**Internal Family Systems**

*The experience of being stuck or absorbed by intense emotion is often the result of internal “parts” that have become polarized pulling us in two different directions. Internal Family Systems is a process of getting in touch with these limited “inner selves” that protect us from perceived harm and those parts that have unmet human needs carried over from the past. The process of IFS works to gently transform the parts self defeating behavior into something life supporting by becoming familiar with what it means to move from a centered, clear and compassionate Self and let go of burdens from the past.*

**Mindfulness cultivates a centered Self, an observing position, that is**:

**Calm Creative Connected Clear Courageous Congruent Compassionate**

**Common Roles of Internalized Parts**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Parts** | **Function** | **Fears** |
| **Protectors** | Protect from pain, vulnerability, harm  Two kinds: protecting from external or internal threat | Abandonment, betrayal, judgment, abuse |
| **Concerned Parts** | Aware of the way other parts are creating problems. These parts are often judgmental, avoidant, intellectualizing, impatient, inadequate, or skeptical | Protectors being seen and socially rejected |
| **Exiles** | Childlike part that carries experiences of vulnerable emotion from formative years including shame, fear, sadness, and hurt | Emotional overwhelm |

**The General Process**

IFS relies on active imagination. From a centered Self, we reflect on triggered situations and ask a part to separate so we can dialogue and view that part clearly, checking to see that the Self is not “blended” with another part emotionally, but instead is in a centered and caring place. If not, we ask the other concerned part to separate and so on, getting to know all the details of the internal parts, how these subpersonalities have their own beliefs, memories, feelings and motivations, getting to know their sense of danger and perception of the situation, and using the senses to notice how the parts feel in the body and how we envision them physically. The process is about befriending parts so that they can put down their exaggerated sense of danger and distorted perception, and instead work in concert to access historical formative events and transform their meaning.

**Questions when accessing a part**

*What is the name of the part?* ***What does it feel like emotionally?***  *What does it look like?* ***What does it feel like in your body and where?***  *What does it say?* ***How does it make you behave?*** *What does it want?* ***What is its positive intent?*** *What is it protecting you from?* ***Under what life circumstances is this part activated?*** *What about this situations triggers this part?* ***What concerned parts react to this part?***