

TMFRS

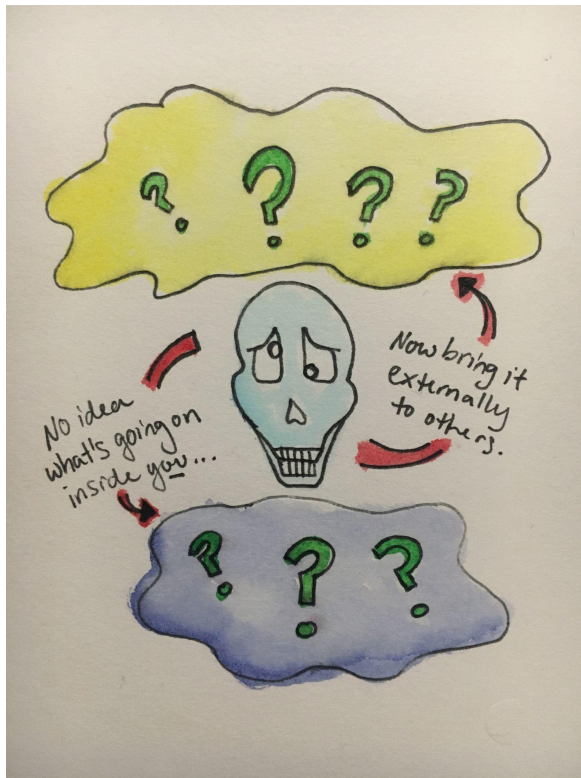
LET'S MAKE SENSE OF YER STUPID FUCKING BRAIN

Polarized Parts and Relationship Problems

What's standing in your way of healing connections?

Spring 2023

Polarized brain programs v. your attempts at relationships



So, now this back and forth in wanting and fearing vulnerability, intimacy, and trust is a bit clearer, yeah?

It's parts! It's always fucking parts.

Some neurons hold one strategy, collection of memories, and set of fears. Some neurons hold the exact opposite. And you're left with a "split brain," unable to make sense of it, to know what you really want, and to engage consistently with your relationship partners because of it.

Last time we touched on this quote:

““Hell is other people.” Yet it would be much more accurate to say, “Hell is how we see ourselves in

relation to other people.” Relationship conflict becomes a hellish struggle or deadlock when it re-evokes and snags us in some constricting identity from the past that is associated with profound psychic pain. And the conflict can go nowhere as long as we continue playing it out with our partner instead of addressing its source - the negative view of ourselves that has been activated, and that is undermining our basic sense of existence, validity, or worth.

Love's expansiveness inevitably brings us up against the walls of our personality structure, the prison of our old identities. Just as a prisoner who wants to escape from jail must carefully study

its layout, we need to understand more precisely what these soul-cages are made of, if we want to free ourselves from them. This kind of self-inquiry is essential in making a relationship more conscious.”

