

IFS Online Circle Month 2

Live call with Dick Schwartz

Dick Schwartz: Hi everybody. As usual we'll wait a minute or so until more of you get on. Then we'll start. Just waiting until everybody gets on. So give it another 30 seconds or so.

Okay, so welcome to another episode of The Online Circle. And shortly we'll start the video of me speaking last time. But I wanted to say hello live, and I'll be around live to answer questions at the end again. And so also just want to say how nice it was to see some of you in person last week. I was part of a big trauma conference there, and asked how many people were on The Online Circle, and my presentation of 200 people, or I don't know how many people were there. And a bunch of you were there, raised their hands. It might be 20 people. So great to go around the world and see how people are following us or getting introduced to IFS from all kinds of different countries. It's great to see in person.

So anyway, yeah, that was fun. It was a big conference and I shared the stage with people like Dustin Underkolk and Dan Siegel was actually part of a different conference that was there too. But we got to hang out with him a lot. And Gabor Maté who's becoming a good friend now. And other people. So it's fun to get to know some of these important figures and have them get to know IFS too and support it.

So yeah, so with that I think, Eric, why don't we start the video, and I'll come back in about 55 minutes.

Hi everybody. It's good to be with you again. Yeah, welcome to, I believe this is my fourth visit with you. You might notice the background is different. I'm Cape Cod. I do something called the Cape Cod Institute every year, which is kind of a five day training, I guess, you might call it. It's not part of our training programs, but it's nice. You just work half the day. They give you a nice house, and then you play in the beach in the afternoon. So I'm in the middle of that.

So today I wanted to talk about some more about protectors, and then after that, get a little bit more into how do you heal in exile? Because in the video I showed last time, we worked with a bunch of protectors.

Can't hear very well? Is that true? Is that a problem? Somebody's saying you can't hear me very well. Just keep letting me know if it's hard to hear. You can hear me? Okay, Jenny. Alright. I'll try to speak up a little bit. Sound is good, here? Okay, alright, that's enough.

So yeah, with the Ramey video that I started last time, we worked with a bunch of his protectors to get permission to go to his exile, and then we stopped the video right when we were starting to work with his exile. So that's a good point to talk about what it takes, and why I'm doing what I'm doing. So I'll get into that a little bit later in this meeting with you. But let me just, I'll

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summarize a little bit of where we've gone with protectors, and I know that Tony and Pam have done some of this too, so some of it might be a little redundant, but it's worth, I think, summarizing.

And I already see some questions, so let me just check. Nice haircut. Thank you. I can hear fine. Okay, thank you guys. Alright.

Another difference from my other calls, because I've watched Pam do this in her last one. I think I will pause at different times and look at questions, and then give some answers and then move on. So I won't wait until the very end to do that this time. So feel free to, as we go, line up some questions and put them in there.

Okay, so as you can see, we have tremendous respect for protectors. And they often are terribly maligned in the psychotherapy world, because they are blamed for... I mean, rightly so. They have, sometimes, some pretty dangerous or scary or dreadful ways of protecting us. And then they are seen as pathology and attacked or tried to drug away and so on. But with IFS, we've learned that even the ones that seemed so dreadful and scary and pernicious are just doing their best to keep you safe, and are carrying burdens that are driving them to do these things that they don't like. They don't like the roles they're in.

And also that they were actually needed at one time, so it's really important to come to them with the kind of respect ultimately that you would to a serviceman, or now these days, a policeman, because the police are getting an awful lot of empathy given how many of them are getting shot these days.

So that's how we come to protector, and as we kind of reiterated this point over and over, I think, we've learned to go to them first and again, go to them, not expecting them to change even slightly, until what they protect has changed. So we go to them to honor them, as I'm talking about, to learn first, their story, their secret history of how they were forced into the roles they're in, and how necessary those roles were at one time. And again, not to get them to change. Because they won't. Many of them just won't just by you telling them to change. The need for their role, at least their perceived need for it, has to change first.

And it's also important to remember that a lot of their fears of what would happen if they let you go to the exiles are realistic. So I think Pam covered some of the common protector fears about going to exiles, and if not, I'll go over more of those. You can let me know. And how we address those fears. But it's important to remember that those aren't just crazy pieces of resistance, that actually dreadful things in most of these clients are trauma survivors, and other clients with lots of extreme exiles. Dreadful things have happened when the exiles have taken over in the past. So the protectors have actually really good reasons to want you to not go to them.

