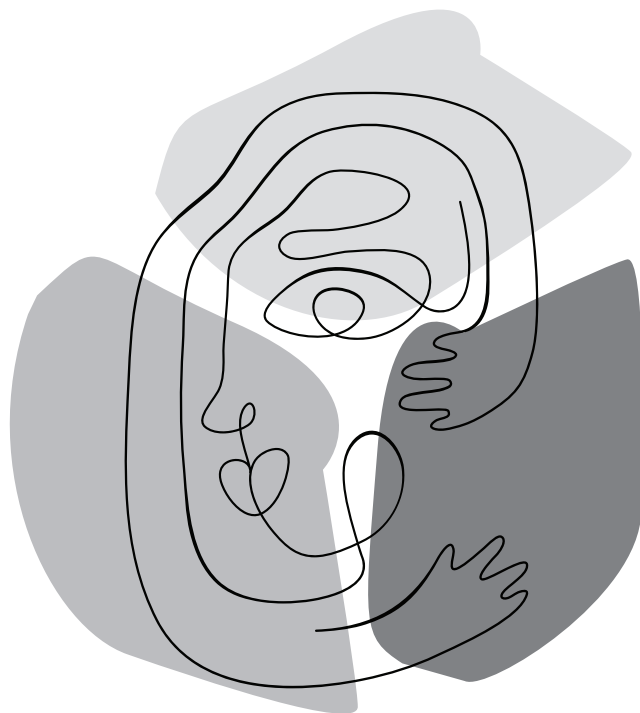


RICHARD C. SCHWARTZ, PhD



Healing Trauma &
Restoring Wholeness with
**THE INTERNAL FAMILY
SYSTEMS MODEL**

No Bad Parts

CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY ALANIS MORISSETTE	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE: INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS	5
Chapter One: We're All Multiple	7
Exercise: Getting to Know a Protector	23
Exercise: Mapping Your Parts	26
Chapter Two: Why Parts Blend	29
Exercise: Unblending and Embodying	32
Session One: Sam	39
Chapter Three: This Changes Everything	49
Exercise: Dilemma Meditation	51
Exercise: Working with a Challenging Protector	55
Chapter Four: More on Systems	59
Exercise: Daily IFS Meditation	69
Chapter Five: Mapping Our Inner Systems	73
Session Two: Mona	82
PART TWO: SELF-LEADERSHIP	87
Chapter Six: Healing and Transformation	89
Exercise: The Path	93
Exercise: Accessing the Self Through Unblending	96
Chapter Seven: The Self in Action	107
Session Three: Ethan and Sarah	109
Chapter Eight: Vision and Purpose	129
Exercise: Fire Drill	134
Exercise: Sad Person Meditation	136

PART THREE: SELF IN THE BODY, SELF IN THE WORLD	147
Chapter Nine: Life Lessons and Tor-Mentors	149
Exercise: Advanced Parts Mapping	153
Exercise: Working with Triggers	156
Chapter Ten: The Laws of Inner Physics	159
Exercise: Advanced Protector Work	163
Session Four: Andy	165
Chapter Eleven: Embodiment	171
Session Five: TJ	177
Exercise: Body Meditation	183
CLOSING THOUGHTS	185
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	191
NOTES	193
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	199

Introduction

As a psychotherapist, I've worked with many people who came to me shortly after their lives had crashed. Everything was going great until the sudden heart attack, divorce, or death of a child. If not for that life-jarring event, they would never have thought to see a therapist, because they felt successful.

After the event they can't find the same drive or determination. Their former goals of having big houses or reputations have lost their meaning. They feel at sea and vulnerable in a way that's unfamiliar and scary. They are also newly open. Some light can get through the cracks in their protective foundations.

Those can be wake-up call events if I can help them keep the striving, materialistic, competitive parts of them that had dominated their lives from regaining dominance so they can explore what else is inside them. In doing so, I can help them access what I call *the Self*—an essence of calm, clarity, compassion, and connectedness—and from that place begin to listen to the parts of them that had been exiled by more dominant ones. As they discover that they love the simple pleasures of enjoying nature, reading, creative activities, being playful with friends, finding more intimacy with their partners or children, and being of service to others, they

decide to change their lives so as to make room for their Self and the newly discovered parts of them.

Those clients and the rest of us didn't come to be dominated by those striving, materialistic, and competitive parts by accident. Those are the same parts that dominate most of the countries on our planet and particularly my country, the United States. When my clients are in the grip of those particular parts, they have little regard for the damage they're doing to their health and relationships. Similarly, countries obsessed with unlimited growth have little regard for their impact on the majority of their people, or the health of the climate and the Earth.

