

TMFRS

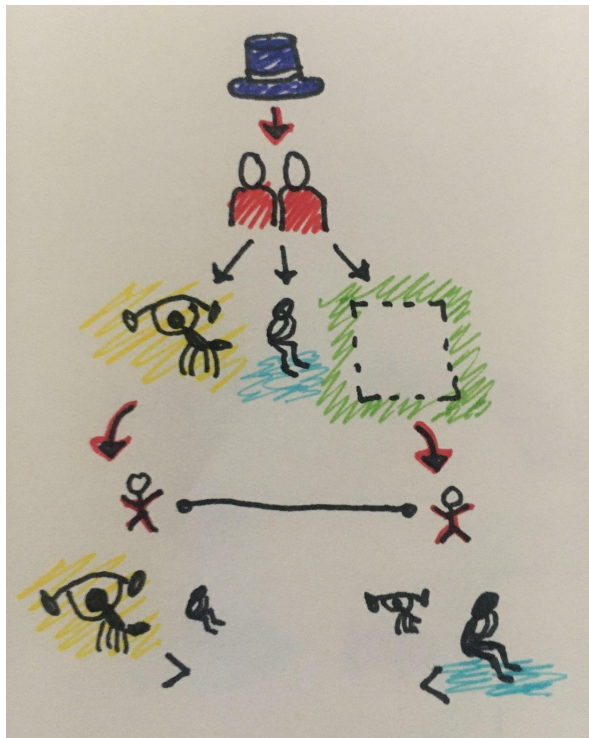
LET'S MAKE SENSE OF YER STUPID FUCKING BRAIN

IFS | Getting Started YerSelf

The words sound dumb, but the application will relieve you.

Winter 2023

Who's fighting who... Inside of you? For what?



Today, I thought we could use to talk a bit more about the ways to work with our parts through IFS. Because there's a lot of instant relief available from this framework that doesn't include seeing an IFS level 3 practitioner or getting to the very bottom of our systems.

In my experience, every single discovery of a manager/protector, exile, or distractor part has been incredibly revealing, relieving, and supportive of turning a new leaf.

It's the route to self-acceptance, one bit of your brain at a time.

So let's talk about some of the easy ways to start working with your internal system, that offer insta-relief.

Shadow parts vs sunlit parts

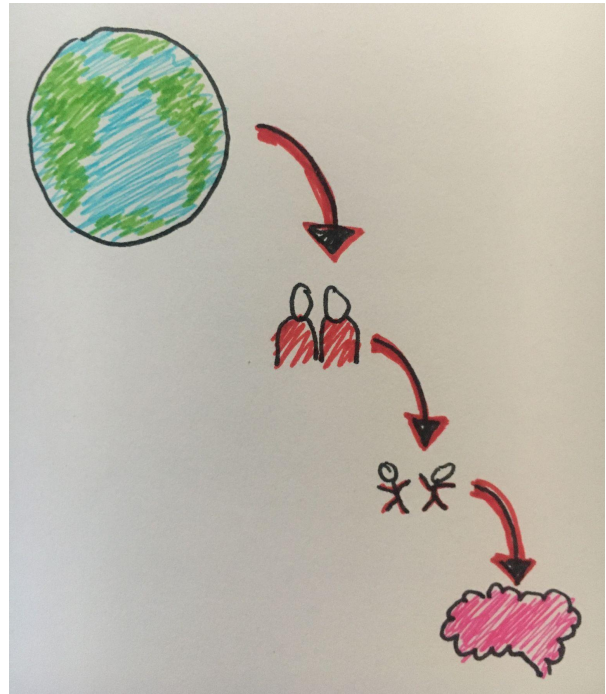
So inherent in this conversation we've been having about IFS is the fact that we like some of our parts and hate some of our parts. But they're all aspects of US.

The difference between light and dark parts is how we assess them. We have these analyses based on what society has dictated to us so far, rather than some universal truth about what's "good" or "bad." And therefore we might be demonizing parts of us, refusing to accept them, for no definitive reason. Just judgments and assumptions.

We put managers and protectors into their lofty roles because at some point we assessed them as being "good" or "correct." But that was probably based on how we needed to function in our larger social systems.