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And Ramey's protectors talked about that. About how he would fall apart, or wouldn't be able to function or also was afraid of being judged by people if he were to disclose this stuff, or being overwhelmed. So their fears are realistic, so that's why we take them very seriously, and we have to convince them to earn the trust of the protectors, that yes, that fear is realistic, but we know how to handle them. So again, I'm a hope merchant, I'm telling them, pretty much step-by-step, the protectors, what we're gonna do and how it isn't gonna lead to what they fear. So we're gonna go in there, not to release all the emotions, so it's overwhelming, but instead to actually unload a lot of that emotion, so that the protectors don't have to worry about it anymore. And when they really believe you about that, they can get behind that project.

So basically, over and over with the protector, I'm giving a combination of these three messages. The first one is empathy, along the lines of what I'm saying. I really get why you don't want us to go there, why you're in this role, how hard you've had to work, how, in some cases I'll say, you're a hero. You actually saved his life. As I'm getting more information about when the protector got its role. And so lots and lots of empathy, and yes, I am sure that bad things have happened when you've allowed us to do that in the past.

So honoring, lots of empathy. And then a second message of control. So you're the boss, and if you don't want us to go, we're not gonna go to the exile. And so you could relax about being pushed around or ... because many of these protectors have been pushed around by therapists, or at least, therapists have tried to push them around. So there's sort of a trust issue, de facto by just virtue of my being a therapist. So I have to be very convincing of that, that it's not a trick, and I'm not trying to sneak around them by saying they're the boss. That I actually mean it. And I have to be doing it not to trick them too. I have to get any parts that might like to, paradoxically, get them to step aside out of the room and be very sincere. So if I can't convince you that it's safe to do it, then we're not gonna do it.

And then the third message is one of hope and vision, and so if you were to open the door and let us go to the exile, we could do it without being overwhelmed. We can go to it and get it out of where it's frozen in time, and we can take it to a safe place, and then we can unload the feelings and beliefs that you're so afraid of that you've been trying to contain all this time.

So that's a very, I think I've said this before, that's a very seductive pitch and most exiles will go for it, and most protectors. If you can do it in a convincing way, if they can trust that you can really pull off what you're talking about. So one of those eight C words is confidence, and it's very important for the therapist to have a lot of confidence and have earned a lot of confidence, because a therapist really does know what he's doing, or she. And for many of you, that's a paradox, because you haven't done this enough to have much confidence. So you sort of have to trust us on it. But most protectors won't open the door unless they really get that you, not only that you care, not only that you're there for them, but that you actually know how to operate in this

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inner world with these delicate, and to the protectors, very dangerous hearts. These scary material that's in it. Sometimes there's a lot of fear of what's gonna come out. What kind of memories or information the client's gonna learn. So there's a lot of common fears, and yeah.

So I'm given, almost every time I meet a protector, after we've gotten to know it and honor it, and learn about what it protects, then I'm giving that three message pitch over and over. Empathy, you're the boss, but if you were to open the door, we could do this and this and this, and that would make your job so much easier. And then you'd be freed up to do whatever it is you'd like to do. And what would you like to do if you were free to this responsibility? And the answer, quite amazingly sometimes, is always valuable and often exactly the opposite of the role the protector's been in. So the part that wants to make you withdraw all the time, wants to help you get out in the world. The part that's such a critic, wants to become your cheerleader and so on. Just amazing.

So that's what we're, we're pitching that liberation theology to these parts. That there is a release from the role that they, none of them like these roles. They're tired, too. Most protectors are exhausted. Some of them, you ask them about a role they'd like, they say they just want to lay on the beach with a drink with an umbrella in it. They want to retire. So we try to set that up for them. But some of them really want a new active role that's always helpful. So...

Okay. So then we go to the exiles, and we heal them, and then we come back to the protector, and then we have the protectors come in and see that they don't need to do this job anymore. That things have actually changed because the exile isn't so vulnerable anymore, and then we help them into their new role, and often they have to unburden too. So we ask about their burdens and set up a process by which they can do that also.

So let me pause and see what the questions are at this point.

How do you deal with a client that has protectors that want to hurt the therapist as an immediate defense?

That's an interesting question. So I don't know if you can still see me. Maybe with this... So most protectors who do seem like they want to hurt you, just do that. They try to hurt anybody that gets close enough to be a threat to them, or somebody who's gonna screw up their jobs or something like that. But you have to know that they don't really want to hurt you. And if they're saying really hurtful things, it's sort of like the mafia. It's business. It's not personal. So they would say these hurtful things to anybody who got close enough to hurt them.

