed at which we can work with managers versus firefighters is often very different.

So I want to just answer a couple of questions that came in. And one was about, someone was working with a client where there were, there was what seemed like an ancient archetype, you know, a part that had some wisdom and the question is what do we call it? And I, I think that what I would say, number one, when you want to understand what to call a part, the first thing that I would encourage you to do is to ask the client themselves. So you do not have to name

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this part. You can ask the client who it is and how it's being experienced. And, what is role in the system is who is it and what is it offering. , and the other thing is that that if it's not self itself you know, I was just working with a client the other day who had an incredibly wise voice coming forward.

Not an archetype that wasn't how it was being identified, but it was a similar, a similar question. And what the client said is, you know, this is a wise part of myself and those parts. For me, it's wonderful to welcome these parts into the system because as I said in the very beginning, not all parts are wounded. And, this may be an aspect of this person's personality who is another kind of great resource. So when you have a question about what and who and why, ask the client to feel into, to sense into, to listen carefully, to ask the part itself who it is and just wait and let yourself sit back and wait for the answer about that. So another question is what if people find IFS too intense? So when you hear from a person in your office, this is too intense, I don't like this, this makes me uncomfortable.

As you begin to get more and more comfortable with the model, will begin to yourself be able to differentiate. This is a part of the person, not all of the person, or maybe it's many parts of the person that don't like the idea of the model or find it too intense. And, you know, I had clients when I was just beginning to shift from the way I was working prior to IFS. I would have clients who had parts who would say, well, why are we changing anything? You know, we were doing, just fine before. Why? Why are we changing this up? And I think my best counsel when a part is speaking about their discomfort is that you slowed down and you take it seriously and you see if you can find very heartfelt, genuine curiosity about what the, what the discomfort is about and let the person at or the part let the part talk about what feels intense, what feels uncomfortable, why does this part feel like it's not a good idea?

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And then also ask the client what needs to happen for the situation to feel more comfortable. It's a relational move with a part, it's safety, creating it's safety developing. If you are feeling like IFS is a powerful methodology that you want to use, then you can talk to those parts about why you think it could be helpful and back off. You know, when you hear somebody or a part say this is too intense, what that says to me is that starting to feel threatening and you want to move back. You want to soften what you're doing. You know, create some more space around it and not push, because you know, one of the very first things we say when we're working with these protectors is what you, what we really don't want to do is to get into a power struggle with a manager or another protector.

Okay? Okay. So inhibited parts was another question and I'm not exactly sure what that means an inhibited part, but what I'm making up is that that refers to parts that stay quiet. Parts that don't want to speak. And I also want to remind you, and this is going to be, you know, over time you're going to be learning more about this, the whole somatic part of IFS, which is that, , parts communicate in all different kinds of ways. So you might have be having sensation, movement, somatic experiences. That person might hear themselves saying something about themselves or this part. So you're going to, you're going to, if you stick with this, begin to learn all different kinds of ways to make it safe for parts that are inhibited to come forth in all different kinds of ways.

So another question, two more and then I'm gonna go back to the PowerPoint and then I will come to all of these questions that are coming in right now on the chat board. So I'm Self-like managers and you know, this term Self, like I have a part, probably my Self like part that really doesn't like that term. But what I would say about any manager is that they have taken on the role because they believe

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they have to. Now again, remember we're treating these parts like their people. So what helps me often is to think about a person to think about, you know, a child maybe who has taken on the role to take over the system because it doesn't trust that there is any other resource but themselves, and these are, these can be wonderful parts actually. I mean, I'm a trainer and I train a lot and it's not always easy and things happen and I get blended with parts and then I have parts that will come in and help until I can get myself back into balance.

So with these parts, like all parts, but I believe these parts work very hard when again, when they feel like there's some threat that no one else in the system's able to handle, so need to be handled with an increase, not handled, but to you know, be given a lot of respect and a lot of care and to listen to them really, really listened to them. And we're going to be going through the steps of how to begin working with protectors and just a little bit. So I'm, I'm imagining that you will maybe get some tips from that.

Now the last question and I want to be very mindful about how I answer this is how do we negotiate with protectors? I'm going to call them social justice protectors, you know, protectors that have developed because of being marginalized in some way. And you know, I want to first start by saying that I am privileged, I'm a privileged person and so I'm very careful about, I'm going to be very careful about how I answer this question because I do not want anybody to feel dismissed or marginalized about how we might view this in IFS. But I think it's an incredibly important question. And if we as therapists are working with who are in marginalized communities, , it's, it's important that we pay a lot of attention to our own internal conversation about this so that we are not, again, minimizing the fact that there are people who have developed protectors for actual survival in the culture that we live in.