Such mindless striving—of people or of countries—usually leads to a crash of some sort. As I write this, we are amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It has the potential to be the wake-up call we need so we don't suffer worse ones down the road, but it remains to be seen whether our leaders will use this painful pause to listen to the suffering of the majority of our people and also learn to collaborate rather than compete with other countries. Can we change nationally and internationally in the ways my clients are often able to?

Inherent Goodness

We can't make the necessary changes without a new model of the mind. Ecologist Daniel Christian Wahl states that “Humanity is coming of age and needs a ‘new story’ that is powerful and meaningful enough to galvanize global collaboration and guide a collective response to the converging crises we are facing. . . . In the fundamentally interconnected and interdependent planetary system we participate in, the best way to care for oneself and those closest to oneself is to start caring more for the benefit of the collective (all life). Metaphorically speaking, we are all in the same boat, our planetary life support system, or in Buckminster Fuller's words: ‘Spaceship Earth.’ The ‘them-against-us’ thinking that for too long has defined politics between nations, companies and people is profoundly anachronistic.”¹

Jimmy Carter echoes that sentiment: “What is needed now, more than ever, is leadership that steers us away from fear and fosters greater confidence

in the inherent goodness and ingenuity of humanity.”² Our leaders can’t do that, however, with the way we currently understand the mind because it highlights the darkness in humanity.

We need a new paradigm that convincingly shows that humanity is inherently good and thoroughly interconnected. With that understanding, we can finally move from being ego-, family-, and ethno-centric to species-, bio-, and planet-centric.

Such a change won’t be easy. Too many of our basic institutions are based on the dark view. Take, for example, neoliberalism, the economic philosophy of Milton Friedman that undergirds the kind of cutthroat capitalism that has dominated many countries, including the US, since the days of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Neoliberalism is based on the belief that people are basically selfish and, therefore, it’s everyone for themselves in a survival-of-the-fittest world. The government needs to get out of the way so the fittest can not only help us survive, but thrive. This economic philosophy has resulted in massive inequality as well as the disconnection and polarization among people that we experience so dramatically today. The time has come for a new view of human nature that releases the collaboration and caring that lives in our hearts.

The Promise of IFS

I know it sounds grandiose, but this book offers the kind of uplifting paradigm and set of practices that can achieve the changes we need. It’s full of exercises that will confirm the radically positive assertions I make about the nature of the mind so you can experience it for yourself (and not just take it from me).

I’ve been developing IFS (Internal Family Systems) for almost four decades. It’s taken me on a long, fascinating, and—as emphasized in this book—spiritual journey that I want to share with you. This journey has transformed my beliefs about myself, about what people are about, about the essence of human goodness, and about how much transformation is possible. IFS has morphed over time from being exclusively about psychotherapy to

becoming a kind of spiritual practice, although you don't have to define yourself as spiritual to practice it. At its core, IFS is a loving way of relating internally (to your parts) and externally (to the people in your life), so in that sense, IFS is a life practice, as well. It's something you can do on a daily, moment-to-moment basis—at any time, by yourself or with others.

At this point, there might be a part of you that's skeptical. After all, that's a lot to promise in the opening paragraphs of a book. All I ask is that your skeptic give you enough space inside to try these ideas on for a little while, including trying some of the exercises so you can check it out for yourself. In my experience, it's difficult to believe in the promise of IFS until you actually try it.

PART ONE



Internal Family Systems

CHAPTER ONE

We're All Multiple

We were all raised in what I'll call the mono-mind belief system—the idea that you have one mind, out of which different thoughts and emotions and impulses and urges emanate. That's the paradigm I believed in, too, until I kept encountering clients who taught me otherwise. Because the mono-mind view is so ubiquitous and assumed in our culture, we never really question the truth of it. I want to help you take a look—a second look—at who you really are. I'm going to invite you to try on this different paradigm of multiplicity that IFS espouses and consider the possibility that you and everybody else is a multiple personality. And that is a good thing.

I'm not suggesting that you have Multiple Personality Disorder (now called Dissociative Identity Disorder), but I do think that people with that diagnosis are not so different from everybody else. What are called *alters* in those people are the same as what I call *parts* in IFS, and they exist in all of us. The only difference is that people with Dissociative Identity Disorder suffered horrible abuse and their system of parts got blown apart more than most, so each part stands out in bolder relief and is more polarized and disconnected from the others.

In other words, all of us are born with many sub-minds that are constantly interacting inside of us. This is in general what we call *thinking*, because the parts are talking to each other and to you constantly about things you have to do or debating the best course of action, and so on. Remembering a time when you faced a dilemma, it's likely you heard one part saying, "Go for it!" and another saying, "Don't you dare!" Because we just consider that to be a matter of having conflicted thoughts, we don't pay attention to the inner players behind the debate. IFS helps you not only start to pay attention to them, but also become the active internal leader that your system of parts needs.