If you mean physically hurt me? I really haven't run into that literal danger, except for maybe twice. And the part kind of charged me, but it was a kind of

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bluf. It just felt that scared it had to do it. So some of the power this model, and at some point we'll show some videos with people who have more hurtful kinds of scary protectors we're working with, is the knowledge that none of these parts are what they seem. So if you're gonna try to go to somebody's incredible rage, like I worked with people that had murdered people, and got them to go to the rage that would actually have them kill somebody. I know in my head, in advance, it's not really a bundle of rage that's gonna leap out and attack me if we get to it. It's a part that got stuck in the role of being the rage. And I think that the Afghani vet video with the MDMA is a good example of that. So if you know that in advance, then you don't get scared when you go to these kinds of parts.

How do you best work with protectors who are adamant that they like and enjoy their jobs? Yeah, and the second part of your thing is, some will concede that if the exile is healed, they wouldn't need to do it, but they still enjoy doing it.

So another good question. A follow up to that, and the key to most of these things, is just staying itself, which means staying curious. So I just showed a video today to this group with a client who had a part that really, really was saying that it loved scaring him and hurting him. Self harm kind of stuff. And okay, what do you love about it? Well, it said I love making him feel like shit. And what do you love about that? What's great about that? Well, if I make him feel like shit, then he's not gonna do something that would be embarrassing.

Okay, so, and so usually if you can follow logical stuff and don't get stuck on just saying... because there are parts that, I've worked with sex offenders, and you ask the offending part why did you do it, and it'll go duh. It's a kick, it's a rush. Okay, but tell me more about what the rush is. If you didn't do it, what would you miss? What's the big kick in it? And it said, well, I just love to dominate a vulnerable thing. A child. I love the power. Oh, okay. So you're into the power of it. I see. Okay. And why is power so important? And ultimately you get to, because he was so powerless when he was being abused.

So if you just stay with it, you'll learn a lot of this stuff.

Okay. When you say dreadful things will happen if the exile takes over, can you give an example?

So, yeah. I have clients that, I might even ask. You could ask the protectors or the client, what did happen when one of these exiles took over in the past? And they'll say things like, I didn't get out of bed for a week. I just felt so terrified, or I felt so sparing, or I was hurt. People hated me being vulnerable and they attacked me. So that's what I mean. These bad things will happen. And opening the door to the emotions without unburdening often releases a lot of toxic stuff, the burdens, into the client's system, and the protectors know that too. So that's part of the reason why the unburdening is so important.

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Okay. Isabelle says, my daughter is getting bulimic. What could that protect? She gets really mad at me if I don't agree that she can't do anything about it.

Well I have a long history of working with bulimia, and if you go to the bulimic part and you ask, what are you afraid would happen if you didn't do this, you get maybe four different common answers. One is, you'd be lonely. So the binge eating is a way to take care of the parts that feel so alone, or to distract from them, and it almost becomes like a lover. A lot of these bulimic parts feel that way. They feel like they're really taking care of the client, and they get really resentful when people try to take that away from them. So that's one example.

Okay, so these questions are great, and I see a long question from my friend Ruce. Hi Ruce. Got a vomiting part. How would you've dealt with the vomiting part that... Well that's, I can't, that's a little too complicated Ruce. I'll maybe get back to it.

Okay, so Roselle says, please go through the fears and the ways with working with them. Yes Pam did so, but in a cursory fashion. She also mentioned there was seven or eight fears, but only gave us five. Okay. I think that's really worth doing, so I'll do that, and then I'll get back.

Okay, so number one, the most popular fear is the overwhelm. So the fear is if the protector opens the door, the exile is gonna totally overwhelm the system and the client will be flooded, and you'll hear things like, I'll feel this utter despair, and I'll be flooded with it and I'll drown in it. I'll never come out of it. It's so much. It's endless. And again, that has happened to a lot of clients. So...

Dick Schwartz:

It's happened a lot of times. So it took some time to figure out how to handle that. A lot of other systems, maybe you've learned some of these other trauma systems, in particular, that's the big fear and therapists are taught to be very, very worried about that and to monitor the window of tolerance and when clients look like they're getting overwhelmed, try to help them ground themselves and come back and learn more skills about self regulation, conflict regulation. So we find that we don't have to do much of that because of this secret that I learned maybe more than 20, 25 years ago that is just amazing and it is kind of bizarre to me that other trauma systems haven't picked up on this yet. Partly because they don't believe in parts. But it turns out that parts can control how much they overwhelm, how much, in our language, they blend with the client's self.