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And what I am going to say just something briefly about this is that, again, we really want to honor these protectors and we want to find out what the external constraints are that require this kind of protection. And the invitation to everyone across the board is if we can help people unblend, these protectors can be resourced, these protectors can understand that there is, there is more help for them as opposed to we're just going to try to get rid of them so that, you know, people feel even more vulnerable and even more scared as there are reasons, there are reasons to be frightened, you know, racist, racism, ageism, sexism, it's all real and alive in our culture. So, you know, the inform me, the introduction is to, to this idea again is itself can be a resource, not, not so that, , we become unprotected. So I hope that makes sense. It's a big conversation. If you move onto the continuity program, there's an entire module that addresses a lot of this and I encourage you, I encourage you anyway to keep going with this conversation. Well, thank you whoever that was for asking that question. So we're going to go to the next slide.

Okay. So common manager roles and Sarah, I think you have to click again just to get some of these up. Let's just see, just do it. Click for me. Critics, controllers, caretakers, analyzers, see if there's one more and worriers. So if you think about who are, who the managers are and what are they're doing, again, they're very preemptive. They're looking toward the future, they're trying to create a stable landscape inside and out. So these are some of the common managerial roles over doers, you know, over doers. , now let's go to the next slide. So common roles of we have found. So addiction is one of those extreme acting out. However we might want to define that. Raging shame, protection, protection, you know, of incredible vulnerability, an activated autonomic nervous system. So we would see the sympathetic and parasympathetic responses as the first activated responders in the system to try to take care of threat or fear.

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Let's see if there are any other ones. Sarah, I'm not sure, and often are polarized with managers, so you can see how they're a little bit different. And you know how I view this is that firefighters, how we see firefighters is that they become much more extreme. And the more extreme a protector is that should be a clue to all of us, that there is more vulnerability, more potential trauma underneath that the behavior of the parts becomes more extreme in order to try to put the fire out of whatever it is that is starting to feel so incredibly uncomfortable inside that these parts think they have to they have to deploy in order to sooth the pain. So let's go to the next slide.

So I see these, firefighters as the most loyal guardians we've got, and I am not going to spend a lot of time with this story, but you can Google this story about a general in the Japanese army during the Second World War, who was, he himself was deployed on an island and even long, long after the fight was, the war was over, they could not, they couldn't get him to come out of the jungle. And it's, you know, it's a, it's actually kind of a heartbreaking story because of how long he stayed believing that he was being told that the war was over, but the war was not over. And I think that this happens to our protectors a lot. You know that even when circumstances have radically shifted and radically changed our, our loyal guardians have a lot of trouble. I'm trusting that it is safe to step down and it's, this is why our relationship with protectors is so critical.

So next slide, look at that picture. That's exactly it. That's exactly what it is. Okay, so you can't see, I don't think you can see what it says, but developing a relationship with protectors is essential. They can't relax until the vulnerable parts they protect are safe. Now you see that that dog, that dog is not going to let anybody get to that baby. Unless that dog knows it, that baby is safe. So that's just the story that I made up. Next slide. Oh, there it is. There it is. Okay. So

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protectors, again, I'll say this again, are often exhausted and long to stop doing what they do. They have evidence that their role is critical and have fears of letting go. And this is very important when we start talking about very specifically how we're going to be negotiating with these protectors. Remembering this is very important.

This is not out of the clear blue that these parts believe what they believe and take on the roles that they do. They have evidence and there'll be able to tell you what the evidence is and it's critical to take them seriously and they will, they will more likely relax if they are taken seriously, by the way. And , you know, I've had over the years, many protectors say the only reason you're being nice to me right now is you want me out of the way. And I, you know, I have to admit it that I think that that's true. As therapists, we can have parts of ourselves that can get very impatient, kind of move the defense structure away so we can get to that vulnerability. You know, we love that vulnerability, but these parts can feel that and can name it if you give them the time to need it.

So one more slide and then I'm going to answer a couple of more questions. So what they need, whether they are firefighters, whether they are managers to be honored, respected and appreciated. And if we have parts that cannot feel friendly toward our clients, toward our clients, protectors, they're going to feel that. And so what is it going to take for us as therapists to honor, respect and appreciate regardless of the behavior and honoring, respecting and appreciating is not the same as condoning. So if that is something that we as therapists are struggling with, that's a piece of work for us to feel welcome and welcomed and understood. And of course this is counter intuitive for us as therapists and also as clients if we think about critics. So those critics are often the first parts that show up when we begin working with clients and we start to differentiate and they start to listen inside.