We put our exiles in dank dungeons, far away from our consciousness, because we determined they were "bad" or "unnecessary" or "too much hassle to deal with." But, again, those were judgments drawn from what we were told directly or indirectly by society. "You're too sensitive" said the world. Or, "this is too much for us to bother with when we have other shit to do" we said unto ourselves, from our manager parts.

And we built distractor parts that somehow fall into the gap in between acceptable and unacceptable. They're not POSITIVE behaviors, but they aren't socially scorned or destructive ENOUGH (at first) to be non-options.



So, we have a lot of assessments about these parts of us, calling them "good" and "bad," which stop us from really engaging with them so we can see what's going on and why.

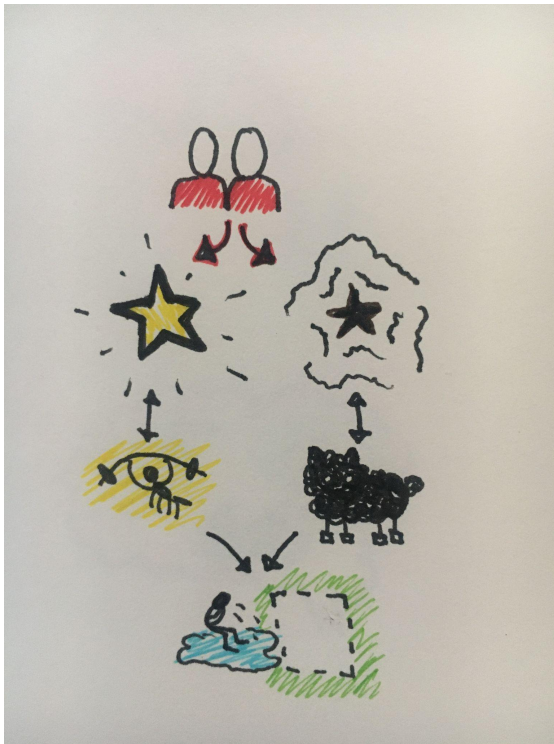
And we often try to develop "Gooder" parts to lord over the "not so good" parts. Which only drives both parts into destructive territory, as the whole system is knocked out of balance.

The thing is, we can't really assess these parts - good or bad - without looking at their oppositional counterparts.

How do you say... There is no light without dark. It's the contrast that makes both things exist, right?

Well, there is no preferred part without having less favored ones. There is no chosen survival strategy without having a lot of rejected ones that we consider "absolutely non-options." You don't know what you like until you know what you don't like. You don't know who you're supposed to be or how you're supposed to operate in the world, unless you know who you're NOT allowed to be or how to operate in the world.

Know what I'm saying?



So, our parts are often overcompensations for one another. And they can't be appreciated or accepted if we refuse to see the other side of the coin. We can't get in touch with and accept all of our parts unless we're willing to see the gold-star pieces AND the shadow sides of us. And how they relate to one another.

For instance, if you've got a hardworking stereotypical manager part - a git shit done part like I have - you probably also have a "do absolutely nothing" part. A depressive part. That you've been working to neutralize or negate. Hence, now this overdrive guy exists and has gotten power hungry.

Maybe you drafted that depression part from your early experiences and environment. It wasn't allowed for you to go out and accomplish, because that didn't mesh with the rest of the system. So, you followed the family's direction and shut down

pieces of your psyche to be a functioning part of that dysfunctional network.

Then, you got into the rest of the world and found out that Depressive Manager part wasn't smiled upon. The broader social system demanded that you do-do-do rather than shut down.

SO, you drafted that git shit done guy to be the opposite of everything that was being spat upon. NOW, it feels like the overworking busy bee is the GOOD part, and you over-rely on it. Pushing the depressive part out of your awareness and operating instructions, as much as possible.

The thing is, getting in touch with both and understanding the ways they react to each other is how we reach a point of self-acceptance. Otherwise we're just going to keep pushing one away while continually overemphasizing the other. And that Exiled part will still show his face now and again, when we least desire it.

So. Working with parts, we have to be open to seeing and acknowledging the developmental history of ALL the pieces of our brains. One will inform you about the existence and functionality of the others - even if they're directly oppositional. Maybe ESPECIALLY if they're directly oppositional.

Starting to work with your managers and exiles first.