So if you ask, for example, an exile in advance of going to it, and that was one of the issues Rami had originally. I didn't get into this I guess. That if he opened the door, he'd be overwhelmed by it. If you ask an exile to not overwhelm before the client gets close to it and it agrees to not overwhelm, it won't. It's never been violated in all the years I've been doing this. So once I get that agreement in place, I relax, and I tell the client to relax about the issue

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because they never do it. Because exiles don't need to overwhelm to get help. The reason they overwhelm is because if they don't overwhelm, they're going to get locked up again. It's like an oppressed group in a country knows that if they don't throw a total coo, then the repressive government's going to put them back in jail. So if you can convince these exiles that they're more likely to get help if they don't throw a coo and totally overwhelm, then they won't.

Wait a minute. From Bruce, I don't think Dick is looking at why... Oh, yeah. Put your questions on the question and answer. Okay.

So that's the number one fear and that's basically how we handled it. I had just reminded Rami of that because he'd watched that in a couple other sessions he'd been watching.

So another common fear came up for Rami also, which is the fear of being judged because most clients feel like if they showed what happened to them or if they showed how vile these emotions are in there or that the therapist would judge them or any witnesses for sure would judge them and abandon them or hurt them or punish them or something like that. So there's an intense fear of not bringing that material out for fear that something would happen from the therapist or other people. A lot of parts actually live as if their original perpetrators or bad parents are watching all the time. Again, they're frozen in time. They think if they step in the wrong direction, they're going to get punished like they did when they were young at home. Again, because they're literally stuck in the past. So there's fear of judgment or judgment from the critical part inside the client. The fear of judgment is another big one and shame. The same that would come from that. So I spend a lot of time reassuring these protectors that I'm not going to be shaming them. If there is this critic, we may have to go to it first and work with it so that there isn't such a fear of that as we go.

So that's two. Fear of secrets or content that the client can't handle. That, again, takes some reassurance. It also brings up the whole issue of false memory, which we should get into at some point because I've had the experience of a client, during the witnessing, showing these very dreadful abuse scenes that ultimately turned out not to be true. So a very careful about what we say is absolutely true when clients are coming up with memories they didn't remember before. Sometimes we can just say, "Well, that's what the part needs to show." We don't know whether it's true or not and you can't know without corroboration. But for whatever reason, the part needs to show this so we're going to go with it. Then get them out of there after that. So we'll keep the focus mainly on healing the part and not necessarily on the validity of the action memories.

What was that about? Oh, fear of the memories. Yeah.

Fear of the content. Fear that the client can't handle it. I think we talked about this before, but a very useful question to ask protectors is how old do you

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think the client is? ery ofen it's single digits, the answer, and just by updatng the part that the client can also say, "I can handle this much more than you think." Then the protector relaxes and we can go on. So those are three, and I'm just looking at the clock. I do want to get more of the Rami tape in. So if we have tme toward the end, I'll give you the other fve or so. ut those are the three.

So just to give you a litle heads up on where we're going to go. I'm going to run it a litle bit behind where we were with Rami. So you can see, again, some of where we're headed with the exile. So we got his protectors to give us permission. He saw this boy, three year old, in kindergarten I believe, and I guess they start earlier in kindergarten in Israel, and we're trying to help him. We got him to a point I think where the protectors open up enough space that he could feel some compassion, and he started to weep. So we're going to start right in that vicinity now.

You can see him now?

Speaker : (foreign language).

Rami: He's located in space in some way.

Dick Schwartz: That's fne. That's all we need. We don't need a clear image of him. Do you still feel compassion for him?

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: So again, let him know you care about him. You're with him now.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: I want you to stay with him, Rami, if you can. Just stay with him.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Is it okay to feel all this?

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Let him know it's okay to let you feel it all. Just stay with it.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: So just go back to him.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Just stay with him and tell him to let you know and feel and sense everything

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he wants you to about how bad that was.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: You really want to know what it's like for him.

Speaker : (foreign language).

(foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Just stay with him, Rami. You're doing really well. Just stay with him.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Rami: I just feel that later when I was a teenager, it was a much worse feeling.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Okay. Let's stay with this boy, this three year old, anyway.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Just stay with him. Tell him to keep going until he feels like you really get it.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Everything he wants you to know and feel and sense about it.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: You're getting that he was really, really badly hurt.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: It's okay to let you know that and it's okay to let us know that.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: It's really good that you can be with him this way.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Just ask him if he feels like you're getting this now.

Speaker : (foreign language).

Dick Schwartz: Don't think about it. Just stay in there with him.

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- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: And ask him if that's what he wanted you to feel or if there's more. Ask him if there's anymore.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: I wanted to hug him and for some reason I kept...
- Dick Schwartz: Just ask him if he feels like you're getng this now. Don't think about it. Just stay in there with him.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Ask him if that's what he wanted you to feel or if there's more. Ask him if there's anymore.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: I wanted to hug him and for some reason I can't.
- Dick Schwartz: You can't hug him? Okay.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Whatever part is blocking you from hugging him, we're going to ask that one to step out.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: See if it'll step out and let you hug him.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Okay. You can hug him?
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Yeah. Go ahead. Are you hugging him in that scene in the school?
- Rami: Mm-hmm (afrrmatve).
- Dick Schwartz: Fantastc.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: We're just going to do that untl he feels really safe like he's not alone anymore.

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- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: It's really good.
So you still hugging him?
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Just stay with him, Rami. Just stay with him. As long as he needs.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Are you hugging him again?
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: I am.
- Dick Schwartz: You can ask him if he needs you to do anything with him or for him before we take him to a safe place.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: Now.
- Dick Schwartz: He's ready to go?
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Ask him if he feels like he really understand that, how bad it was.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Yeah. We're going to stay until he feels like you really get it.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: That's great. It's really good.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: It feels like it's endless.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: He probably thinks that needs to step out.

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- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Just going to be really patient with this boy until he feels like you really, really get it. As long as that takes.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: He's waiting a long time for this.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Yeah, that's great. Just stay with it.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: How's he doing now?
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: That we can go on.
- Dick Schwartz: Just ask him. Ask him if he's ready or there's more he needs you to know to make sense.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: It's totally up to him.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: He said ready.
- Dick Schwartz: He's said he's ready. Just ask him directly.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Yeah. There's more. We're just going to stay.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: He's waited a long time for this. It's his time right now.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: Feeling as if my mind is started to look forwards to get...
- Dick Schwartz: I noticed that.

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- Rami: That's what they said...
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: So just ask the part that keeps coming in and tries to get you away, what it's afraid would happen if it let us stay with the boy until he was done.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: Too much.
- Dick Schwartz: Too much what? For what?
- Rami: Too much to feel.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Okay. Okay. Just stay with that. Rami, ask the part who thinks it's too much to feel, ask it how old it thinks you are.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: How old he thinks you are. Ask him, seriously.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: See what comes back to you.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: Having a sense of three or so.
- Dick Schwartz: Yeah. So tell this part you're not three years old.
- Rami: No, I'm not three years old.
- Dick Schwartz: Tell him that.
- Rami: 67 more.
- Dick Schwartz: When you were three years old, he had to protect you this way because it would've been too much. But he doesn't right now. He doesn't because you can handle this.
- Rami: I can handle.
- Dick Schwartz: He doesn't know that. So tell the part that.

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- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: (foreign language).
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Let's go back to the three year old and just see if there's anything more he needs you to feel or see or sense.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: It's confusing because the feeling is this rejecton feeling was more active again and again so many tmes when I was teenager. The feeling this litle boy could somehow could see to the future it's going to be like that.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: So he kind of knew that it was going to be bad over and over.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Yeah. He still had to live even knowing that.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Rami: To be able to survive when it happened.
- Dick Schwartz: Yeah.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: Let him know you really get that now.
- Rami: Huh?
- Dick Schwartz: Let him know you really get that now.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Dick Schwartz: See if there's anything more he needs you to know or feel or sense.
- Speaker : (foreign language).
- Speaker 3: [foreign language 00:50:00].
- Speaker 2: Oh. He says no?