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They hear a lot of critical voices. So for us to be able to welcome a critic and understand a critic and help a client understand a critic is not always an easy task because these are the parts that we often want to just somehow extract and they're not extractable and they are there for a very, very important reason. And that's what we want to find out. They need to learn to trust Self and they need to learn first to trust the self of the therapist of course. Because if they're very blended with the client, it's going to be hard for the client to separate enough so that the, so that these big protectors can feel safe on the inside. But that's our goal. Our eventual goal is to create enough safety inside the system of the client so that all parts can feel welcomed and begin to relax and trust that there is a support on the inside.

There is something to lean into. There is something to rest into that they're not alone. You know, a lot of these protectors feel so alone and they have felt so long for so, so long. So to be befriended, genuinely befriended and again very hard to prevent, to be friends, some of these firefighter parts that appear to be hurting the client and also hurting other people. So you know, how can we work with our own systems so these parts can feel that they are safe to begin talking and explaining and communicating about what they're up to and why. Okay. So, okay, I'm going to go to some of your questions cause there's a lot. Okay, I'm going to scoot up to the top here. Okay. Working with parts and all humans who believe that the parts model is dangerous and therefore their job is to prevent, user exploration of the parts models a way to protect. They don't feel that the parts model is safe and survivable. This is true in individual fields of therapy and in society.

Okay, great question. So this is when someone, let's say it, let's take it, let's look at this question from an IFS perspective. There will be

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people who have parts who believe that this idea of parts is actually quite dangerous. And this is not that unusual. You know, at all because we have, there's a lot of stigma about mental illness still and also then this idea of differentiation, differentiating on the inside, which is a form of can also evoke all kinds of fears about what this actually means about my mind and what's happening to me. And it has been pathologized, severely pathologized over time. So it makes sense, doesn't it, that people get scared about this idea of multiplicity.

And somehow I have found that this word part can either be incredibly soothing for people. You know, it made for some people, it makes a lot of sense. Okay, now I understand better, how am I, you know, why I, why I do what I do and why I think the way I do. But on the other, conversely, we can have parts that do not feel relieved by that concept and do not feel relieved and do not like that. We're part actually. So two things I want to say about this is if you're interested in learning about brain science, this is something that can help those parts in my experience is understanding that the, the brain is subdivided naturally and the more we learn and read about neuroscience, the more we see that there is, that there's actually a scientific explanation to this. And I have found that that is extremely helpful for some people who get scared that all of us have, you know, all of us have a brain, we have different parts of our brain and different, different things happen in the brain.

And you know, when I take, can take the time to help people understand that old memory, new memory, explicit memory, implicit memory reactivity, the prefrontal Cortex, the autonomic nervous system and how it all, you know, how it all operates as I, you know, as you know, in different parts that can be very, very relieving to people. The other thing that I do is I take the word part out of the conversation until people begin to differentiate and understand

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themselves as having separate aspects of their personality. And this term aspect of your personality is not as threatening as parts. You know, because we might say, well, you know, you know, I might say to somebody, so on one hand I'm hearing that you feel really, really angry at your x, y, and z. But on the other hand I hear that you also have a lot of compassion or sympathy for that person as well.

And so this is what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the idea that you can think and feel different things at any one given time. And you know, my, my method with people is to validate upside down and backwards. If people feel threatened. I mean, because if they feel threatened, there's a really good reason and I want to get curious, tell me more. You know, tell me more about that. Tell me more about that. Tell me more about that. So that I can get into your world with you and really understand what is scary about this or what doesn't make sense or what, what triggers your anger about this. So just maintaining lots of curiosity and pull back. Any parts of me that get so enthusiastic about this idea that I want to push. Like there is no pushing, you know, in my experience that works.

I think patience, which is the opposite of pushing is something to really, really cultivate and then use different language because I, most of the time people do recognize that they feel different things at different times. So I might just switch from the word parts to feeling, you know, this day you feel this way and this feel way you feel, you know, this day you feel that way about the same given subject. What do you make of that? And you know, let the client tell you what they make of that. But we want to take the threat. We really want to take the threat out of this conversation. Okay. And you know, another thing that I say in the basic training when I used to do the basic trainings, which I don't anymore, is we can hold this idea of multiplicity and we can hold this idea that everyone has a Self without ever using the lingo of this model until people are ready.

