

An Outline of the Internal Family Systems Model

(Adapted from "An outline - Dr. R. Schwartz")

Basic Assumptions

- A. Everyone has a Self and the Self can and should lead the individual's internal system.
- B. It is the nature of the personality to be subdivided into sub-personalities or "parts."
- C. The intention of each part is something positive for the individual.

Overall Goals of the Work

- A. To achieve balance, harmony and peace within the system
- B. To differentiate and elevate the Self so it can be an effective leader in the system
- C. When the Self is in the lead, the parts will provide input to the Self, but will respect the leadership and ultimate decision making of the Self

Self

- A. Everyone has a Self
- B. The Self is competent, compassionate, self-assured, relaxed, creative, curious, and courageous. The Self can be thought of as one's best or highest Self and can and should lead the internal system. People describe a feeling of being "centered" in Self.
- C. Different level of entity than the parts - the "you" that the parts are talking to.

Parts

- A. Sub-personalities or aspects of our personality that interact internally in similar ways to the ways that people interact
- B. Parts may be experienced in any number of ways - thoughts, feelings, sensations, internal voices
- C. All parts want something positive for the individual and will use a variety of strategies to gain influence within the internal system
- D. Parts which become extreme are carrying "burdens" such as extreme beliefs and feelings. A part can be helped to "unburden" and return to its natural balance
- E. Parts which have lost trust in the leadership of the Self will "blend" with or take over the Self

General Groups of Parts

A. Exiles: Motivation - re-enter the system (come home)

1. Young parts that have had negative experiences and often become isolated from the rest of the system in an effort to protect the individual from the big feelings (pain, sadness, fear, etc.) of these parts.
2. If exiled, a part can become increasingly extreme and desperate in an effort to be cared for and get their story told and can leave the individual feeling fragile and vulnerable

B. Managers: Motivation - maintain Status Quo (keep exiles away)

1. Parts that run the day-to-day life of the individual
2. Attempt to keep the individual in control of every situation and relationship in an effort to protect parts from feeling any hurt or rejection
3. Can do this in any number of ways or through a combination of parts - striving, controlling, evaluating, caretaking, terrorizing, etc.
4. Are responsible for the “critical voice” in the system

C. Firefighters: Motivation: to keep exiles away

1. Group of parts that react when Exiles are activated in an effort to control and extinguish their feelings and...
2. Can do this in any number of ways including: drug or alcohol use, Self-mutilation (cutting), binge-eating, sex binges, workaholism, refusal to relax

When the Self brings its compassionate loving attention to the parts it becomes possible for them to be heard and release the burdens they are carrying.

With the Self in the lead, greater peace is experienced.