Our managers and protectors first appear to be the golden children of our brains. I mean, we might really fucking hate them, but we still know that we rely on them to keep moving along in life. So we're protective of our protectors, even if it's on a subconscious level such as feeling "my self-criticism and perfectionistic manager part keeps me safe from making mistakes."

We're reluctant to see the BAD in what we've deemed GOOD. And we're even more reluctant to see the GOOD in what we've deemed BAD. But if you start getting in touch with those Managers, I think you'll find that double edged sword.

One strategy isn't correct. BOTH of them are relevant and valuable. The real healing comes from finding the gray tones in between the two, and being able to shift from one state to the other, as life dictates, without either getting "stuck" in gear.

And those realizations will get you closer into contact with your Exiles.

You can first note the positive sides of the managers - the Git Shit Done part keeps me fed and housed, so we need that. Then note the negative implications they *actually* have on your system

- but I'm miserable in that food-filled home, because I don't feel like my real self and I'm fucking tired of pretending to be what the world demands of me.

And you'll find that your Exiles live on the other side of that prainbow bridge.

So are any of the parts bad? Should they be shut down, shamed, and ignored? Or should you see them as being interconnected, neutral, responses to the world that altogether culminate in you being the you who you are today?



And if you're unhappy with the you who you are today... Is it the parts, themselves, to blame? Or the relationships BETWEEN them, which contain a lot of judgment that you can't unsee in this moment?

Let's lose the judgment of our parts as much as we can, and instead use those preliminary assertions to better comprehend how "good" and "bad" self-assessments over time have formed contradicting, counteractive, parts that all have their own functions.

Then we take those functions and figure out how to actually apply them to life. Cuz, yeah, sometimes you need to get out there and thrash against your circumstances... and sometimes, you just need to shut off all the extra effort to rest. Neither is bad. Until you get stuck in one, as you insist the other is a nasty person for you to be.

Trailheads.

Remember, trailheads are the emotions, thoughts, memories, or external stimulation events that trigger your parts into action or awareness. They lead from one innocuous event to yer brain kicking wholly into a part, or they simply give that part more power so you can actually make contact with it.

So, we use trailheads to dig beneath the layers of protector parts and get to the real roots of our polarized brain operations.

For me, the most powerful trailheads are emotions. But that's because I experience my world through feeling... unless it's too overwhelming to feel and then I shut that shit off completely, thanks to a manager part or five.

That means, sometimes I have to trigger my own emotions in order to access them. In order to access my parts. And THAT can be done with any of the senses.

I'll suggest the audible route of listening to music to you, since that's been a recurring theme lately. But you can also use visuals, smells, tastes, and skin-perceptions of feeling.

If you ARE in touch with and in control of your emotions, you can jump right to fostering a particular feeling in your body and tracing that back to other times when you had similar vibes. Just going to assume most of us find that to be a lofty and laughable goal, unless we're talking about the deep dark emotions that we're trying to avoid all the time.

But that doesn't mean we SHOULD avoid them.

Just like our painful associations with a certain song, photograph, food item, olfactory stimulus, or physical condition shouldn't necessarily be avoided for the mental rabbit hole it could throw us down.

In fact, all of those connections are powerful ways to get into your most ignored parts. To remember that they still exist and investigate the information that they contain.

Uncomfortable? Yes. But full of data. And the key to opening the door to your own adaptive brain developments.

So. Lean in to stimulation that feels good, bad, or otherwise. Buuuut probably, especially, the bad-feeling ones, if you really want to do inner work. If you really want to become aware of your parts so you can heal them.

Start the ball rolling with a stimulatory event. An image, a sound, a smell, a feeling. Notice what you feel, deeply, on your insides. And then... the thing none of us want to do, and that's why we're in this mess in the first place... sit with the emotion and investigate it. Try to ride the waves as it runs its course.

Be curious about it, knowing that this is a sensation you've always been carrying and you'll continue to carry it unless you work this out. And know that it'll work itself out, if you just let it.