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So if somebody has a part that really hates the jargon, I don't use it, but I will always hold in my mind that I am speaking to different parts who are interacting among themselves and that I will, that I after all these many years, believe that all human beings have this inner wisdom that can become a resource. So I'm holding that and I'm holding that for them until they begin to differentiate more and more. But you don't ever have to use the language if people are, are challenged by it.

Okay, next question. How do I understand if I'm blended with my exile or if my protector is working to create dissociation? For example, in new environments traveling, I experience extreme fear and anxiety, which creates the dissociation being spacey and not on the planet. Well, it sounds like you just answered your own question basically. So, you know the way to understand this if you're taking this seminar to understand your own parts really is to get some facilitation with this so that you can begin to understand the difference between when your exiles are terrified and your protectors are trying to take care of you. And if you have an experience of being spacey or dissociated. You know, it may mean that you need some help with that part because to dissociators are some of the bigger biggest protectors, we see dissociation as protection as a protector. And if you have the conscious awareness that you're beginning to get spacey, then you know that I would assume - I've got something going. You know, I've got something much more vulnerable going on that doesn't feel safe. So that's how I'm going to answer that question for today.

And ultra, do you have you come across an ultra protector that is an overall protector responsible for protecting? Some of them were common protectors and I will give a resounding yes to that because I came across that part of myself pretty early on in my, in my IFS

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journey and I referred to that part as my CEO. So the chief executor of officer and all is often that's very first one that you're going to encounter and who kind of has in my system anyway. And I've, I've worked with other clients who've had this who sort of, you know, try to control all the other controllers. So, it's a part to be loved and honored to relate because if you think about it like, you know how early that part must have come on board to try to manage everything and how exhausted it it must be. So you're going to work with it, you know, you're going to work with it the the same way, which is to, you know, we're going to get to that in just a minute.

Is to begin to understand it, be in a relationship with it, understand its fears and see if it will relax so that you can then get to the next layer of protectors. So sometimes there are many layers that we're getting through before we get to the exiles. Okay. All right, I'm going to go back to the PowerPoint for a little bit and we're going to talk about how we enter this system safely working with protectors. So Sarah, I'll take the next slide. And I also want to say for those of you that haven't gotten to the videos yet, there are, if I may speak for my part, it's a little bit of embarrassment, but Pam and I and we, we were creating this webinar. We actually worked with each other so that you can see, I'm going to go through these steps and then you can go and watch those and see how, how we each work.

We worked with each other to kind of enter the protective system in a safe and respectful, in a safe and respectful way. Now, of course, we were not, you know, we're not working with our most highly reactive parts in videos, but the reason that we didn't is because we don't have those anymore. I'm only kidding. Because we want to see you. It's the same thing we do in the training. We want you to see the steps in a way where you're not, you're not being sort of introduced to the, some of the more sophisticated nuances of the model, but that you're seeing how you can enter the system safely. So let's go to

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those, connect slide away. Before you go to the next side. Wait, go back, go back a second. Sarah. Sorry, I just want to show you this picture.

Nope. Okay. That's, stay here. Stay here. That's fine. Thank you. But there, that picture is a sculpture. That someone saw and took a picture of at the burning man gathering. And it just, it really speaks to what's happening, you know, in the, in our system is that we're, we've got these cages around, , the vulnerable parts that are reaching, you know, they are really reaching for help. And for redemption. And you know, we want to eventually get to those. And so in order to get to them, we've got to go, nice and slowly. So the first one of the first protocols that we teach in IFS, we call the six F's. The first three F's I see as unblending technique. So, you know, unblending again is the invitation to clients to begin to differentiate, excuse me, on the inside and to see themselves as not all of only one thing.

So I'm going to be talking about how we use these six F's to begin to make it safe for protectors to be seen, known, understood, and start that very gentle. You know, I see it as kind of a rocking, you know, a rocking motion of creating relationship in order to begin to trust the self of the client. So the very first F so you can give us the next bullet, Sarah is find the part. So what we do here is, you know, we're going to see if we can find a target part with the client. We can, we're going to begin the conversation in a session with what's happening, what is most present, what is the issue you want to attend to? And maybe you've been working for a long time on a certain issue. So we're gonna you know, for instance, if a client might say to me, you know, I just said, you know, we'll, we'll start a, I'll use the critic again.

You know, I just can't get this voice out of my head, this critical critical voice out of my head. So we want to start by seeing if the

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client can identify a little bit more about how they're experiencing the part. So let's just say for example, that this critic just shows up like a weight on my shoulders, you know, so I might ask, you know, let's see if we can find that part in or around your body that, that might be the first question. Let's see if we can find that part. How are you experiencing it? What are you noticing? Now? I use the body a lot and down the line in this course we're going to be doing a whole month on the body. So, you know, you'll get more about that, but you know, paying attention to if people are available and some people will say to you, you know, what are you talking about in your body?

