

# Decision Tree

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Pam: Okay, so we're going to talk about this little decision tree I've created, but I do want to start by saying that I don't want this to be so binary that you begin to think I'm doing in-sight or I'm doing direct access or I'm doing one or the other. In truth, every session flows between in-sight and direct access, so it's rare that you stay stuck in one of those two modalities throughout an entire session. Two, however, to teach this, I think it's sometimes the only way to teach it is to describe one and describe the other in more discrete ways, but you will be flowing back and forth between the two modalities in every session that you do.

Okay, so how do we get started? Again, we've talked a lot about this. The curiosity is the most important thing. When your client comes in, just be curious about what they're talking about, but again, how do I feel toward my client? Do I feel like I need to do something? It's really different doing therapy from a place where I feel like I'm responsible, I need to fix something, I need to help somebody, versus doing therapy from a place that I know that everything the client needs to heal is inside of them, and that's really a description of being self-led. I know they have everything they need. I'm just here to help them find their way to that, so I'd encourage you all to check yourselves about that as you're starting with your clients, and then you just start by asking a lot of questions, as we talked about.

In the slide, you'll see getting started, there's some questions there listed for you that we talked about in the last segment, also why you need to do that, what's it like when you do that, what are you afraid would happen if you didn't do that, and then you help your client track the parts, and we talk about a particular situation that's happening. "I got really angry at my partner. He did this, he did this, he did this, and I yelled at him and then I felt really sad and ashamed and then I felt guilty," so you're going to ask a lot of questions and you're going to begin to track parts, so let's go back to my one about, "I got angry with my partner."

"I got really angry at my partner. I wanted to scream and yell at him. In fact, I did. I just yelled and yelled and yelled, and then I could see that I hurt him and I started feeling really awful and ashamed about what I did and I tried to make it better, so I keep trying and trying and trying to make it better but when he does that I feel like he doesn't even love me," so you're just tracking all the parts that someone has, and then you're helping them ...

Again, this is a new client, maybe. I don't really know anything about them, but I'm just listening to their story and asking them what it is they want me to know about them, and then they lay that out and then I'm saying to them, "Okay, so which one of these things would you like to get to know better? This anger that you have? The guilt or shame that you feel? That feeling of not feeling like you

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matter, not feeling loved? Which one of those are you most interested to get to know?"

I'm helping them select a target part, and then I'm going to start with the six F's. I can't say enough how important the six F's are for you. It is really the backbone of this model. We just do it over and over and over again, so the first thing we are trying to do is help this client find a target part. If they don't get what that means, even from the get go, if they can't find a target part, if they don't understand what you mean, that would be an indication that they need some more direct access, so you would ask a question like, "Tell me what you don't understand about that. What's confusing about that?" Whatever comes, you're just then curious about it.

Toni and I were talking about this, about how when we were first IFS therapists and how this can happen for many new IFS therapists, that when somebody puts that barricade up like, "I don't get it, I don't understand what you're talking about," early on I would go right away to the place like, "Oh my gosh, they can't do this," or, "Oh my gosh, I've done something wrong," or, "Oh my gosh, they don't understand the model. They don't like the model," whereas all that part is really saying is, "Really, deep down, I'm afraid. I don't know what you mean," so whatever you're met with, if you can just stay curious about it, you're doing IFS.

If you continue to stay curious you're going to be following the direct access side of this decision tree, so that's down the right-hand side. If they can't do this, you continue doing direct access. If they can do that, if you ask them, they say, "I want to get to know this anger," you can have them find that anger, focus on it, begin to flesh it out. They may say the anger ... I'll feel like what my anger does. My anger takes over my whole body. I can really feel it in my hands. I feel lots of energy in my chest, and if I begin to focus on it and just listen to it, any images or words or thoughts that come with it, you help them do that, and then you ask that most important question in our model. How do you feel toward it?

If they can answer that, if they can say anything, "I feel... I hate that anger," or, "I'm interested to know it better," whatever they say, that's an indication that that makes sense to them and you can continue using in-sight, you can continue down that in-sight side of the decision tree. If they can't answer that, "I don't know what you're talking about. What do you mean how do I feel toward it? This is just what I am," that would tell you that, well, this isn't quite clear to them. That part is really blended with them. Maybe I should just stay here and continue to flesh that part out a little bit using direct access, so you'll see you're going back over toward the direct access side of the tree now. Just continue to

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engage with that part, always asking yourself, "How do I feel toward my client?", which is really, "How do I feel toward that part of my client?"

Let's focus a little bit, just to stay on the left-hand side of the tree, the in-sight side of this decision tree right now. You've helped them find the part, focus on it, flesh it out. You've developed that they can experience a feeling toward it. Just like we talked about in all the previous months, you're going to un-blend any other parts that are there so that they can feel some quality of self energy toward that part, so now you've gone through the first four F's. Find it, focus on it, flesh it out. How do you feel toward it?

Then if you stay on the next side and you've gotten enough of an answer that you know there's a little bit of self energy in the client relating to their own part, now you're going to do the fifth F, and you'll see it on there. You facilitate a relationship between the self of the client and the part of the client, i.e., how do you feel toward it? "I'd like to get to know it," they might say. You help them develop that relationship by then let their part know they'd like to get to know it, have the part respond to the self, and then, once that relationship is built, you go on to the sixth F, which is find out the fears of the part.