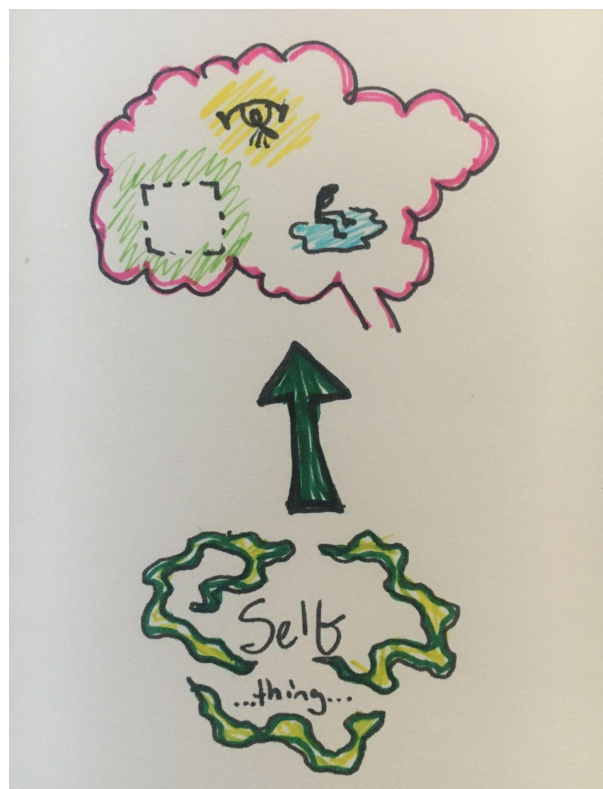
While doing that, let all the associated memories come up with it. Just allow them. You might Brainspot a bit to get further into that state of mind.

Remember who you were when all these things went down. And then try to contextualize it. What was happening, more broadly? What were you adapting to? How did this strategy help? How has it ultimately been hurting you? What information is missing from this painful place, knowing that it's stuck in a prior time and hasn't been updated with the past many years of informational downloads?

And with all of that inner recognition and re-education... Can you shift that "bad feeling" to a neutral place, with these perspective rewritings?

This is how we NOTICE our parts, then ACCEPT our parts for developing in the first place, and then finally HEAL our parts with new information and broader, updated, outlooks.

Start with trailheads so you can make contact. Gather all the information you can from that part of your brain. Then give it new data to work with, from your calm, cool, compassionate Self place... which has a whole lifetime of knowledge (or, in my views, many lifetimes of knowledge) to even the scales and correct the corrupted, self-hating, perspective contained in that part.



You can get a lot of work done just by: Asking parts to step aside

So, one of the big questions that continues to be brought up in the community is “how to meditate.”

And, look, we can go through MORE meditation prep and practices... but if the ten episodes on that shit hasn't helped so far, I really don't know what else can be said by this mouth, at least.

What else can we really do here, as far as getting into an effective meditational routine?

Well... the simple answer that sidesteps all of the usual meditation advice? Is to just ask your parts to shut the fuck up.

You know, kindly.

Here's the thing. If your parts are essentially your brain programs. And your brain programs are what we're trying to quiet to reach a meditative state. Which they are. That's the goal, just to separate our Selves from our Brains, so we can supervise and manage the organ better.

Then... logic would reason we can just ask our parts to be silent for a minute, get out of our brain chatter, and experience something else.

The Self, you might say. A meditational space, you could also call it. But whatever you prefer, it's just a place where we can WATCH our brains doing their thing, but we aren't identifying AS our brains. We aren't our thoughts, we're observing them and letting them go.

We're witnessing the parts chattering, themselves, and amongst each other. Without engaging with the parts.



And we CAN actually do that. We CAN just ask that our parts take a coffee break, so we can observe our brains without being our brains. And it does actually work.

Take a deep breath, feel into the bottoms of your feet, and ask your brain if it can get quiet for a few seconds. Just a few seconds. Can

your manager parts stop managing for just a beat? Can they loosen their grip and lay down their gripes, for any amount of time?

And if so, can you sit in that space, and acknowledge what else comes up while the loudest voices in the crew shut their flapping mouths?

What you'll probably find is, 1) the managers do not want to let go of control. As you try to do this, you'll have resistance and assorted thoughts that pop up to distract you. So, can you speak to the manager from your Self place to reassure it that the bill can wait ten minutes? You aren't going to forget? And then drop back into mental silence again?

And 2) if you CAN get your managers to lay down their clipboards, there will probably be exiles and distractors on the other side. Painful shit starts coming up, quickly, and your brain will try to react with numbing comforts and distractions. "Hey, I'm actually starving, I better go get a snack!" your brain might suddenly volley at you.