So then I might just say, well, how are you experiencing this? You know, that you have a critic, you know that you're hard on yourself. How do you experience that part? And that's an easier question sometimes. Oh yeah, I just feel, oh, I just feel weighted down or it's in my head. I just have a constant conversation. So, you know, we just want to see if they can somehow find the part, you know? Sometimes if somebody can't really identify a part, I'll say, well, let's, let's take this pillow that's on my couch here and let's just put it on the floor. And just for the sake of argument, let's just say that's the part, you know. So we externalize it a little bit too to see if we can get a little bit of a differentiation around it. So we want to find the part, the question is, the questions are, how are you experiencing it?

What do you notice about it? You know, tell me more about it. Tell me more about it. So that's number one. All right, let's go to the next one. So the second F is, now we're going to focus on it. So once we've established that this is the part that we want to focus, we want to have you know, you that the client wants to spend time with. Now we're gonna now that we found it to a certain extent, now we're gonna begin to focus on it. And I like to stay right here for a long time. I do, because I don't want to see if the client can focus on it and

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become present to it. So, you know, can, can you be with it and notice what you notice about it by focusing your attention right on it. So sometimes I might just say, you know, if somebody has expressed that they noticed where it is somatically, I might just say, you know, how would you feel about just focusing right on that sensation?

How would you feel about just focusing right there on that tension, on that voice, however it is that they're experiencing it. And just kind of hang out there a little bit just to see what more, what more they want to notice about it at this phase. So my experience is that focusing will also lead to more on blending. So finding the part, okay, now that I found it and I'm, I'm noticing that it is something where somewhere that's unblending, staying with it for a little bit longer is also going to with the sensation or wherever it is in the body is also gonna help with unblending. And the third unblending question is, Sarah, you can give me the next bullet is fleshing it out more. So again, the, these two are very similar to me focusing on it and fleshing it out. So what are you noticing about it?

Some people are very, very visual. I happen to be one of those people I see. You know, I, I see very quickly, many people don't see. So we remember that parts can show up in all different kinds of ways that we can, all of our senses can be active in this process. Some people see some people here, some people feel you know, so we want to get a little bit more about that. How is it showing up? What are you noticing about it? Again more, what are you noticing about it? And I like to spend time right here. I am, I am an IFS therapist that believes that slow is fast. And actually I was in a training once and you know, one of the participants said, well slow is smooth and smooth is fast. And I thought, that's so great. You know, so I used that to this day, which is you know, if I can slow down the front side of things, you know, when we're actually doing the healing work, things will speed up.

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So I don't, I just don't put my foot on the gas pedal here at this phase at all. Because unblending is the key here. So helping people get some, get some unblending, get some differentiating, get some effect regulation going on in relationship to their own system is actually gonna help down the road with the process. So find it, focus on it and flesh it out. Are the first three F's okay, now let's go to the next three relationship building. Okay, so this is the second part of this six F's. And I like to, I like when I'm teaching about this to break it down into threes. The first three are unblending, the second three are relationship building. So now we're going to ask that all critical question. So let's have the next bullet please. How do you feel toward it?

This is F number four. How do you feel toward it? And guys, this is your critical, critical, the question that you are going to ask. I've been doing IFS for 20 something years at this point. And , I am always asking this question whether I'm working with an individual, whether I'm working with a couple. This is a question that just rolls off my tongue. And the reason that we want to ask this question over and over again during a session is we want to see how differentiated the client is on the inside. So when we're thinking about a critic and we ask our client, how do you feel toward it? What do we hear? Okay. Usually, usually we hear another part who has an opinion about, about this part. I don't like it. I hate it. I wish it would go. We don't usually in the beginning of therapy here, I have so much compassion toward my inner critic.

We usually don't hear that when we do hear that, that's lovely. But usually we hear another protector that has feelings about it. So what we are waiting to hear when we ask this question is some language of differentiation. How do you feel toward it? So we're going to keep unblending other parts until we hear I, there's some language of self.

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It doesn't have to be full-blown compassion. Sometimes curiosity is the easiest aspect of Self too. Capture in the beginning of work. How do you feel toward it? And so we'll look at, before we move on to any more apps, we want to know that there's just a little bit of openness toward this part. So, you know, I feel curious about it. I really do understand it. You know and negotiating with protectors to other protectors to help them step back cause nobody likes the critic.

