

Therapist Parts

Toni Herbine-Blank: Welcome back, everyone. In this segment, I'm going to be talking to you about your parts, because in this model, understanding who you are and who's in the therapist's chair is key to the un-blending process and helping you access self-energy. It's also key in you being able to access the wisdom of your parts without the burdens and the reactivity of your parts. Because, you know, I love my therapist parts, I have to say. I love those parts of me that went to school, that learned a lot about theory, that put things together, that is always ... Those parts of me that are always learning and can be helpful to my clients if they are in an un-blended state.

In order to get the wisdom of those parts, I need to know who they are and I need to understand their reactivity. When I'm teaching students about therapist parts, I like to break it down into two different categories of parts. The first I call, "Parts of the therapist." These are our parts whose personal history begins to get activated in the face of listening to a client's personal history. In other words, if I'm working with a client, and they happen to be going through the same thing that I am at any given moment, or they have a history that's similar to mine, I might have a part of me that starts to get activated as it begins to listen to the client's story.

Those tend, in my system anyway, to be younger parts, parts that have been wounded similarly perhaps to my client, or parts of me that are over-empathizing with the clients, or parts that move into a care-taking role because it's hard for me to think about what happened to me, and now I'm listening again to my client. I think we've all been there, and that this is probably very familiar to you. You might not have slowed yourself down to begin to really listen to what's happening to that part, and why it's surfacing right now, and what does it need from you in order to stay un-blended. Often, these parts, if exiles are getting triggered, the protective parts that are trying to take care of your own exiles will now start to want to engage and either move the client with your agenda, or take care of the client because your own material is getting activated.

This is something that you really want to pay close attention to. I think that it's very easy to get a blind spot here, especially if you have parts that are living in the shadows, that haven't been acknowledged yet, but get triggered with your clients. That's the place where they come up. Those would be your history, your personal history that is getting activated in a therapy session. The other set of therapist parts are those parts of us that I was just talking about, the trained expert, the parts that got the degrees, that have done the research, that have read the research, that have a lot of good theory on board, and the parts of us that have concepts and judgments, and think that we know where the client should be going.

These are other parts that we really want to be watchful of, because if they come up, and they get blended with you, and you don't have awareness, then you're going to begin to do therapy from these parts, and in our model, will not be in the service of the client un-blending and accessing their own inner wisdom. We have to let go of a few things when we're doing IFS

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therapy, and one of them is being the expert. When I got this invitation in my level one training, it was like breathing a huge sigh of relief. I got to say, "Okay, I don't have to try to control this. I don't have to try to run this show. My job here is to get un-blended and be a guide for my client. I do not have to work so hard."

I was an extremely hard-working therapist by the time I got to IFS, so this was a huge relief to my therapist parts. I was able to say to them, and even visualize this for many years, "Everybody go get in the beach chair and put your feet in the water and just relax. If I need you, I will call on you." Because again, I love these parts, and they're wise, and they do have wisdom, and they tap into things, and they might have information for us about what's going on in the therapy room, and that's great to be able to access that. It's not great when they take over, because if they're taking over, it means that they're no longer trusting your self or the self of the client.

Another thing that we have to let go of is a rigid roadmap. We've taught you a roadmap. We've taught you about the six F's. IFS is an organic and fluid model where we are following the client. We are following the client, and I think that that does take ... It's one of the artistries of IFS, and it's one of the nuances of IFS. Even though you have that roadmap, at some points you're going to have to let it go, because the client is taking you from this F, to another F, but not the F that comes right after it. Being able to be fluid and ... What's the word I want? Fluid and non-rigid and not attached to where you think that you are going.

That's the next one, which is your agenda. One of the things that I learned, which was also really great in IFS is that one and one does not equal two. I learned it over, and over, and over again, and was surprised for a long time, and finally I got it, finally I got it in my system that one and one does not actually equal two. What I mean by that is that a client would start presenting with an issue, and presenting with certain parts, and I would have a therapist part that would say, "Oh, I know where we're going." One of the invitations to IFS therapists is to ask that part to step back, because when someone starts out on a trail head, we actually don't know where they're going to end up, and where they're going to end up is exactly where they need to be if we can get our agenda out of the way.

Even though it can be really difficult, especially if you're working with some very extreme situations, to want to think you know what the outcome will be, to ask those parts to give you a little space so that you can find out from the client where they're actually going. I have a term that I've used in this program, and that I use with students all the time, which is, "Hold it lightly." Because you may be right about where you're going, but you may not be right. If you can stay open to the idea that you might not be right, you'll be surprised again, and again, and again, and a kind of like jaw-dropping surprise if you're willing to trust the process and allow your client to lead you.

Just to reiterate, you have parts, you have parts that get triggered from your own history and your childhood. You have therapist parts that are trained

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experts that are going to have a lot of good theory, they're going to have concepts, that have judgments, that are going to want to lead and guide your client. These are some of the things that you're going to need to understand inside of yourself, both the therapist parts and the parts of the therapist, and begin to let go of your agenda. In the next segment, I'm going to be guiding you through a meditation where you're going to get to start to get to know maybe some of your parts, your therapist parts, in a very different way. I'll look forward to seeing you then.