Instead, can you nicely convince your brain that it isn't going to explode if you sit here in discomfort for 10 seconds? Literally, can you take just 10 fucking seconds of this, without acting? The answer is Yes. You've been through a lifetime of pain, you can take 10 seconds. You can do anything for 10 seconds.

But, practice it.

You'll get proficient at asking - seriously, I mean, in your head, ASKING - the whole crew to simmer down and lay down their arms. Then, you can just observe them from a place other than your judgmental and flighty brain.

And boom, you're meditating. You're getting closer to your Self place, without your brain drawing all the power or convincing you that it's concerns are the end-all-be-all.

That's it. Just ASK your parts to step aside for a beat. And then extend that time with practice. It works. Shockingly effectively.

So make sure you're in a safe, quiet, nontriggering place. And then engage with them the same way you'd engage with a trustable loved one. "Hey, I'm trying to work on something else right now, could you pause this communication for a little while and I'll come back to you when I'm done and capable of giving you my full attention again?"

And see if it works for you, with some practice, as easily as it's been working for some other Motherfuckers.

Down with overthinking, focus on sensing and knowing.

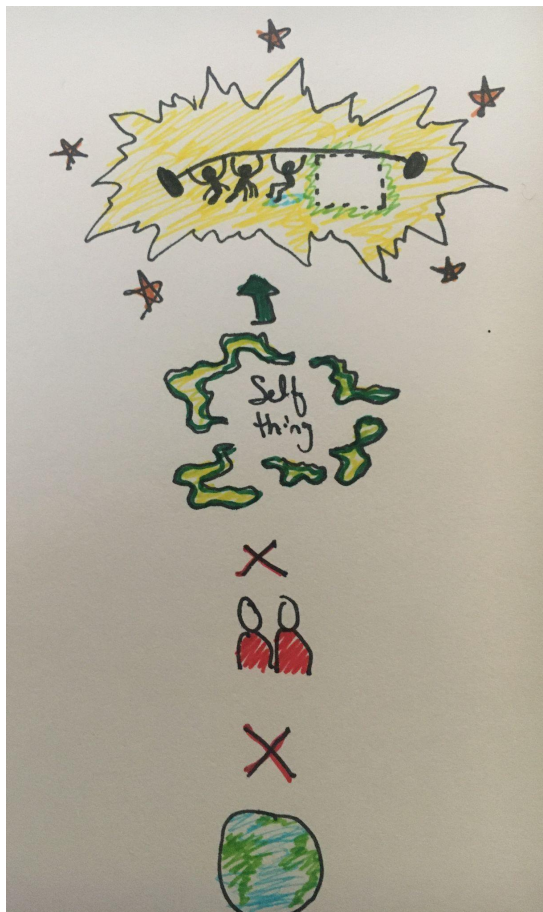
If you can convince your parts to chatter less. If you can use that quiet space you create to get in touch with your Big S Self. And then eventually use the Big S Self to communicate with the parts from a balanced, calm, confident, wildly-perspectived, and meditation-like place...

Then you start healing your brain, and developing a more cohesive, communicative, and functional system. Getting all the components of the car working together, so that vehicle can leave the garage and stop stalling out mid-trip.

And you'll find something else... a lot less obsession and worry. Because you'll stop relying on your PARTS, which are proactive and reactive cognitive programs that'll fill your head with overanalysis in ten different directions.

Instead of always being trapped in your THOUGHTS, you'll reach a place of KNOWING.

SENSING what's happening in your world, and how that's impacting your inner existence. And KNOWING what it all means, what you should do next, how it fits into your larger story.



Here's my easy rule.

THINKING comes from the head. KNOWING comes from the guts. What you KNOW doesn't take brain-searching to get to the answer, it bubbles up from down below without pause. If I asked "what color is the sky?" you wouldn't have to scan your head for the correct response. You just... KNOW. Seemingly, from somewhere else.

So, get in touch with that guttural place - the Self place - and you won't endlessly spin your wheels anymore. When you catch yourself doing it, overthinking by default, (like an automated part of a car), you can easily talk that part down again.

