

The Nature of Parts

Okay, hi everybody. Now that you have all the basic assumptions of the model and the goals of therapy, we can start getting into the meat of some of the fun material. I'm going to talk a little bit about parts and you heard Toni say this and you're going to hear us say this over and over and over again but it's really important and often a hard thing for people to hold on to, that we're not saying that self is good and parts are bad. Both of them have an important function in our system. I like to refer to parts as ... For me, my parts feel like they're my humanity. They're what helped me engage in the world, okay?

What they are, are really just sub-personalities inside of all of us. You can envision them really as little people. They're little people inside of us and they are inherent; we're born with them. They come into this world with us either manifest already or with the potential to manifest. They come with us. Each one contains a full range of emotions. It's not that we have one sad part, one happy part, one crabby part. My husband would talk about my crabby part a lot, but anyway, they just don't have one emotion. They have a full range of emotion, so every part is happy, sad, angry, shameful. They all have all the emotions. That's an important thing to remember. Again, just as a reminder, they're not a result of trauma. We're born with them. They come into this world with an intended role. They have a function in our system, so they're here to help us during this lifetime.

Okay, so we have all these little parts inside of us, full range of emotions, how do we get to know them? How do we know what's a part from a separate part? If you look at the next slide, Slide 5, you'll see different ways in which we can begin to notice our parts, how they show up in our bodies. If you remember back to Toni's client waking up with a sensation in his chest and then having some feelings go with it and then body sensations, those are some of the ways in which parts show up. They can show up just as a thought. They may show up as a feeling. They may show up as sensations in our body.

We can also see images for parts, we can hear words, and we can even have certain movements in our bodies that would be a part revealing itself, so there's many, many different ways a part can show up. Some show up with all those things, some may show up with just one. Some parts, especially those that are more thinking parts, mostly just words and thoughts. Initially they won't have a lot of sensation.

I'm going to talk with you, now that you have all that basic stuff, I'm going to talk with you a little bit about the nature of parts. This is what we know about parts and this isn't something that we just pulled out of the air, that we just thought might be what parts are. These are what parts have told us they are, starting back from the very beginning when Dick Schwartz was listening to his clients and really started listening to them. Hang on. He started listening to his clients and that's how he really came to discover this model. What I'm about to tell you about the nature of parts is what parts will tell you. If you listen to them, they will tell you these exact things.

If you go to the next slide, let's talk about these little things that are inside of us that come to us as we're born. What we know that in a non-extreme role, like when a part comes into our system, it comes with a positive intention. Sometimes people call that a benevolent intent. They do have something positive or something benevolent they want to do for us. Now, it can be hard sometime to

The Nature of Parts

think about what that might be and especially some parts that are more what we would call addictive parts or parts that behave in really angry or aggressive or hurtful ways, but if you can get curious enough about any part, you can find what it's trying to do, what its positive intent is.

The next point on the slide is, remember, they come to us with this preferred role and then they are forced from that role by things that happen in our lives. We'll talk much more about that later. When they're forced into a different role and they take on these burdens that Toni was talking about, these mistaken beliefs and ideas about who they are, they're forced into much more extreme roles. Some parts are forced into extreme roles where they're actually more dominant in the system. They're what we would call protector. They're much more dominant, they try to keep us safe from feeling any kind of pain, from being wounded again.

There are parts that become protectors. Again, we're going to go into that in a lot more detail further on down. This is just an overview. Then there's some parts that are forced into some extreme roles where they become more vulnerable and they're forced into hiding. We have those two basic categories of parts: the protectors that are more dominant, that try to keep us from feeling pain, and the exiles which are more vulnerable and hold the pain and the wounding of things that have happened to us.

Here's another really interesting thing about these parts that get pushed into protective role. They believe that they know exactly what needs to be done to keep the system safe. Every part, every protective part wants to have as much influence in the system as it possibly can. Because it believes I, I know what to do, so it's like you've heard the old thing like, "If I have a hammer, everything looks like a nail?" Well, that's how these protective parts are. Whenever any kind of situation arises, they believe, "I know the exact right answer and I'm going to do that," and you're not going to be able to dissuade them from that very easily.

Also to gain access, these parts ... Remember, no part operates in isolation, so parts will form polarizations or alliances to try to gain more dominance or more purchase, get more traction in the system because, again, they feel like, "I know what to do." They also believe that I made it alone most of them. If I don't do this, really, really bad things are going to happen, so they're very highly motivated to do what they do. Again, remember that there are no good parts and there are no bad parts. Every part has a function, every part is put ... For most of us, our parts are pushed from their preferred role into a much more extreme role, but they're still not bad. They still have a positive intention and we can find out what that is.

In this model, we're never trying to get rid of parts or eliminate them. We're just trying to develop a relationship with them. The problem for most of us is, this is true for me and it's true for most people, is that as we grow up, our parts just get into this rhythm of having to protect us. We have no choice. I think Toni talked about choice a little bit earlier. We don't really choose how we react to things or parts or how we respond to things. Our parts just react. We're not trying to get rid of these parts. We're trying to develop a relationship with them so that we can understand what they're trying to do and begin to learn over time and through healing how we can respond to the environment rather than just react to it.

The Nature of Parts

For example, a part going being in a more extreme role and then going back to its more preferred role, I have a part that really knows how to get stuff done. It's very efficient, the ones that do things really well, really wants to get it right, so badly to get it right, and that's so that I won't feel less than or not good enough. When my kids were little, around the holiday time, this part will just take over, which is busy, like at Christmas, making sure that all the presents were done and everything was ready for all the company that was coming and all the food was just perfect, and so this part would take over. My kids used to say, "Watch out, mom has a bustle on." Because the part, while it was highly effective at getting stuff done, it was also not relational at all. I wasn't really able to be in relationship with my kids at this really important time because this part was too busy getting stuff done.

After learning more about my parts and healing some of the exiles that this one protected, it's now I still have this part. It's still highly effective, but it doesn't have to lead the show any longer. There are times when I get it out that it can just ... What do they say? Kick butt and take names. It's really good at that. It's less intense, because it's got a relationship with me now so it doesn't have to overwhelm so much and be so in charge. That might be an example of a part who was really forced into this extreme role and always had to do that, could never take a break. Now if it starts to amp up, I can say to it, "We really don't need to do that right now. You don't need to work so hard right now. Everything's okay." That's an example of a part being able to go back into its more preferred role.

Welcome back everybody. I'm going to be talking in this segment about the idea of self or self-energy from an IFS perspective. This is a little bit of a complex conversation. Those of you that are familiar with IFS, you may already know the definition of self, you may already be working with this methodology and working with self in relationship to parts, but this also might be new, a newer concept to some of you. IFS is a psycho-spiritual model of therapy and this is the spiritual aspect that I'm going to be talking about, this idea that all of us, all human beings possess an inner wisdom, healing energy. We see all human beings as already healthy and whole.