Usually the critic is nasty inside. The critic can be nasty outside to other people. Just as I was saying in the beginning. So we're going to see if we can help parts feel safe to let the client get to know this part. So, we're going to have maybe do some negotiating. You know, that the fear of talking to a part like this is that it's going to just get bigger. And that's one of the, the primary fears of protectors is if we get start to get to know these parts, they're only gonna get bigger. They're only gonna get worse because it is counterintuitive to lend some kindness to, to some of these protectors. So once we begin to get some differentiation and the person has, is with your help able to unblend and create some space for the part to be able to speak for itself.

And that's one of the invitations that I, that I give to parts that are threatened is I asked the client to reassure the parts that are sort of crowding. And that the reason we want to get to know this part is to help it to be less reactive, not more reactive. Like we wouldn't have want a critic to get even more reactive, right? So I just can validate that fear. But once we have some separation, then we're going to go to the next bullet. We see if we can help the client, the friend, the part from self. So once we begin to hear, I'm curious about it, I understand it, then I will invite relationship building. For instance, I might say, can you let it know that you feel curious? Can you let it know that you are available? And then I stop and then we noticed what is that like for this part to feel your presence?

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What is it like? What is it like for this part to actually have a little space on the inside with you? And that you genuinely want to get to know it. And then this is in the beginning of my IFS career these would be jaw dropping moments for me because it was a little hard for some parts of me, anyway to believe where you could actually talk to a defense mechanism and it would talk back to you. I was a little skeptical back in the day, but what I found is that it relationally, it would just internally, if it's just a powerful, powerful move to begin to befriend, a part of yourself that has never, no one has ever taken any genuine interest. Yeah. And then once we befriend it, we can begin to ask some questions and some of those questions might, what is your role?

What is your, what have you been doing? How long have you been doing it? How does it feel to have had this role? To be doing this job for this long? So another relational move. I want to know about you. I want to know about what you do and why. I want to know, I want to know you in a different way. So, you know, it changes, it really does change. When we can help people do this, it begins to shift that internal relationship, not immediately. Sometimes this is a long, long process, but then the final F okay. Number six is we first validate and negotiate all of the fears and we're going to be digging much more in depth into how we negotiate with these protectors. Because again, you know, unblending is one of the keys of, this work, but also being able to know the negotiate and be present with all the fears of the protectors on how we actually do that in a skillful way that helps them to relax and trust that moving to vulnerabilities actually not only just a safe thing, but a good thing and a healing thing.

So there we have it. Find it, find it in your body, focus on it, flesh it out a little bit. We're going to keep asking the client over and over and over during the session. How do you feel toward it? How do you

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feel toward it? How do you feel toward it now? Because you know, other protectors can sneak in just when you think, just when you believe that everything is beginning to relax. Another protector might feel very threatened and you can see it in people's body language, you know, so you know, paying attention to the tension and people's body, their nervous system. You know, they might open their eyes and by the way, people don't have to close their eyes to do this where he either, I just want to say that. So, , but we want to pay attention to that.

If other protectors are starting to feel threatened about the work. So how do you feel toward it? How do you feel toward it? That's your assignment for this month. Once you begin to help your clients, if you're, if you're working with the model is to just start that question, well, how do you, how do you feel toward it? How do you feel toward it? How do you feel today?

Okay. I'm going to go back to some questions. Okay. Okay. I have a part that takes the bullet to protect others. That's right. This injures her. We're currently exploring, if she will allow me to do this for her? Are these types of parts common? I'm not exactly sure about this question. This is a part that takes bullets to protect people in her life. That's what I think I'm reading here.

So she will, or he will or they will try to protect other people and in trying to protect other people, she, this injures some other parts of her. So that, that's what, and you're, you're currently exploring. So you know, we have a whole different kinds of parts I think that have developed ways to take care of us that look like they're trying to take care of other people, protecting other people, care-taking other people. You know, and I think that is extremely common. You know, but I do think that, I do believe that these are also protectors and parts to get to know just like any other parts. So it would be a

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wonderful inquiry to start to get to know that part that takes bullets, that tries to protect other people and then gets wounded. And I'm wondering actually if it's the part itself that gets wounded or is there another part that gets wounded by the action of this part?