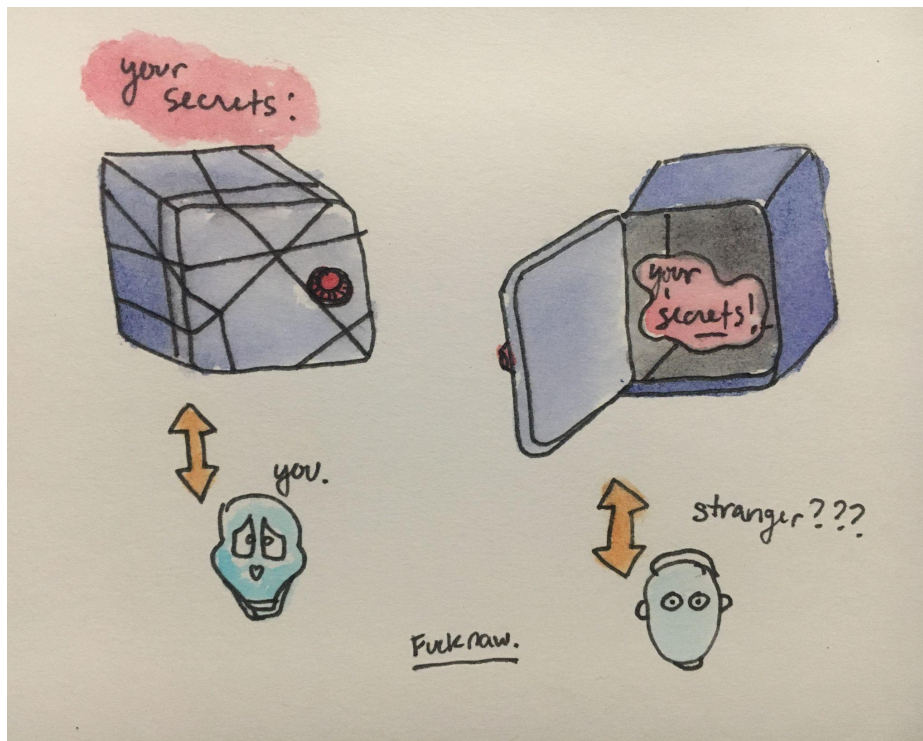
-John Welwood

From that, I hear, “Learning about your parts is essential in making a relationship more conscious.”

So if we can't honestly and accurately see the “walls of our personality structure” that come up through engagements in relationships, we're doomed to stay trapped in those cages.

As the word “cage” implies, that means we're keeping OURSELVES closed off from ourselves, firstly. And we also aren't letting others inside those structures, either.

Suggesting, to me, a lot of inner paranoia. We distrust and mask ourselves from within, and we therefore have to execute the same strategy to keep others from making discoveries we're horrified by. If you can't trust your internal crew members, you can't trust other folks to engage with them either.



If you can't even trust your own mental cohort, how can you trust others?

We don't get to know the buried parts of us deeply, because it's uncomfortable to re-experience the memories, emotions, and thought pathways they contain. Intimacy. We're not opening ourselves up to the pains that they could bring by acknowledging those contained experiences and desires. Vulnerability. And we're not believing in them having legitimate wants, needs, insights or behaviors. Trust.

Meaning oftentimes our Managers and Protectors stop us from truly knowing ourselves, by stonewalling the Exiles. They're keeping us from being our full selves, and from having relationships with the less preferred versions of our own histories. Pieces of our systems are just "off limits" - in exactly the same way we assess the rest of humanity.

But at the same time, we do this to our Managers, too. We also don't get well acquainted with those parts or foster realistic trust. We see them as our bosses and core personalities, but that doesn't mean we pay much attention to their needs. Hence, they're so janked out and overwhelmed most of the time.

And you could say the same for Distractors, of course. Few of us try to understand WHY we're driven to maladaptive coping from a compassionate place. We're hard and rigid against these parts of us, simply telling them to "stop it" - whatever way they usually provide us short term comfort.

So, overall, looking at our parts... We don't know em. We don't trust em. We don't want to interact with em. We'd probably rather not even see them. Isolation from the inside, out.

If we don't know, acknowledge, or respect all of who we are internally... within our own parts... then how can we expect to be able to extend those connection points to others, outside our own system?

Wouldn't it be better if we could figure out how to compassionately engage with what we're really carrying on the inside, so we could be less aggressive, overcompensatory, and scared in our interactions on the outside?

And wouldn't it be great if we could do that by working with our parts?

Today, let's run through some research on the necessity of understanding YOUR parts, solo, so they can ultimately work better in relationships, instead of working your relationships into the ground.

What goes wrong when we're not internally intimate? When we're still shielding ourselves from ourselves? How do our ego identities create a relational clusterfuck, for all involved?

And next time, we'll come back to talk about our COLLECTIVE parts work for the benefit of less shitfoolery relationships. Cuz you're not the only one with subconscious identities, Fucker. And the interplay between two unseen "victims" is going to be a messy one.

Let's talk about just your parts today. And I think it's time... let's jump in and do the thing. We're discussing:

Projection
Chronically unfulfilled needs.
Cyclical abuse
Self-fulfilling prophecies

PROJECTION

But... to get to THAT point, let's first talk about laying the groundwork for PROjection with INjection.***

*** NOTE: correct psychological term? "Introjection." But in my brain, "Injection" is more direct.

PROjection is when we take our assessments of our inner world outwards.

But to do that, we have to initially go through the stage of taking our assessments of the world inwards. You know, identity formation. To have parts of ourselves that we project, we first have to create them.

Welwood uses some different words, but I think you'll easily be able to track the parts conversation in his writing. He tells us:

"... Our ego identities - the ways we see ourselves - originally develop out of our relationships with others... If the basic sensitivity of our nature is like soft wax, the impressions we take in as children are like imprints in this wax. As our mind fixates on those impressions, it's as if the surface of the wax starts to harden, and these impressions become etched into our psyche.