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Speaker 4:

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- Speaker 2: Okay.
- Speaker 3: [foreign language 00:50: 2].
- Speaker 4: Oh-
- Speaker 2: So, ask if this is really-
- Speaker 4: [foreign language 00:50: 6]
- Speaker 2: So, is that other-
- Speaker 3: [foreign language 00:50: 8]
- Speaker 2: So, ask-
- Dick Schwartz: [crosstalk 00:50:20] Okay, I'm not sure how to stop the video.
- Speaker 2: [crosstalk 00:50:27] number three.
- Dick Schwartz: I should've stopped it before I did the... okay.
- Speaker 2: Going to a safe, comfortable place.
- Speaker 3: [foreign language 00:50:33]
- Dick Schwartz: Okay. And how do I do this?

Okay... so that's what we call witnessing. That's a big part of the healing of exiles. And next time, we're gonna talk more about that process. It's really the second step. First step is forming a trusting relationship between this client's self and the part. And when that's in place, we begin this witnessing process. And there's a lot to be said about that. And you can see, it can be pretty dramatic. It can be very emotional. And sometimes not. Sometimes it doesn't look to the outside eye like a whole lot's happening, even though it is inside. So different people witness in different ways. And again, we'll talk about that more as we go.

But for now, I hope you can see that while he's doing the witnessing, there are a number of parts that would try and pull him out of it. And finally, there was a part that just admitted it: "What is it gonna take for me to get you to stop torturing me this way?" And so then I asked it more about why it was so afraid to let him do it. And it said... I think it said, "He'd fall apart." And then I asked that question: "How old do you think Rami is?" And he turns out he thought he was three. And I'm sure that part was reassured to hear he was actually 70. And then it didn't bother him so much.

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So these protectors really... I mean this is the scariest thing you've ever done in your life, going to these exiles. And they really think that terrible things are gonna happen if they let you spend too much time with these emotions. So you kind of expect it when you start the witnessing, for either the same ones you met along the way or new ones to keep popping up. And you keep a good parts detector for that. Noticing when they're there and then asking them to step back. And when they won't, then just getting to know their fears about it and trying to reassure them. And it turns out...

I think it was the second and third fears around the scary... around the judgment of the therapist and also the scary content. We have an advantage because I can say to him, as I did earlier in the session, "We don't need to know the details." And you saw... I don't really know what he's witnessing. I know something happened kindergarten, and then more as a teenager. But I don't really know exactly what it was because I don't need to know for him to heal. It's his self who needs to know it. So, I'm just trying to get the exile and the protectors to give enough space that his self can be in compassion while he's getting this horrible thing that happened to his little Rami. And as you can see, that can be a struggle, that can be hard for people to stay with it.

And you also saw that I'm a kind of bulldog when it comes to the part feeling completely witnessed. Because there were a couple times where I said, "Is that everything?" And he said, "I think so. I think it is." And again, that's a part just trying to truncate things. So I've gotten good at saying, "You know, I wanna hear from the part directly. Ask the part directly if it's done. If it feels like you really get it." And the reason for that is that if a client doesn't get the whole thing, then you'll have to go back over it at some point. The part isn't gonna feel complete. It's gonna have to take you back and see more. So I'm much of the opinion of, "Let's get it all out there this time, so we don't have to come back and the part can stay in the good place and we take it there." So that's why you saw me continue ...

Even when he says, "It's endless." You know, you know that's a part. Because I know it's not endless. I know these exiles. I know they're not gonna go on forever. So that should step back and so on. So, you know, almost anything... and this is hard for a lot of beginning of as therapists, almost anything that's not one of those C words is gonna be a part. And you just constantly are trying to protect the witnessing process and help the client continue. And then if the part won't stop interfering, then you go and you work with that and you tell the exile, "Pause. I'm witnessing." And that you'll come back to it.

And it's good to think about... even these big, puffed-up protectors that seem so dramatic and adult-like usually are pretty young. They're usually, at best, teenagers. And they're scared. They're like kids who've had to... like in ... what's the William Golding book? "Lord of the Flies." It's like kids who've had to be the warriors in an inner system. And what they really need is somebody to come in with some confidence, who's an adult, and just say, "It's okay." So a lot of my comments: "Just stay with it. Keep going. You're doing great" are

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aimed at the protectors, just reassuring them that what we're doing is really gonna help and that I'm there and that I know what I'm doing. And I'm saying it from a place of utter calm as you can see, which really helps. Calm and confidence while we're doing it.

And to do that: to be able to witness that kind of pain in another person and stay present and stay in self, you have to have a pretty good relationship with your own exiles. So that, as they get triggered by watching your client, they don't start to overwhelm you, or your protectors don't come in to get you away from them and then get extreme with your client. That's why in our trainings, we put a lot of emphasis on therapists doing their own work so that they can take clients to these kinds of places.

