

Direct Access¹

Direct access is a method by which the therapist, from the Self, interacts directly with and dialogues with client parts. This can be used to:

- Help facilitate unblending when the client has limited or no access to Self;
- Directly develop relationships between the therapist and client parts;
- Facilitate and model a way by which the client can witness/experience a Self to part relationship (recognizing the the client's Self also witnesses the interaction);
- Talk to a part who either won't talk to the client's Self, won't unblend to allow client Self access, or who blocks the client Self-to-part process; and
- Speak directly to parts that otherwise overwhelm the system or are deeply feared by other parts - particularly true for clients with complex or extreme trauma.

Benefits² of direct access include:

- Parts can find ways of expressing themselves in a way that can be understood and appreciated, by them, other parts, and the client's Self;
- We can begin to slow down the process to allow for parts that otherwise distract or take over;
- Experience the Self-to-part relationship, first between therapist and part, then client and part;
- Other parts can witness the interaction and see the benefits of trusting the Self; and
- Parts can be given the space to articulate their motives and agendas.

Generally speaking there are two types of direct access:

Implicit - therapist engages with client parts in a way that doesn't recognize the client by name or speak in terms of it being a part. In effect, we are speaking to the client AS IF they are the part. This is typically used when client has little or no access to Self (highly blended), or states that it is distracting or doesn't make sense to speak about them in the 3rd person.

Explicit - here we engage with the client and reference the client by name: e.g. "How do you help Sally, or what is it you do for Sally." The intent is to get to know the part and help it feel validated/understood so that we again might have more access to the client's Self. It is explicit in that we are speaking to the part as a part, and are acknowledging that in our choice of language. We use explicit access when client has some access to, or understanding of Self, and seems comfortable with language that refers to them by name to help with the unblending.

In-Sight vs. Direct Access

	In-Sight	Direct Access	
	Client's Self is available	Client's Self is not available	Avoid
Therapist Self is Available	Client's Self to client parts	Therapist Self to client parts	Client part to client part (unless invited)
Therapist Self is Available	Therapist Self to client's Self		Therapist parts to client parts

¹ Source: Schwartz, Richard C., Sweezy, Martha, Internal Family Systems Therapy - Second Addition, p. 139, Sima Hate, 2000

² Disadvantages include it takes longer; risks bypassing protectors; doesn't promote attachment to client's Self