When we are young, our parents reflect back to us certain pictures of who we are IN THEIR EYES. Lacking our own self-reflective awareness, we inevitably start to internalize these reflections, coming to see ourselves in terms of how we appear to others. The mirror image provides a picture of how we appear to others. Yet because it also forces us to relate to ourselves as though from the position of an external observer, it separates us from our direct sense of ourselves as a living being. When seeing ourselves in terms of an image, we treat ourselves as an object. We become an object of our thought, rather than the subject of our experience. And this prevents us from knowing ourselves in a more direct, immediate way.

To form an identity means taking ourselves to be something, based on imagining that how others treat us means something about who we really are. For instance, a little boy whose father is always critical might take himself to be an inadequate person. It is only a small leap from “I can’t seem to make my father happy” to “I must be an inadequate person,” or from “My parents disapprove of me, and I feel bad” to “I must be bad,” or to “I don’t care what other people think - I’m better than they are anyway.”

The problem here is that we take the reflections of ourselves in others’ eyes to represent who we are, whether we like them or not. If we like them, they become woven into a conscious identity that we promote and defend; if we don’t like them, they become woven into an unconscious identity that we ward off. In either case, we fixate on these images, giving them more weight and credence than our own direct experience of ourselves. This makes them into soul-cages.”

So, we take cues from our environment and turn them into full-blown identities. We know, we’ve talked it to death already. The things that are “good” about us become wildly exaggerated and over-relied on. The things that are labeled or assumed “bad” are rejection-worthy pieces of ourselves we hide at any cost.

And this is how we start forming our personality structures. The ones we’ll lead with, and the ones we’ll begrudgingly hold behind closed mental doors.

We INject ourselves with these templates. So that we can later PROject them onto others. By accident. But that doesn’t make the effects any less destructive. Let’s talk about that next.

Welwood says:

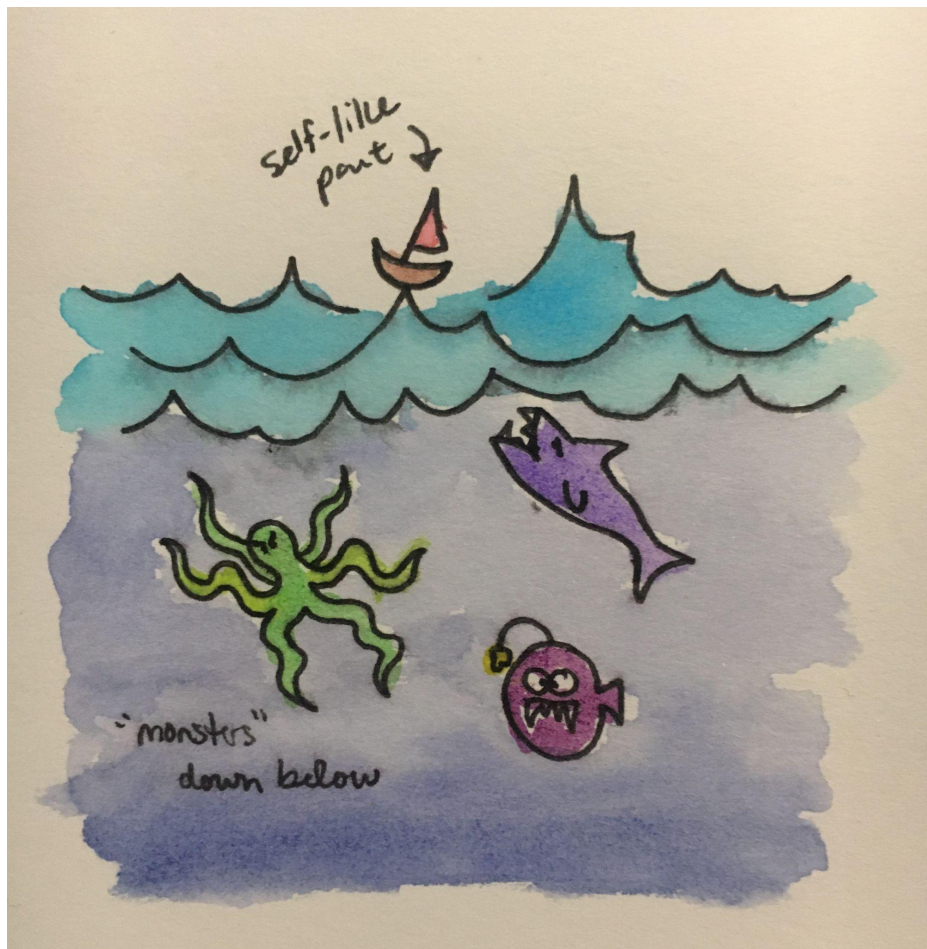
“If we see our parents as caring and supportive, we may develop a view of ourselves as worthwhile, and the corresponding feeling might be confidence or self-respect. If our parents are abusive, we may come to see Other as threatening and ourselves as a victim; and our life may be permeated by a mood of fear, distrust, or paranoia.