You also saw that anytime a client can't do something, like, early in this clip Rami said he wanted to hug the child, but he couldn't. So for me, automatically, it's not that he can't. It's just that there's a part blocking. So find the part that's blocking. Let's get that one to step out too. Okay, let's see. Get the whole story? Yah, and you saw me repeatedly say, "Just ask the boy. I don't wanna hear from any protectors. We're not gonna stop until that boy directly says he's done with the witnessing."

So, yah. Next time, I'll talk about the steps toward healing an exile. Again, the first two... we covered a little bit so far, which is this trusting relationship between the self and the exile. And the second one is the witnessing. And that's about where we stopped. And I'll show the last ... I think there's maybe eight minutes of this Rami video, where we do some unburdening and we do a retrieval. We take the boy to a safe place out of that scene, and then we do some unburdening, and we bring in protectors to check it out. So I'll show some more of the Rami video next time.

And let me go to some of these questions now. Okay, yah. So... here I am back live. And I'll go to some of our questions. Our live questions. So, let's see.

Kathleen asks, "Why is it that certain inner critics move the client into shut-down mode? Thanks."

Well, it's not just critics that do it but, just, protectors in general will try to shut down the work. If that's what you're asking, Kathleen. Just because they're afraid. They're afraid of the feelings that might come out or the information that might come out. If you're asking why critics move the client into shut-down mode by shaming them in their lives so that they shut down and they don't open to people. That's the reason. If there are certain critics, certain managers whose job it is to keep you safe by keeping you low-profile and keeping you small. And so we honor them too.

Chelsea: "What's your experience using IFS with those diagnosed with borderline personality issues?"

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Chelsea, we've had really good luck with people called borderline. I was talking at this conference with Gabor Maté about possibly writing or editing an alternative DSM, where each diagnosis we would look at from a non-pathologizing point of view. And to give you an example, worked with many borderline personality disordered clients, so-called, and they all were sex abuse survivors. And they had what I'll call a recruiting manager, whose job it is to find people and reel them in who can take care of their exiles. And those recruiting managers can be very manipulative at times and clever. And if you let them, they'll move into your house and live with you.

But on the other hand, they also have a big kind of a bouncer, protector who, as soon as you get close enough to potentially do any damage, will get enraged with you about something or another. And so you've got these two different... you've got a pull from the recruiting manager. And then the firefighter rage that blasts you so your head is spinning if you don't know that that's to be expected. And so that's just a IFS example of how we think about these kinds of things. Most of the DSM diagnosis really is just a fairly accurate description of the way protectors organize differently in different people when the person has been hurt badly and traumatized.

Annakey asks, "I've been thinking about where evil acts come from and how IFS explains evil. As I understand it, self is our good and divine core. So similar to the self, is there an evil core as well? Are there parts that just wanna destroy or hurt as their core intent? Or is all evil just protecting parts that have good intentions in their origin? When I see some awful actions, I find it hard to believe sometimes. So I'm kind of..."

Very interesting and foundational question. And I used to say and think that there weren't any evil, pure evil parts, that they're all protectors who get misled and carry burdens that drive them to do destructive things, until I started to run into these little bundles of seeming evil, who don't seem like parts in the sense that they just keep saying the same things over and over, and they don't seem to have any positive intention. And if you ask, they'll say they aren't parts. And if you ask more, they'll... so anyway, we call those unattached burdens. And generally, when you get a client to not fear them, they're not hard to send out of the system, just like other kinds of burdens are.

Bernard: "How do we work with clients who don't have much self energy and have a hard time accessing their protectors?"

Those are two different questions, Bernard. When you work with clients that initially don't have much access to self energy, mainly you are working with protectors. And you become that self to the system who talks to each protector directly and forms a trusting relationship with it and at some point, asks them to step back and let self emerge. And done that a lot with, for example, DID clients, who you wouldn't think, because of the horrific abuse they've suffered, would have any self energy. But it takes a long time... and their parts or protectors don't trust that it's safe to let self back in for reasons I

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won't get into just now. But once you do get them to separate, the same self shows up and takes over in the same way. So, when I saw that happening, back in the day, that was part of what convinced me that self is in everybody and can't be destroyed.

Karen: "Can you please talk more about this distractors?"