So I think that would be the first question that I would want to ask is this, is this dilemma actually more than one part? And once you have that fleshed out to too, just like any other protectors, see if your client can kind of get a sense of where it is in or around their body, begin to focus on it and listen to the job and the role and the fear of not doing that. The other question, once a relationship is built with that part, is does, is that part of where that, that it is causing injury in the system because sometimes protectors that are doing, doing that kind of action to try to protect the person for whatever reason, make them a good person. I, you know, I don't know, I can't make up the answer to that, but that's the question. What's the role of that part? What's the fear of stepping back? And that is, that is when you'll begin to hear what the part is protecting the vulnerability. Like what would be the threat of stopping that behavior. And that is, you know, that's a very serious question and a real question, like that must be scary to think about not doing it for that part. It also may not know about its impact. So that's another question. Okay.

An example of a firefighter and a manager polarization might look like. Okay. So in the beginning of, not of my IFS career but my career as a therapist, I did a lot of work with women, young women with eating disorders. So this, these are a great example of how protector parts managers and firefighters can get very, very polarized and cause a lot of conflict in the system. And I also want to just say that we're going to be talking about polarizations in another, in another module. Once we feel like you've kind of gotten the idea of how to just work with one part, then we, we basically say to you, you know, it's never just one part. And then how do we start working with the

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system in a different way? But if you think about parts that try to protect the system by overeating, and they are that as a firefighter, let's just say for, you know, not all over eaters are firefighters, but just let's say for the sake of argument that you have a, a part that, that overeats to the extreme, as a way to try to suit the system from shame or fear or you know, whatever it is that's, that's needing more or it believes, needs protecting sound, strong feelings, and then that part does its thing and the next day there's a backlash to that, you know, a very serious backlash to that, which is the critic that comes in, look what you did.

Why did you do that? You know, we've been working so hard on not over eating and now you've just ruined everything and no, I'm not going to be able to stop. So that's the polarized conversation there. So you also have in those circumstances, firefighters that will get polarized, right? You'll have in these circumstances, what I would see is the firefighter who would eat and then the firefighter that would restrict and they would be in the terrible, terrible, painful, painful battle, which causes a tremendous amount of anxiety, but that's, you know, all parts can polarize with each other. But so I've over eaten on this day and now I'm going to put myself back on this very strict diet on the next day. And that works for a little while. And then the firefighter says, you know, it's not really working. So now I'm gonna, I'm gonna eat again. So, and we can, you know, we can inject any kind of of extreme behavior with a part that wants to try to manage it as well. So I hope that answered that question.

Okay. Here's another question. Let me just scroll down a little bit here. What if when focusing on the critic, they jumped to the exile or vulnerable part because they are too threatened to examine either one. They're acting as a team to not change the system. Yeah, that is very, very common. I mean, and that's what you're going to run into all the time, that they want to, I'm not sure exactly what you mean.

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They jumped to the exile. Does that mean that they begin criticizing the more of the vulnerability in the person's system? Because they don't want themselves examined? I think this is, if that's what you're saying and you can rewrite the question, but I'm going to go with what I'm, what I'm making up here is that one of the dilemmas of protectors is not wanting to be found out.

You know, they themselves want to not be seen as something to be gotten through or gotten by. And so they do all kinds of things to avoid having to deal with either of themselves or to let the client, , begin to access self and go to the wounded exile. And, so they will, I don't know, they're acting as a team to not change the system. And I think that that, that is also very true, that when a protector believes or protectors believe that they have actually created homeostasis, whatever it is that they're doing and that change is going to be threatening, you know, they're going to do whatever they need to do to maintain power in the system so that the system doesn't change. And it's very interesting because as you know, we know with family therapy that that's the same thing that can happen in a family.

You know, we're all going to stay in the same roles because we don't want to shake things up. Things are bad. But if we shake things up, it's only going to be worse. And I have heard that, you know, more times than I care to count from protectors who say we can handle this the way it is. If we start digging away here, we get a few, you have the therapists get out your little, you know, excavation tool. This is only going to get worse. So we want to maintain the status quo. We're not going to let any change occur. And you know, this is where the negotiation is so important because they're only speaking for themselves. They're not actually speaking for the exiles that do want change. You know that the exiles are reaching for redemption. The exiles who have lived in exile, that's why we use that term.

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They've lived in exile and they're, they're longing to be saved. They're longing for help, they're longing for healing, they're longing to get out of exile. So it's rare. It does happen, but it is rare that it's the exile that doesn't want the change that in general, it is the protectors who feel threatened by the change. So I hope that I answered that question and if I didn't, you can feel free to rewrite it. Okay. Okay. My client has identified a neglected five-year-old in her. The client was able to hold and comfort the young self in the last session, the clients that she was aware of, the five-year-old sitting quietly by her most days, anything she should do. Well, isn't that lovely? Isn't that lovely? So the question might be, is there more that that child needs? And I'm not going to go through all the steps of unburdening here in this call because we're really not up to that.