Every view of Other implies a view of self, and every view of self implies a view of Other.

Our ego or conditioned personality is composed of various identifications, or self-images, and develops in childhood as a form of self-protection. It begins as an attempt to cover over and compensate for our loss of being, by fabricating certain qualities that we need, but that seem to be missing.

For example, if we did not receive the kind of support that would have nurtured our inner strength, we might TRY to be strong through force of will: "I'll be strong. I won't let this bother me. I'll overcome this..."

This attempt to make ourselves strong forms a conscious identity - an image of ourselves that we promote and defend in order to cover up an inner sense of lack. Underneath our conscious identity is an unconscious identity, our identification with that lack; in this case, our secret belief that we are not really strong, but weak instead. We construct a conscious identity - a facade or "cover story" - to ward off and shield us from this more painful, threatening unconscious identity.



Thus our ego structure serves a useful function in childhood. As an attempt to supply what is missing, it protects us from having to feel the pain of our losses.

For example, our fabricated strength, which we activate by tensing our muscles or gritting our teeth, may help us to endure and survive difficult circumstances; and this keeps us from having to experience our lack of true inner strength. But later in life, especially in intimate relationships, this facade becomes a hindrance, for it is a false sense that prevents us from being genuine with our partner. It also keeps us from discovering our true strength, which can never be fabricated, but only discovered as an intrinsic quality of our being.

The ego's agenda in relationships is to have other people *confirm* our conscious identity. If our partner sees us as strong, for instance, that will validate our self-image as a strong person, and help us ward off the more terrifying belief that we are really weak instead. So our HOPE is that our conscious identity will be confirmed and our FEAR is what keeps the whirlwind of samsara, or confusion, in relationships spinning round and round."

Meaning, we NEED our partners to validate who we've come to believe we are. And if they don't... well... we'll work harder to be the person they want us to see, blocking out everything we're hiding even more harshly.

And, to spare ourselves from the pain of ever seeing our subconscious parts, we'll often use self-protective strategies to place the blame on THEM and THEIR parts, instead.

Now let's hear from Toni Herbine-Blank again:

"Protectors have an arsenal of behaviors at their disposal. They use our body, emotions, awareness, and behavior to achieve their goals. One such behavior, which Freud called projection, is particularly important in relationships.

Projection goes one step beyond denying or distracting from emotional pain by extending an internal process to external relationships. In the process of projection, a protector in Person A criticizes Person B for displaying an attribute that is actually characteristic of another part of Person A—either an exile or another protector—who is being disowned.

Protectors can project anything. It might be an intensely negative feeling like fear or anger, a vulnerable state like innocence, an inhibitory behavior like judging, an inhibited behavior like

withdrawing or dodging conflict, or a disinhibited behavior like drinking too much or anxiously pursuing a partner.

The projection may or may not be accurate for Person B, but it is always accurate for some part of Person A. Like all protective measures, projection is a way of managing vulnerability.”

So. Our gd Protectors can't step down. They can't wholly relate to your own system, let alone the system of someone else. Let alone... trying to figure out how someone ELSE'S parts aren't relating to THEIR whole system, and how that mess is showing up in your dynamics.

It's further complicated because to them, what's being said is accurate... even if the rest of the person making the statements would disagree. They're convinced that they hold the correct perspectives and strategies when these parts are activated.

Furthermore, they tend to project those beliefs and burdens onto other people. If we can't look directly at our own (I want to say bullshit, but I'll say) "wounds"... then we view them through witnessing others and subconsciously taking their behaviors to mean the same things we fear about ourselves.

What we're trying to hide from light in our own systems, we're a lot more comfortable viewing in others. We're bothered by what's happening inside of us, so we interpret outsiders to have the same programming. We're trying to shield ourselves from our own internal programming, so we see it everywhere. Or we insist that other people are "causing" us to feel a certain way, when those vibes are actually originating within ourselves.

So, Protectors are Projectors. And we have to be mindful of their games.

We're taking secret self-judgments and making them applicable to others, so we don't have to deal with them ourselves.

If you haven't come to terms with all of the pieces of you that already exist in your own memory bank, and then you see any similar characteristics in others as you see in your own disgusting parts...