If it's a protector you find out what it's fears are, what it's afraid would happen if it didn't do that. You become the hope merchant, helping that protector know that you can heal whatever that protector is taking care of, and then you would move toward that part, which is now an exiled part that's carrying pain, and you would find out its story. You would witness it and then you would unburden it following all the steps of unburdening that you heard about in the first six months of this training, so you've got all the way through.

Then you unburden the part, and then the next session you always start at the top of the six F's again, always at the top of the six F's. It is the backbone, so what I just described is a very smooth flow down that side of the diagram, and obviously it doesn't work that way all the time, so if you get to that step about how you feel toward the part and you can't, other parts won't un-blend, then you have to shift your attention, remember, shift your attention to whatever parts won't un-blend. Like if in this example my client says, "I get really angry and I want to know that anger," and I get to the place where I say, "How do you feel toward that part and this one that just says 'I hate it, I hate it, I hate it'?", won't step back so I can't get a self to part relationship with the original target part, I have to shift.

I have to shift toward this other part that wouldn't un-blend, and when I do that I'm right back to the top of the six F's again. I'm back to the top of my chart. I'm having them find the one that says, "I hate the anger." Find it in your body,

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focus on it, flesh it out, and I'm going to keep going down the left side of the decision tree, so I'm just looking for wherever ... I'm just going to keep doing that until I can find a place where I can get a self to part relationship in the client. That's the flow on the in-sight side of the decision tree.

Back to the direct access side of the decision tree. We've talked about if it doesn't make sense when you ask them to find a part, that doesn't make sense to them, or that you just keep being curious. If they find a part and they can focus on it and they can begin to feel it in their body and then you ask them how do they feel toward it, if that doesn't make sense to them, remember, you stick with direct access. You continue to be curious about who's ever answering that question, or saying, "What don't you understand it? Tell me what's confusing about that," and, again, monitoring myself.

Am I reacting? Am I starting to hear the parts of me that tell me I'm doing something wrong? Am I hearing parts of me that are telling me that something is obstructionist in the client? That's another big thing that will come up. We'll start calling these parts resistant rather than just fearful. They're just afraid, remember? They just don't trust, so I'm constantly monitoring those kinds of things and staying as curious as I can stay with the client, and then the other thing that I'm really doing here is continuing to build a relationship between me and whatever parts of my client are present.

I know that they're scared or they don't trust, and I'm just going to continue to build the relationship and also talk with them very often about the possibilities of what we can do in this model. I am acting as a hope merchant or a possibility merchant to these parts, and that possibility is that there's a way that we can heal whatever is underneath all this stuff. There's a way we can do it safely and that everything the client needs to do this healing is inside of them, and that it's my job or my responsibility or my ability to help them find that healing energy inside of them, so I'm continuing to talk with them about the possibilities of the model while I'm building relationship with them. Not trying to push them into something that they're not ready to do, but also holding that invitation there so that it becomes a possibility.

All that sounds pretty theoretical, and it might be a little difficult to, I don't know, make complete sense out of that, so I'll just give you a quick example about a client that I had many years ago, and this was a person who had an incredibly, incredibly anxious part, who this part was so wanted to connect every time they came in about, "What should I do about this, and what should I do about this, and what should I do about this?" and was not at all open to the possibility of finding any kind of parts in the system.

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I would say something and this person would just pretend like I'd never said anything, so as I would talk with her I would say things like, "Look. We can look at all those different aspects, all those different situations in your life, if you want, and we can talk about some possible solutions for them, but there's also another thing that we can do, and that is we can find what's getting so hurt by all these people in your life and make it so they can't hurt you any longer, so that they can't do this, so you won't have to be so hypervigilant about making sure everything is taken care of," and for the first probably six months that I was with this client, every time I would say that would just completely go over her head, couldn't even hear it.

Then eventually I would say that and she would say things like, "Yeah, but if we do that then you can't help me with this," and I kept saying, "And what if I couldn't? What if I couldn't help you? What if you didn't get that answer that you are striving for?", and we began to uncover this. She was eventually able to talk about this part that felt like it didn't matter to anyone, and then I could say, "That's what we can heal in you. We can heal that place in you that feels so invisible and so like you don't matter, and there's a healing energy inside of you," I use that term a lot for self energy, "so that there's this healing energy inside of you and I can help you find that if you want, so that these people can't hurt you that way," and eventually this anxious part became more and more curious and finally said, "Okay, but I don't know where that healing energy is."

I said, "That's okay. I can help you find it, and if you're ready to do that we can start now," and at that point the part was ready, so you'll see on this decision tree, that's when I went to the six F's, and I said to her, "So right now you're feeling pretty anxious still, right?" She said, "Yeah," and I said, "So just notice what your body feels like. Let's just begin to notice, to notice this part that's trying to help you, that's trying so hard to protect you and to see what it feels like in your body," so it took a while. It took a while. Sometimes it can take a session. Sometimes it can take many weeks or even months with some people to have their parts trust me enough, see, that whole time that anxious part was really trying to find out whether or not it could trust me enough to be open to this possibility that I was describing to it.

Then I went right into the six F's and continued through the model, so I hope that's a helpful explanation. You're going to get a copy of this decision tree with the PDFs, with the handouts for this month, so keep it with you, look at it. Hopefully it'll help out a little bit, and I do just want to say one thing, which is I am really not good with PowerPoint and all that, so I want to thank Toni Herbine-Blank for taking my chicken scratches and turning it into this incredibly incredible document, so thank you Toni, and I hope it's helpful to you all. Take care and see you next time.