While it may sound creepy or crazy at first to think of yourself as a multiple personality, I hope to convince you that it's actually quite empowering. It's only disturbing because multiplicity has been pathologized in our culture. A person with separate autonomous personalities is viewed as sick or damaged, and the existence of their alters is considered simply the product of trauma—the fragmentation of their previously unitary mind. From the mono-mind point of view, our natural condition is a unitary mind. Unless, of course, trauma comes along and shatters it into pieces, like shards of a vase.

The mono-mind paradigm has caused us to fear our parts and view them as pathological. In our attempts to control what we consider to be disturbing thoughts and emotions, we just end up fighting, ignoring, disciplining, hiding, or feeling ashamed of those impulses that keep us from doing what we want to do in our lives. And then we shame ourselves for not being able to control them. In other words, we hate what gets in our way.

This approach makes sense if you view these inner obstacles as merely irrational thoughts or extreme emotions that come from your unitary mind. If you fear giving a presentation, for example, you might try to use willpower to override the fear or correct it with rational thoughts. If the fear persists, you might escalate your attempts to control by criticizing yourself for being a coward, numbing yourself into oblivion, or meditating to climb above it. And when none of those approaches work, you wind up adapting your life to the fear—avoiding situations where you have to speak in public, feeling like a failure, and wondering what's wrong with you. To make matters worse, you go to a therapist who gives you a diagnosis for your one, troubled mind.

The diagnosis makes you feel defective, your self-esteem drops, and your feelings of shame lead you to attempt to hide any flaws and present a perfect image to the world. Or maybe you just withdraw from relationships for fear that people will see behind your mask and will judge you for it. You identify with your weaknesses, assuming that who you really are is defective and that if other people saw the real you, they'd be repulsed.

“When people asked me if I was ready for my life to change, I don't think I really understood what they meant. It wasn't just that strangers would know who I was. It was this *other* thing that started to happen to me: when I looked in their eyes, sometimes, there was a little voice in my head wondering, *Would you still be so excited to meet me if you really knew who I was? If you knew all the things I have done? If you could see all my parts?*”

Queer Eye star Jonathan Van Ness¹

A Brief History

The mono-mind perspective, in combination with scientific and religious theories about how primitive human impulses are, created this backdrop of inner polarizations. One telling example comes from the influential Christian theologian John Calvin: “For our nature is not only utterly devoid of goodness, but so prolific in all kinds of evil, that it can never be idle . . . The whole man, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, is so deluged, as it were, that no part remains exempt from sin, and, therefore, everything which proceeds from him is imputed as sin.”² This is known as the doctrine of *total depravity*, which insists that only through the grace of God can we escape our fate of eternal damnation. Mainstream Protestantism and Evangelicalism have carried some version of this doctrine for several hundred years, and the cultural impact has been widespread. With “Original Sin,” Catholicism has its own version.

We can't blame this sort of thinking solely on religion, however. Generations of philosophers and politicians have asserted that primal impulses lurk just beneath the civilized veneer we present to the world. While Freud contributed important insights regarding the psyche, many of which are compatible with IFS, his drive theory was highly influential and pessimistic about human nature. It asserted that beneath the mind's surface lies selfish, aggressive, and pleasure-seeking instinctual forces that unconsciously organize our lives. Dutch historian Rutger Bregman summarizes these underlying assumptions about human nature here: "The doctrine that humans are innately selfish has a hallowed tradition in the Western canon. Great thinkers like Thucydides, Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Luther, Calvin, Burke, Bentham, Nietzsche, Freud, and America's Founding Fathers each had their own version of the veneer theory of civilization."³

Willpower and Shame

The emphasis on willpower and self-control permeates American culture. We think we should be able to discipline our primitive, impulsive, sinful minds through willpower. Countless self-help books tell us it's all a matter of boosting our ability to control ourselves and develop more discipline. The concept of willpower, too, has historical roots—namely in the Victorian Era with its Christian emphasis on resisting evil impulses. The idea of taking responsibility for oneself and not making excuses is as American as apple pie.

Sadly, our worship of willpower has been used by politicians and pundits to justify increasing levels of income disparity. We're taught that people are poor because they lack self-control and that rich people are wealthy because they have it, despite research to the contrary. Studies show, for example, that lower-income people become empowered and productive once they are given enough money to cover their basic survival needs.⁴ However, the very real fact—especially considering the economic effects of the current pandemic—is that the rug could be pulled out from under most of us at any moment, and that threat keeps the survivalist parts of us humming.

Because this willpower ethic has become internalized, we learn at an early age to shame and manhandle our unruly parts. We simply wrestle