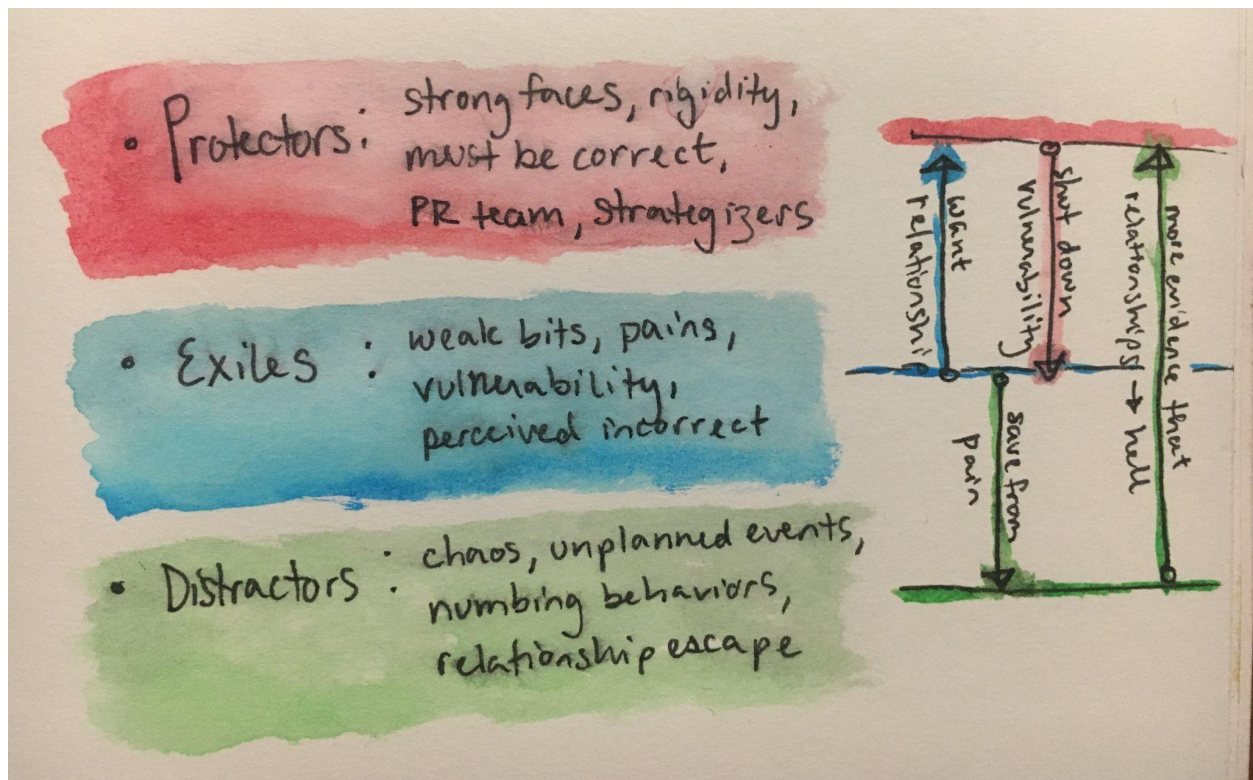
You're going to react with a polarized counterpart, to shut that program down FOR THEM under times of duress. At the same time, you'll strengthen your own oppositional program that exists to mask that unwanted bit.

Know what I'm saying? If you can't let your Exiles speak, you're sure as hell not going to let someone ELSE'S similar exiles hold the mic. You'll repress their parts in the same ways as you do to yourself. Your Protectors can't stand to hear your own complaints - if someone *e/se* starts

spitting them out outloud, you're in danger of your own Exiles being riled by the shared messages.

Instead, Manager parts insist you HAVE to shut that person down, to shut their parts down, to shut your parts down.

None of which will lead to a touchdown on the "safe and healthy, stable, close and long lasting, interpersonal connection" field. Because without VIT on the inside, we're abusing and neglecting our selves, and that shit will almost always wind up being projected outwards, despite our best efforts to keep the thrashing contained internally.



UNFULFILLED NEEDS

To make matters more complicated, consider how this internal obfuscation and strangerification keeps us from addressing our own mortal wounds and gaping unfulfilled necessities?

Hell, if we don't want to acknowledge our own inner landscapes and memory banks, that means we don't even want to *acknowledge* our own NEEDS. We don't want to see what's ailing us, because we're not sure how to fix it within our own lives.

But then we have lofty goals of OTHER PEOPLE providing for those needs? And expect ourselves to also be able to address THEIRS?

