

Clinical Care Consultants

Internal Family Systems

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What is Internal Family Systems?

In a natural state, we as human beings are subdivided into a multiplicity of parts. Each part has its own set of experiences. If left to manage their experience without positive guidance, parts can be flooded with emotion and intolerable beliefs. Everyone has a Self, which contains the qualities of calm, curiosity, compassion, confidence, courage, clarity, connectedness, creativity, patience, presence, perspective, and perseverance. We are born with our parts and our Self-energy. Within our system, the Self is intended on being the leader of our system. When the Self is in the lead role, all the other parts of our system are in harmonious relationship with the Self. The Self is not damaged in any way and has the ability to hold all of the parts within our system without any judgment and holds compassion and curiosity. This results in a balanced and harmonious system.

Unfortunately, most of us are not parented in ways that allow the Self to emerge as the leader of our system. Our parts can become burdened, which forces some into exile and others into a protective position. In therapy, all parts are welcome! This doesn't mean parts can misbehave though. In our system, protectors influence and create polarizations which allows for little to no balance. The goal of IFS therapy is to utilize the therapeutic tools to locate the Self within each of our clients and create connections between Self to parts.

How does IFS work?

IFS is a client-centered model of therapy and this means we follow the client's curiosity about his/her parts, engaging parts as they appear. In making these connections between Self and parts, the Self can learn the positive intention of each of our parts and this allows for the client to not get overwhelmed by any part. When healing begins to occur, the Self will welcome the parts to ebb and flow through the system without any part needing to overwhelm the system. IFS focuses on positive intention, strengths, the undamaged core of the self, and the ability of parts to shift into positive roles.

How does IFS therapy work in Couples Therapy?

External relationships mirror internal relationships between parts and the Self. In therapy, we work to integrate the interpersonal with the intrapersonal. While in session and outside of session, couples will do the interpersonal work of examining, healing and reconnecting with their partner while also engaging in the internal work of healing injuries and transforming any strong polarizations of parts within the system. The goal of Couples Therapy using IFS is to generate a loving and authentic, adaptable relationship both inter and intrapersonal.