

IFS Principles (a work in progress :o)

The following are some basic principles of the IFS model, which underlie the process for which we do this work.

- All parts are welcome.
- You never make a part step aside or separate, you only ask (and it helps to let parts know that if they have concerns as we go through the process that they are welcome to voice their concerns or ask us to slow down or stop the process)
- All parts have positive intent at their core and ultimately want only the best for you. If they appear to have negative intent, they are using strategies that, on some level, made sense at some point in their past but are no longer effective. Getting inside their world and understanding the origin of those strategies is a key step in helping them adopt a more effective strategy.
- Parts will cooperate once their fears are addressed and once they can feel you in Self and understand your intentions.
- It isn't possible to do it wrong when working on yourself using IFS. Even if your process is completely blocked, it just means that a Protector is stopping the process for some reason. You access that Protector and find out why it is behaving that way.
- The fastest way to resolve an issue is to work slowly, patiently and respectfully with all parts involved.
- Managers and Firefighters are often in conflict (polarized), the former is trying to preemptively avoid overwhelm and traumatizing, the latter reacting to what it sees as an imminent threat; understanding this polarization is key to untangling and unblending
- When you make an agreement or contract with a part to give space or not overwhelm, it will abide by its agreement unless it senses you are not in Self
- Parts are like fractals of the whole self, they are a sub-personality with feelings, thoughts and beliefs that have been conditioned over time
- What may have been adaptive to a protector at one point in time can become maladaptive over time.
- Many parts, especially Firefighters and Exiles, don't have a sense of present time, space, and circumstances. They are often acting as though time had stood still and parts that have been wounded are still in a vulnerable and susceptible to reinjury.
- Protectors and Exiles are often skeptical and take time to build trust with the client's Self. It is best to validate the trust, even encourage it to allow the part to know that we are not trying to get rid of it.
- Skeptical parts usually respond well to "somatic empathy", when you show a part where you feel it in the body, it can often break through resistance and mistrust.

Source: Self Therapy Workbook, Bonnie Weiss; Internal Family Systems Therapy, Richard Schwartz and Martha Sweezy, Stuff I learned along the way, Tom Cannon