Just... quick question... How the fuck?

If our system is neglected, feared, and chided. Largely unknown to us or purposely ignored. Then how could we take that system into the rest of the world and anticipate different results in our experiences with outsiders? In giving or receiving?

Shit, most of us can't even receive nice things, period, because they set off those Manager alarm bells. We can't be nice to ourselves, because "what if we're wrong or we don't deserve it." And when others try to be kind, we respond by saying "sus. My parents never acted that way. What's their real motive?"

But then we go out into the world, guns blazing, and think that positive social dynamics are possible? With alllllll negative expectations to "keep us safe" and alllllll sorts of defense mechanisms in place - against our own brains and against others - we're going to attempt to form satisfying and trauma-healing connections?

So, you have no idea how to do the thing, in the first place, even in the safety of your own home (or skull) where no one else will see the skills you're working on building... but decide to bring it outwards to a dozen others and see if it works out positively?

Makes no sense. No one will leave feeling full or energized, trusting or hoping for more, from the experience. The dinner will be a failure. Just like your relationships will be, if you never get peacefully acquainted with the parts that live in your own brain before you try to bring those relational recipes into the real world.

So there's that point.

If your Managers and Exiles can't even get along or fully acknowledge each other - if they have split feelings and ideas about relationships that you're not taking into account or working through - then bringing that social battle to a wider audience isn't going to have different results. You're just going to seem as disjointed and unpredictable in your outward behaviors as you feel with your inward ones.

And therefore... who's going to engage with those unnoticed and unhealed parts?

Probably not the well balanced social companions you're aiming for. Probably folks with a lot of unhealed and unknown parts, them damn selves.

And then you've got a real parts-party going on, huh? Most likely, one that will come with brawls.

Good luck with making relationships work externally, if you haven't worked on the relationships you hold internally.

Unless, of course, you anticipate someone else can anticipate what you're craving on a soul level. That THEY can carry the relationship, through knowing everyone involved inside and out, without any of that being authentically expressed.

That's an unfair expectation to put on someone else.

Akin to abuse in my eyes - when we have baseless standards we expect others to solely fill, without being able to even define what those standards are, we're setting them up for a terrible time.

And, for what it's worth, we're doing the same for ourselves.

Let's talk about not knowing thyn own parts, leading to abuse cycles in our lives. Starting with - yikes - how WE can end up abusive, through ignorance of our own internal systems.

ABUSES ONTO OTHERS

Our author (Welwood) continues:

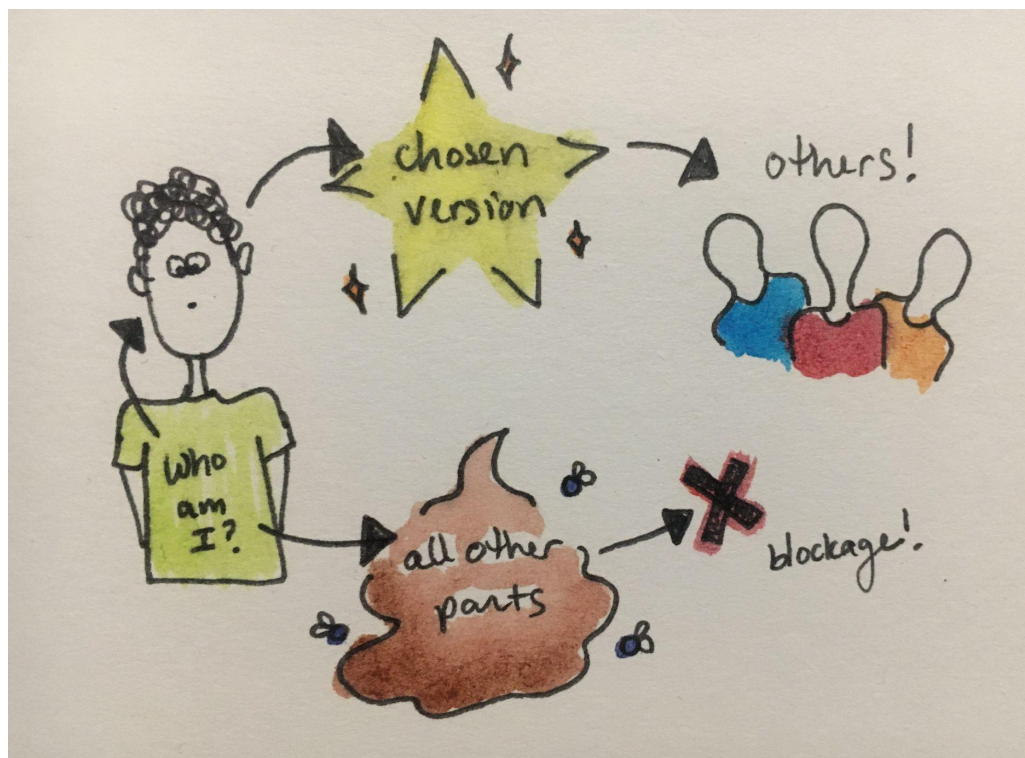
"If relationship conflicts did not snag us in this way - by exposing unconscious identities we have spent our whole life trying to ward off - they would simply arise, be worked with, and pass away. For instance, even if my partner and I often felt angry with each other, this would not be a