But I'm curious whether that child, whether there's more healing that needs to occur. I would also ask, is that a comforting thing? Is the child sitting quietly by her most days? Does that feel like a connected experience? An experience of, you know, is it a good thing essentially or does the child need more? And you know, as you learn more about the steps of unburdening, you know, they're, that child may be carrying some beliefs about herself that she needs help with. So it's a curiosity to keep, just to have your client, you know, kind of sit with her unblend, ask those questions. How do you feel toward her? What are you noticing? Can you extend some of that goodwill or compassion or kindness or love, whatever it is that you're feeling toward the child. You know, another question to ask is, does the child feel you?

And that's a, you know, does the part feel you is a question that I'll ask a lot actually, because when we say how do you feel torn apart, we hear, we hear what the client is experiencing toward their own part. But another very important question is how does the part feel

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toward you? You know, so, you know, because you'll get more information that way that the, the little girl feels so good. The little girls still feeling afraid of me. And then what does she need to feel safer? Or is this, is this what needs to happen right now? Sitting close, sitting close. And you know, one of the things that I love about this model is how we collaborate with and empower our clients to feel into what needs to happen with their parts to, to be able to ask those questions or to invite, parts to express their needs and to ask for what it is they want and what would feel safer and what would feel more healing. So that then, you know, even more of a relationship can build between these two parts.

Okay. Let's see., we're almost to the end. I'm going to see if I can get to these questions. When a protector comes up during the F process, I love that. The F process. That's right. Do you pause and then to that part to work the same process? Okay, so here's my rule of thumb here. If, if you have established a target part, you know that your client really wants to work with this part, you know, and you keep asking the question, how do you feel toward it? And you have a part that can't relax back. You do need to change. What we say is you do need to change your target part. So then we would say to the original part, there's this part that keeps interrupting and we need to turn toward it and understand what's going on. So you may need to turn toward it for a while so you can get back to the original part or this part then becomes a target part.

And sometimes what can happen is a lot of parts or just, you know, diving in and the idea is to distract you basically from the work. And then these are nuances that we're going to get to much later is how you work with, parts that just cannot, you know, they can't step back. Because otherwise you could be changing your target part, like, you know, every five minutes. But if they're, you know, when you think, if you think about family therapy for a minute, if you would just, you

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know, kind of get into your mind's eye, you're working with a family, say and say there's one of the members of that family simply cannot stop interrupting everybody else. The therapist is going to find out what's going on there, why that person is having such a hard time letting other people speak or giving other people time. We wouldn't just toss that person, you know, we wouldn't just drop kick that person out of the office. We would want to find out because it has something to do with the dynamic of the family. So it's the same with parts. If there's a part that's interrupting that just can't relax, something's going on. So yes, the answer to that, that was a very long winded way to say, yes, you need to change. Sometimes you need to change. Okay.

Six F's are for both managers and firefighters, correct? Yes. Does a firefighter ever guard an exile? Yes. Or once firefighters step back, you are normally have to deal with the manager before getting to an exile? That's a great question actually. So, the answer is yes and no to that, to that final one. The six F's are going to go in my experience much more slowly for the firefighter. So we're asking potentially, so we're asking the very same questions. We're just, our pacing is probably going to be different, you know, I mean, you know, there are, you know, firefighters can be very, , that's the word I want to use. So, you know, they can be obstinate, you know, , they can be mean. They can not trust, usually don't trust anybody really. So, you know, when we start to invite the questions, it can be more challenging to, to have the firefighters speaking in an unblended way.

So when we get to direct access with you guys, you'll, you'll hear more about the need to work, to work directly with a firefighter in order to help it to unblend and sometimes, you may encounter another manager, you may encounter another protector. You may have to work to, you know, with that polarized polarization, the manager and the firefighter before either one of them will let you get

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to the vulnerable part. And again, which is why, you know, the negotiating is so, so important to, to be able to create safety for these very, very big protectors who feel extremely threatened by the vulnerability, for whatever reason, to make it safe for them to relax and trust you. And of course, as the therapists, we're going to become the most trustworthy self in the room until your clients can begin to differentiate. So that brings us to the end. Folks. Thank you so much for all the great questions and your enthusiasm. And, you will be having a call with Pam and Dick next month and I look forward to working with you or seeing you or are you see me? I don't see you, but in two months, so be well, everyone take good care.