

# The Way We Work

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Hi, everybody. Welcome back. I am Pam [inaudible 00:00:17]. I'm going to be hosting this month's training for you all. This month we're going to look at an overview of the model. Just really sort of an IFS session in overview from beginning to end so that you can get an idea of what's supposed to happen, how it looks. Give you a frame. We're going to sort of ... I sometimes say to people, "You know, this is a puzzle. We're going to put all the pieces in." This month is really about giving you a framework for you to fit all the other pieces of the puzzle into.

I'm also going to do ... Tony's going to be my client, or victim, however you look at it. She's going to be my client for a couple of brief demonstrations to show you a little bit about how this looks.

Let's jump in. IFS, like any other model, is very ... The therapeutic relationship is essential. Initially when we're working with clients ... Let's imagine you're starting with a new client. That's probably the easiest way to describe this. Someone comes into your office and they're not going to reveal everything they need to reveal until they're sure, or somewhat sure, that it's safe and okay to reveal what they need to reveal. It is the foundation of our model, just like it's a foundation of many models. Even within that context, the self is still the healing entity in our model.

I also want to give you a framework about what that means, that the self is the healing entity. In IFS, we have 2 basic modalities of working. One is called insight and the other is called direct access. Insight is when we are creating a relationship between the self of the client and the part of the client. That's sort of like, you'll think about going inside. That is describing insight.

There's also direct access, which is a relationship, describes a relationship, between the self of the therapist and the parts of the client. That's also an important aspect of our model and is especially important as we're beginning to establish a therapeutic relationship with our clients.

When a client comes in, remember, it's our job as an IFS therapist to be as self-led as we can. If I'm engaging my client from a place of more self leadership, right? When they're coming in, and I'm getting to know them, it's giving their parts an opportunity to get to know me and determine whether or not they can feel safe with me to do what they need to do in the therapy session, or in the therapy. Make sense to everybody?

I also want to make a little disclaimer. Direct access is not better or worse than insight and insight is not better or worse than direct access. What's important is to know when to use insight and when to use direct access.

Initially when a client comes in, we can't just ask them right away to develop a relationship with their own parts until their parts can feel safe enough with us. When a client, when I'm first engaging a client, I am noticing how curious I can be about that client, what brings that client into therapy, and all the different parts that I can begin to notice in the client.

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Initially I am as curious as I can be. Also, trying to convey to the client that all parts are welcome. That's an important tenant of our model, that every part is welcome in the therapy session, or anywhere, anytime we're together.

That idea of all parts being welcome is a really, really important tenant in our model. Again, remember, we're not welcoming good parts and sending away bad parts. We're trying to know all the parts and develop a relationship with them, and find out what their, especially protectors, what their positive intent is. For them, the best way, or one of the best ways, to create safety for parts to be present is for them to know that they're all welcome.

As I'm beginning with a client, I'm really watching any parts of me that may be coming in to try to help figure things out, to try to help them. You know? I know this from my early training as a therapist, I had a lot of parts that were trained to believe that I needed to know what to do to help the client. In some ways I was the expert at this and they were here for my help.

One of the things I really love about IFS is that's not true in our model. IFS is an incredibly collaborative model where if I can be curious enough and open enough with my clients. I can discover what's happening with their parts and help them find their roadmap through their own parts. That I'm not the expert, they're actually the expert. They just don't know it yet.

I'm more of a ... I don't know. It just really feels to me like I'm just trying to help them listen to their own internal system and their own wisdom, and follow what they know to be true, even though they're not consciously aware of it.

Okay, so maybe at this point it would be helpful for me to just throw in a little example so that you could see how this would work, how you would engage a client as they come in. Again, Tony and I will demonstrate this for you a little bit later.

When someone comes in, right? I'm just asking what brought them here. I'm trying to engage them, get them talking, right? Let's imagine that a woman comes in and says, "I don't know what to do. I'm here because I just ... I think I have to leave my husband and I don't know if I can do that, but I feel" ... Then, this is going to sound like a lot of therapy models, but I would probably say, "Well, tell me more about that." Right?

I'm trying to get her parts talking and hear what her dilemma is and really begin to sort of suss out the parts that ... What part may want to stay, what her fears about leaving are, so that I can begin to create a map for her. She says, "One part of me really wants to stay. I have a very strong religious foundation and I believe that it's wrong to get divorced." Right?

I'm also early on, as I'm engaging the client and trying to be open and curious and create safety for her parts in my presence, I might begin to use parts language a little bit by saying something like, "Oh, so, part of you is pretty religious and doesn't feel like it's right to leave. Is that correct?" Then as she would name another part, "I really ... I can't take it any longer. I just ... I can't take feeling so isolated and so

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alone. I get really angry at him because I've talked and talked and talked, and nothing changes."

I would reflect that back. "So, a part of you feels a different way." Just begin to help her subtly know. Again, as I'm doing this, I'm getting some clarity for myself about the different parts that she has. I'm trying to introduce the concept of parts to her. Again, this creating safety, creating a safe enough space for her parts to be revealing because it's really true that until the client's parts can feel safe enough in the relationship with me, they won't be willing to experiment with that internal relationship.

This can take, developing this external safety, can take 5 minutes, it can take 5 sessions, it can take longer than that. It just depends upon the client. If you'd like to read more about this, there's a book called Internal Family Systems New Dimensions. There's a chapter in the book that Dick Schwartz wrote on the therapeutic relationship. It's really lovely, more in-depth explanation about the importance of the therapeutic relationship and how to establish it.

Once that's established, and again, that's direct access, right? Myself to the part or parts of the client's. Once those parts feel safe enough with myself than they'll be willing to explore the internal relationship and get to know the self of the client.

Now I'm going to demonstrate this first explanation with Tony so you can see what that looks like in a little more detail.