problem as long as we could move nimbly through these feelings. Then the anger would just be energy, like a passing storm, and might even intensify our passion, generate humor, bring attention to issues that need to be addressed, or energize our communication.

But as soon as my partner's anger stirs up one of my unconscious identities, the problems begin. I no longer respond flexibly to the situation at hand. It's as though I fall into a trance, in which I am watching an old movie playing in my mind, rather than seeing and responding to what is actually happening. Perhaps her anger makes me feel like a helpless child. In my trance state, I may see myself as a bad boy being scolded by his mother.

This view of myself is so painful and threatening that I feel compelled to ward it off. Up comes a defensive facade: I try to show my partner that I am really tough, perhaps by lashing out at her and making her feel bad instead. But reacting in this defensive way leads nowhere. It distances me from myself, by denying what is REALLY going on inside me. And it distances me from my partner, further reinforcing my sense of being bad. All of this - the reaction to my partner as though she were my mother, the anger and defensiveness, and the loss of real connection with myself and her - stems from the trance I fall into when this old, unconscious identity becomes activated.

It all happens automatically, without much awareness of what is really going on."



We enact our early traumas internally, unconsciously, taking on the roles, attributes, and identities that were validated or demonstrated by others. And then we recreate them externally, by accident, when we recognize something we dislike about ourselves, in others. Or if we feel accused of holding these untouchable parts, whether or not that's what they were aiming for.

This leads to re-enacting the events that formed our subconscious and conscious identities with others. Passing the trauma buck, transferring the abuse, reducing vulnerability, intimacy, and trust with each turn.

So. No familiarity with your inner programming? No recognition of its various unfulfilled needs? No methods to meet those needs yourself? No trust, intimacy, or vulnerability inside of you. Just a lot of self-protective projections that might lead you to abuse your own partner, in the ways you're abusing yourself, in the ways your original interactions taught you to.

No ability to meet your own internal requests or proceed through life without internal fear and opposition because you have no VIT? No fucking chance of being able to give or receive when it comes to relationship dynamics. No hope of the relationship playing out in a positive way.

Which can also create abusive situations for US.

ABUSE CYCLES FOR OURSELVES and SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES

So if we've INjected these identities in ourselves and now we're regularly PROjecting those pains onto relationship partners, what's going to happen?

Sure, we can be assholes. Trying to bully our relationship partners into parts that we feel good seeing reflected back at us.

But we can also force them into "bad" parts, which allow us to see ourselves in one cohesive identity. In a way, *forcing* abuse, if it wasn't already present. In order to validate that we are exactly who and what we thought we were.

Welwood tells us:

"These self-Other imprints we carry within us operate like unconscious templates determining how we set up our relationships. Sometimes their influence is obvious, as when a woman who was criticized by her father repeatedly chooses critical men; seeing herself as unworthy, she

may look for a partner who devalues her *because that is what she knows, that is her unconscious sense of reality*. These setups also affect couples in more subtle, less apparent ways, and may be harder to detect if several different, even contradictory patterns are operating at the same time.

Yet in one way or another, two partners usually act out some form of matching identities, especially in the early phases of their relationship. Whatever part we are playing, we unconsciously tend to look for or create the corresponding role in our partner. Even when those we love don't entirely match our inner templates, we tend to focus on and bring out the parts of them that do.

For example, a woman whose father abandoned the family when she was young believed that men could never really be there for her. Whenever her partner wasn't totally available and loving, she would feel anxious and start a fight. In effect, she fell into a trance where she saw her partner as an abandoning parent whose actions were saying, "I don't care about you. You're not important." And this in turn brought up an unconscious identity she had hoped that would save her from; seeing herself as worthless.