Well, distractors are protectors. And it's really a class of firefighter usually. And they're trying to distract you from the exiles so that you don't feel their feelings. And they'll do that in one form or another until the exiles calm down or locked up again and the coast is clear.

Anonymous: "If you agree that protector is right, that situation is limited, hope, like with someone who's very ill or dying, how would the work be different or the same?"

Oh, I see. So if the situation is pretty hopeless, how do you work? I've worked with people who are dying or very ill. And just getting them to take care of the parts that are scared or the parts that do feel hopeless, and getting more access to self as they make this transition is very, very, very comforting. And I believe that that's some of what the psilocybin does that you might've heard about with the dying. It accesses self and you kinda get that 30,000 foot view of life and get much more perspective. And so then, I do that kind of work. And it's a lot of, just, comforting protectors and exiles.

Norma: "How do you prioritize which protector to work with when there are several competing?"

That's a good question, Norma. So my tendency is to start with critics because I find that if you start with other parts, the critics just keep interfering. Either critics or thinking parts are also a good place to start because they'll keep interfering if you don't work with them at first. Or if there's a protector that the system fears a lot, I might go to that one first. Like, a suicidal part. Just because, as long as it's looming over the whole work, it is kind of a governor about... a regulator about how much you can do and how vulnerable the client will be because they're so afraid of triggering that.

Kathleen: "You ever worked with someone who's been a victim of mind-control programming? My understanding is that ritual abuse survivors who have also been victims of mind-control programming have parts that have been programmed to hurt, kill therapists, or anyone who gets too close to the truth. I'm wondering if you have any experience with that? And know even those parts will not actually hurt you."

Kathleen, I've worked with a lot of different kind of ritual, cult ritual abuse survivors, but I haven't run into that per se. I haven't run into parts who have been programmed to kill me, so I can't really speak to that.

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Xena: "Do you view psychosis as a protector in this model?"

Well, I view psychosis the way I view migraine headaches or other kinds of things that the clients have predispositions for that are biochemical. ut parts know about them and can push that button when they need to. And at our annual conference this year, I'm gonna present on IFS and schizophrenia, for example. And I'll show some video of working with a 24-year-old kid, who's been hospitalized multiple times for paranoia. And we go to the paranoid part. And it's a protector. And we work with it and it's no longer paranoid. And now it's just called the vigilant part. So, anyway...

Ariel: "Can common protectors and responses be posted or.. if not already there?"

You know what, Ariel? All of that is listed in a book I did with Frank Anderson and Martha Sweezy recently. The pesi, p-e-s-i cells. And it's a ... I forget the title of it. Should know that. ut it's a manual for using IFS with trauma. And so, I would steer you toward it.

Norma: "How do you tell that the part can take this experience and continue?"

So, yah. That's an important question, Norma. And sometimes it's a little dicey. Not that the part can take it, because self can always take it. And whenever they don't think they can, it's usually parts that are just scared. ut, at what point do you need to stop and reassure those parts, rather than just ask them to step back? Is more the question. And, in the process of doing that, at what point do you need to ask the exile that's flooding to scale it back a little bit? And it's a bit of a judgment call, but most of the time I'm asking people how they're doing and, you know, how do they feel toward the part now. And if I get an answer to that question, I know there's still enough self even if they look totally overwhelmed. ecause if they're totally overwhelmed, they'll say, "I am the part. I don't feel toward it. I just am it." Okay?

Norma: "How do you tell... " Oh, okay.

Elizabeth: "The video with Rami is amazing, especially when the 3-year-old part sensed what was coming in the future to the teenager. Is that what he said?"

Yah, that is what he said.

"Does this happen often?"

I haven't run into that very often. I was a little thrown by that too. Okay... somebody's at my door.

Diane: " eautiful video to watch. Did you know to stay with the exile... " Oh,

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yah.

Richard: "Are there parts other than frefghters and managers and exiles and how did they arise?"

There are lots of parts that aren't in... ft those categories because they haven't been burdened so much. And they're just in their naturally malleable state. They don't arise. You're just born with them.

Laurie: "What if a session length doesn't allow for completng the witness session. Do you pick up... "

Yes you do, Laurie. You pick up where you lef of the next session. And ideally, yah... and you don't forget. You have to remind the client.

Neilya: "What is a simple way to apply today's learning with clients if we haven't done level one?"

That's a long queston. I don't have tme, Neilya.

Michael...

One second.

Okay. I've got to go, everybody. I'll see you in a month. Okay. uh-bye.