

Seven Common Protector Fears

MONTH 4, 4.1

Hi everybody. Welcome back. Good to be back with you this month. We're going to continue building on what you've learned so far. This month, we're going to look at common Protector fears. We've talked to you about developing a relationship with Protectors and how we offer them hope to help them step back and sometimes you can find that offering hope isn't enough. Remember that, just as a little review, of Protective Parts that they're dedicated to our system, they're trying to keep Exiles from being hurt again and or trying to keep the system from being overwhelmed by the feeling of Exiles. Another really interesting thing to know about most Protectors is, even though they seem older, more adult- or adolescent-like, they're actually really quite young.

They start doing what they do at a very early age, around the time that the Exile's wounded. They're quite young and often quite fearful. It turns out that sometimes just offering them hope and appreciating them isn't enough for them to consider giving up the job that they have or again, not even giving it up just stepping back and creating a little space in the system to begin to heal the Exiles. This month we're going to look at common fears that Protectors have and how to address those fears. Interestingly, it turns out that there's seven common fears that most Protectors have. We're going to start by reviewing those. After we go through these seven common manager fears, Tony and I are going to continue with the demonstrations that we've been doing for you to show you how you could address some common Protector fears.

You'll have a demonstration of that also with both of us and then we'll talk a little bit more about Exiles and burdens and how to release those. If you want to follow along in the first slide that you have, list some of the common Protector fears. I'll go through them all with you to illustrate them all a little bit more. The first common fear that Protectors have is, if I let you go near that Exile I'm going to be overwhelmed by feelings. It's not hard to imagine that this would be a fear of these Parts. They've worked their entire lives to keep these feelings from coming up. Any time the feelings have come up out in their regular life, it has been overwhelming. They've been flooded by emotion that they've tried to keep away.

With all of these fears, the first thing to know is, they're realistic. I always like to say, they're not making this stuff up. This stuff could really happen. Their fears *are* realistic and it's really important to validate the fears of these Parts. It's the first thing, we want to validate the fears. We want to find out more about the fears and then we're going to reassure the Part about how we're going to keep whatever they're concerned about from happening. Again, we're not going to really go through all of the possible answers here. We're going to list the fears and then Tony and I are going to show you in our demonstration possible ways that you could answer these really common fears. That's the first one. I'm going to be flooded by this emotion and what's the point? I don't want to get stuck there. The second fear that you'll hear a lot from Protectors is, why should I go back to the past?

What's done is done. I can't change it. I've done this a million times before and nothing's ever changed. Again, doesn't it make sense that Protectors would feel this way? They've spent their lives trying to get away from what happened in the past. Why would they be eager to go back there when they believe

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there's no way that they can change it. We're going to validate that this is a realistic fear. Of course we can't change the past, but we can heal what happened in the past. You'll hear that quite a lot. Another common fear that Protectors have and this is especially true for Manager Parts. Managers are proactive. Never again. I'm never going to let anything bad happen again and then something happens that's unexpected. Sometimes I think about it like homeland security. Manager Parts are homeland security but no matter how diligent they are, no matter how hard they work, something is going to happen that they're not going to be able to stop.

This is exactly what happens in the system. Managers work really hard to keep everything nice and smooth, then something happens, and the Exile feeling comes up. Remember Toni talking about firefighters not being worried about collateral damage. They just come in and try to put out the flame of emotion. Sometimes firefighters can be pretty dangerous. They can be extreme in the way they protect. Especially some of those more addictive firefighters or even Parts that are suicidal are firefighters. Manager Parts often have a concern that if I start rooting around in there these extreme firefighters are going to come up. You can see that this is a realistic fear because this is what happens in their regular life. That Exile gets triggered and in comes this dangerous behavior that...it's not good. I'm not voluntarily going to go there. That's another thing that you'll commonly hear from especially Managers.

The next fear is really a fear that is between the client and the therapist and that is that the therapist won't be able to handle whatever comes up in the client, like some extreme emotion. There's often a concern about, for example neediness. Let me say that. These Parts are afraid that if I start to root around in what's down there all this neediness or vulnerability is going to come up. The experience of these Protectors is that when those Parts come up, there's rejection or people don't like them or people try to shut them down. There's often a fear in these Protectors that the therapist will react in the same way that other people in the world have reacted to this Part. You're going to get tired of hearing me say this, but these are all very realistic. They're not making this up.

The fears are related to experiences that they've had in their lives. This would be a fear that the therapist would have to reassure the client about their ability to deal with Parts that have extreme emotions. This is another reason why, again, we encourage you, and any IFS therapist, to really know his or her own Parts. It's hard to make this guarantee unless you know that you won't be triggered by what's coming up in the client. The next slide lists the final fears that you'll see these Protectors have. A common one that you'll hear is that I'm going to lose my job. If I do this I'm going to lose my job. This is a fear of being eliminated. Especially Parts that have been pushed away or viewed as being bad Parts, they'll often have a fear that you're trying to get rid of me, because sometimes that happens. We try to get rid of some of these Protective Parts.

You need to validate, listen to, reassure that that's not what we're trying to do here and that no Part gets eliminated. Everybody gets to return to their intended role. Another fear that you'll hear also is that if we do this, secrets that have been hidden away will be exposed. Often that fear's related to the concern or the belief that if these secrets are exposed, I have to do something about it. I have to talk to

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somebody about it. I have to tell someone about it and that's another important feature of the IFS model. Remember, as we're doing this internal healing it's happening between the Self of the client and the Part of the client. Actually, nothing even needs to be revealed to the therapist if the client chooses not to do that. We can reassure our clients that no secrets need to even be revealed to us and that there will be no pressure from us to force or encourage or push them to reveal any secrets to anyone else that they don't feel comfortable or ready to do.

They may choose never to do that but lots of people come in believing that the only way I can really heal is if I confront someone or if I address it with someone in the external world. It's not as frequent as some of the other fears but it's quite common. The final fear that you'll hear, I've worked with children a lot in my life and this is especially true for children, and that is the external world can't support the change in me, that I need to be a particular way to be safe in the external world. I need my Protectors, I can't go into this neediness or this vulnerability because it's dangerous for me. I need my Protectors to help me survive. That's a true and common fear. It may be with folks who have this kind of fear that there's actually work that needs to be done in the external environment to make it safe to do the internal work or to go to the neediness and the vulnerability.

Sometimes we also come into therapy believing that the best course is always to push forward. Yes, we should push to where the pain is. That's not necessarily true, especially in a situation like this. We need to make sure that the external world is safe enough, before we take someone to places that could make them more vulnerable. Those are the seven common Protector fears. You'll hear them a lot. Learn them. Get to know them a little bit. Now, Toni and I, as I said earlier, we're going to continue with the demonstrations we did, so you can see a little bit about how we might each deal with the fears of the Protectors that came up in the earlier demonstrations. If you need a refresher about that, feel free to go back and watch the videos again. They're still there for you. If not we'll see you in the next demo.