If you're in touch with your Self, the answer WILL come. Your brain has a lot more room for subconscious processing, for starters, if you aren't

consciously running your head into a wall over and over and over again. So it can solve your life mysteries while you go about your day, and the answer will just erupt when you least expect it. Shower thoughts, for instance.

So. Less thinking. More knowing. More goddamn peace and self-confidence.

Simply by quieting our parts rather than letting them run loose through the same old patterns, over and over and over again. That's what you can look forward to through doing this parts work, and that's how you really make decisions in life... if you're me... rather than getting lost in the weeds.

Freedom from compulsions

If you work with your parts and get in touch with that Self thing, you won't find yourself stuck in the same patterns anymore. Not by sheer will, just... naturally. Without thinking or putting effort into it.

Obviously, we just talked about the issue with obsessive thinking and brain-spawned anxiety. We've also talked about depression, self-critique, and delusion as aspects of prominent manager templates. And, of course, there are the distractor tactics of things like smoking, drinking, disordered eating, self-harm, digitally disassociating, human escapism, high risk sexual behaviors, and suicidal ideation.

Well... none of those will be enormous thorns in your side anymore, when you can quiet the parts and think clearly, with Self direction.

Understand your impulses and current programming through investigating those nooks and crannies without self-judgment. Keep the brain quiet and free from overthinking while you patiently and confidently wait for problem solving answers to chime in, seemingly, out of thin air.

And you won't be so impulsive or compulsive anymore. Because you won't be trying to outrun your own brain.

Remember, we don't want to create MORE manager parts. And I think that's the hole we most often fall into when we're trying to make change.

We say “okay, I just WON’T DO THIS ANYMORE” and successfully create a NEW part that attempts to shut down some older and more well established ones. And then wonder why it feels exhausting and doomed to fail, time and time again.

Well, change doesn’t happen FROM the brain, Fuckers. It happens TO the brain, by being aware and operating from somewhere else.

You can cram all this information into your head. You can try to use logic and reason to change your brain patterns. But does it WORK?

Not really. It just makes you overthink how you overthink and you continue micromanaging yourself. And that shit will burn you out without making any lasting progress, because you’re not really addressing any of the issues - you’re just trying to think your way out of them.

Remember, we don’t want to keep shutting parts of our brains DOWN, that’ll make them rear back up someday with even more strength.

Distractors have personalities too

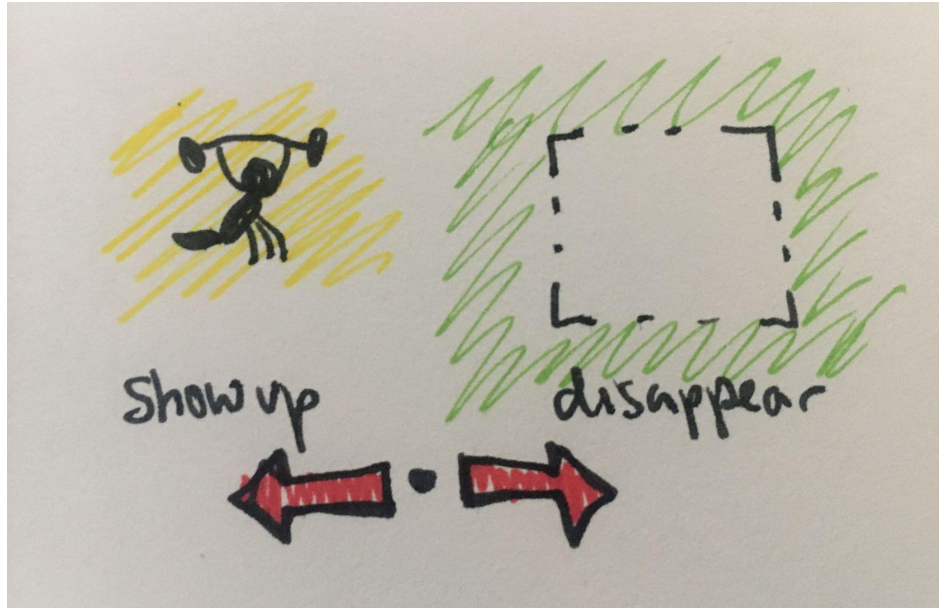
We’ve worked really hard to understand managers and exiles by now, right? They’re pretty easy to spot and investigate, if we’re open to seeing the light and dark sides of them and how those parts formed to counteract the unwanted aspects of ourselves.