In truth, her partner was potentially there for her. But when she was in her trance she could only see the twenty percent of him that wasn't there, instead of the eighty percent that was. Pushing him away with her attack actually reinforced the unavailable part of him. The more she acted out of her inner setup, the more it became a self-fulfilling prophecy, keeping them both stuck in fruitless, repetitive conflict."

So, she fell into a part that took over her reality. A part that was used to being "incorrect and rejectable." Though she consciously wanted the exact opposite experience, she subconsciously couldn't accept it. She twisted her perceptions to see what she needed to see, to continue understanding herself in a continuous manner.

She didn't realize she had a part that was still ailing from the original burden of parental neglect, which took over and defined her perspective of the relationship and herself. This, then, created external situations that pinged her fear of worthlessness.

And I'll betcha... there wasn't any VIT available for anyone at that point.

Not externally. And obviously, it was never available internally. Parts never examined. Wounds never healed. Instead, played out again and again, with any partner who could remind her of her original circumstances and the self-loathing programs that had defined her life so far.

WRAP

We form true or false identities based on what we're shown early on. We overcompensate for the identities, rather than fully experiencing or questioning them. Without intimacy with our own psyches, we can't possibly have our needs filled. Instead, we project our strengths and weaknesses onto others, and accidentally wind up in abusive situations. Sometimes, we're the villain, sometimes the victim.

But at the core of it, our relationship challenges come from failing to know ourselves through and through. Instead, giving us room to blame the other, while still conveniently avoiding looking at ourselves. And all our discrepancies.

Welwood says:

In this way, identities generate faulty perceptions of reality - trance states - that cause us to perceive and respond to those we love in distorted ways. And they will continue to operate like this *until we start bringing them into the light of consciousness*. Relationships call forth this kind of heightened awareness by showing us exactly how and where we are stuck. Instead of seeing our partner as our jailer, we need to see that we have constructed our own cage, one we have been carrying around a long time and that we keep ourselves confined there.

And THAT's just examining OUR parts. Let alone the disaster known as "parts versus parts" in relationship. The next missing piece in achieving healthy relationships.

So let's wrap with one last quote, paving the road for next month's discussion.

"With (another individual) whenever his partner became angry, this threatened to expose his unconscious identity as a small, defenseless child, hidden behind his facade as a highly evolved spiritual being. His defense was to treat his partner in a righteous, scornful way. Yet his cold disdain only triggered one of HER most painful unconscious identities - as someone unworthy of love - and this intensified her wrath. For (patient) seeing and feeling himself as prey to other people's anger felt, literally, like hell; for his partner, hell was seeing and feeling herself as unworthy of love. In reacting against their own internal hells, they each triggered the other's hell-state - which led to a recurring pattern of conflict that seemed impossible to resolve."

And I think, as an introduction to our next point, that about says it all.

Let's come back next month and chat about working with parts BETWEEN partners. How our identities trigger each other and keep us spinning in the circles of hell, unable to authentically

relate, unable to consistently enact VIT, unable to patch up our prior conflicts and move forward together... because our brains are still trapped decades behind.

Reflection Q's

What are your conscious identities? Who do you present yourself as?

Where, when, and how did you learn these traits were preferable? Do you have direct memories of people impressing their perceptions and influences on you?

Do you believe these identities are “unquestionable” and “correct”? Do you feel panicky at the idea of losing them or having them challenged?

What are your underlying identities? The subconscious bits of personality that you don't touch? Why do you aim to mask them? What threats do they face in relationships?

Do you enter relationships fronting with your conscious or subconscious identities? Who are you when you first connect with others?

At what point does that start to switch? When do other parts start to take over?

Do you get triggered BY the relationship? BY your partner? BY other life circumstances?

Does this engage an alternate part of your psyche? What memories are those shifts related to?

Do you experience any strong motivations to protect your chosen identity? How does that present in disagreements or common communication?

Do you stonewall? Project? Attack when pain feels too real? AKA - do you feel difficult emotions rising up that you can't cope with, and respond in a way that relieves the pain while cutting your partner out of the healing equation?

Have you ever been in a relationship that felt “like home”?

How did that confirm or question your prior identities / views of yourself? Did it feel relieving?

Do you find relationships follow a similar pattern in your life? Does your partner “always turn out to be just like _____”? Do any parts of you subtly believe this is your fate?

Have you ever created self-fulfilling prophecies in relationship? Do your fears tend to become reality? Is there any chance your fears are distorting your perceptions? Creating that reality?

Do you have any clues about how YOUR parts possibly activated THEIR parts in those circumstances? And vice versa?