

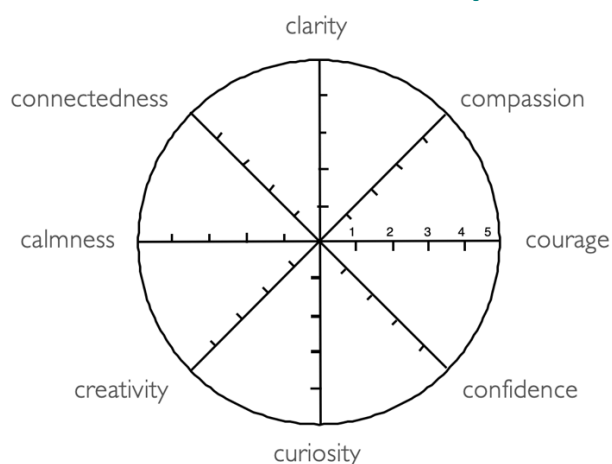
Internal Family Systems (IFS) Overview

Internal Family Systems – IFS was developed by Dr. Richard Schwartz over the last 30 years and has grown into a powerfully transformative, evidence-based model of psychotherapy and coaching. It has become a global movement and an empowering paradigm for understanding and harmonizing the mind and thereby, larger human systems. IFS is helping both individuals and human systems to heal, making the world a more compassionate place.

Key principles of IFS:

1. The human mind is naturally *multiple*, with countless Parts who interact internally with each other and externally with other people. The internal dialogue we hear inside our minds are most often Parts commenting about what's going on and their opinions about it.
2. The Self is the essence of who we are in our deepest spiritual sense. The Self is who we are unencumbered by the trauma and burdens that manifest in life. The Self cannot be diminished.
3. The Self is not a Part and is characterized by the 8 C's of clarity, compassion, creativity, calmness, curiosity, confidence, courage, and connectedness.
4. There are two main kinds of Parts. Protectors and Exiles. Protectors seek to prevent or respond to threat or pain. Exiles are the injured ones who feel vulnerable, betrayed, or overwhelmed.
5. Managers are Protectors who seek to prevent further harm from happening. Managers are the Parts who judge, criticize, control, plan, overwork, organize, and persevere.
6. Firefighters are Protectors who want to ease extreme emotion that comes with stress or injury. They do what is often called "acting out." It includes addiction to food, alcohol, social media, rage, or escape. Firefighters become activated when the Manager strategies fail.
7. Both Firefighters and Managers act in ways that made sense at one time in response to a particular situation. As time progresses, their behavior can become more extreme which often creates new problems in relationships and life.
8. When we seek to understand our Parts from a place of compassion and curiosity, from Self, the Parts begin to tell us more about their burdens, beliefs, and history. IFS has a process to restore Parts to their original, less extreme role that affirms their positive intent.
9. Parts acquire burdens from the trials and trauma that unfold in our lives *and* from the lives of those who came before us. Legacy burdens are burdens we inherit from our ancestors or society. Legacy burdens are also often inherited based on gender, ethnicity/race, national origin, or socio-economic status.
10. When angry, if we say, "*A Part of me is angry.*" instead of "*I am angry.*" we begin the unblending process that brings space between our Self and the Part so that the Self can help it heal.
11. As our Parts begin to trust the Self, they can be asked to not overwhelm our inner system. Dialogue can happen when a healthy distance allows for conversation and connection.
12. In IFS, "**All Parts are welcome.**" All Parts seek our highest good. All Parts flourish when treated with respect and compassion. "**Self leadership**" occurs when unburdened Parts function as a team with the Self as "team captain" drawing upon the skills, strengths, and talents of Parts who cooperate with one another for our overall success.

The 8 C's of Self Leadership Wheel



The 8 C's of Self Leadership help us recognize how much of our "Self" is available to us in any moment.

Using the radar chart above, rate yourself on the scale with 0 (low) at the center and 5 (high) on the perimeter. Then connect the dots to make an 8-sided figure. Fill in the 8-sided figure with a highlighter.

Calmness - 1. serenity regardless of the circumstances 2. the ability to react to triggers in your environment in less automatic and extreme ways

Clarity - 1. the ability to perceive situations accurately without distortion from extreme beliefs and emotions 2. the ability to maintain objectivity about a situation in which one has a vested interest 3. the ability to recognize one's own bias or preconception and then seek a deeper understanding

Curiosity - 1. a strong desire to know or learn something new about a topic, situation or person in a non-judgmental way 2. to have a sense of wonder about the world and how things work

Compassion - 1. to be open-heartedly present and appreciative of others and one's self without feeling the urge to fix, change, distance, or judge 2. an intuitive understanding that the burdens or suffering of others affects you because of your connectedness to them

Confidence - 1. to maintain the ability to stay fully present in a situation and effectively handle or repair anything that happens 2. to have internalized the growth that comes from healing previous traumas and failures 3. to understand that life and learning includes making mistakes

Courage - 1. strength in the face of threat, challenge or danger 2. to take action toward a goal that others would find overwhelming 3. to take complete responsibility for one's actions and make amends to correct one's errors 4. the willingness to reflect upon and explore one's inner world

Creativity - 1. the use of the imagination to produce original ideas 2. the ability to enter the "flow state" in which expression spontaneously flows out of us and we are immersed in the pleasure of the activity 3. the ability to create generative learning and solutions to problems alone or with others

Connectedness - 1. the state of feeling a valued part of a larger entity such as a partnership, team, community, or organization 2. to be able to relax your defenses with others because you know that you won't be unfairly judged or inappropriately controlled 3. to have companionship and/or spirituality that helps one deal with reality in a way that transcends circumstances