But what we have some trouble with contacting, in most cases? Is the distractor parts.

They seem to be dopamine-fueled junkies, inserting themselves into our lives to placate our systems and offer some quick fixes, without any thought or further intention.

But are they *really*?

Hell nah, they’re just like all our other parts. They have full experiences locked inside of them. Real personalities and portions of your life. And they exist for a reason, which is probably more specific than “to feel better.”



Like, “to feel better... in *what circumstances?*” What is THIS distractor trying to treat, versus THIS distractor over here? And how did they come to exist, with these patterned behavioral reactions, in the first place?

Distractors aren't stupid, senseless, adaptations. They all have a reason, a function, and a purpose. Understanding all of that will help to correct the perspective and chosen strategy of that distractor part, and then you can replace the behavior that it pushes with one that's more positive for the whole system.

So something I've been working on is tracing my distractor bad habits back to their origins and really getting in touch with those situations. Understanding my cognitions at the time, the distress I was experiencing, and how some behavior worked to numb that uncomfortable feeling or thought pattern.

I've realized, there were explicit, conscious, decisions I made in my younger years that put these bad habits into place as escape routes. And now, I just operate on those old patterns subconsciously when I sense the same variety of distress or similar circumstances.

For instance? Smoking cigarettes?

I know *exactly* when that went from a social fitting in habit to a self-destructive coping one. It was a conscious decision when I was 1) working retail and being terrorized by the general public as well as management and generally overworking as a glorified robot. And 2) when the pain of all that was too great to bear, and the idea of dying early was preferable.

Under those circumstances I consciously assessed “eh, fuckit, this tobacco stick is less harmful than sitting in the pain of these situations, let me light up real quick.” And it WAS a pointed, logical, choice, back at age 16 or something, that I fully reasoned through at least once.

Which is to say, that part may not have been running through the full line of reasoning ever again, once the pattern was established. THEN it just felt like a brainless, automatic, event that took place.

So, my cigarette habit is tied to overworking, feeling like a cog in a machine, frustration, and long-game suicidal ideation.

And now, understanding that, I can both talk to the part to let it know that a fucking Marlboro never fixed any of those issues... AND be more aware of the underlying currents that often lead to buying a pack of reds and smoking til my lungs hurt, so I can preemptively get into my Self place to manage that part before it steamrolls me.

Release the burdens of your parts - even your distractors - by understanding where they came from and what they historically have done for you... maybe... decades ago.

And again, you'll find yourself much freer from compulsory behaviors that you'd otherwise expend all your energy just trying to “shut off” and manage.

When you're not sure what else to do... just dip into your Self place, get out of your brain, and get freedom from your prior programming. Then, explore that programming without engaging with it, and draft yourself whole new brain. A working, functional, you-directed, system.

That's the real power of IFS.

Reflection Q's

Do you have parts of yourself that you judge as "good" or "bad"?

Why do you feel this way about them? What are the originating circumstances for those judgements? Are those judgments true to YOU? Or imparted by others?

Do you see connections between your "good" and "bad" parts? Do they counteract / contradict one another? Is "good" compensating for assumptions of "bad"? How? And can you find gray tones between the light and dark strategies you've programmed?

Can you get in touch with your exiles and managers?

What causes you pain, anxiety, loneliness, fear? (Exiles). What events go along with those internal reactions, presently and historically? What makes you avoid these aspects of yourself in the modern day?

What causes depression, limitation, and inner criticism? (Managers). What events go along with these internal reactions, presently and historically? Can you spot any self-limiting beliefs or fucked up core beliefs related to these programs? What makes you put these parts of yourself into power, and what relieves them of their duties?

What are the pain points and fears (burdens) contained in your exiles and managers? Can you speak to them? Can you provide what those parts are lacking, your Self?

Do you have some potent Distractor parts in your life to better understand?

When did those behaviors start? What were the conditions? What were you trying to "escape" when you originally engaged in those actions?

How have those distraction strategies become automatized over time? When do you utilize those coping mechanisms? In what conditions? What triggers your distractors and who are they trying to protect (exiles).

Can you replace those automatic, unwanted behaviors with better ones that serve the same function?