

Presence and Congruence

Toni Herbine-Blank: Welcome back. In this segment, I'm going to be talking about presence and congruence and giving you some ideas about how to stay connected to your parts and of course, I want to just say that part of learning how to unblend quickly as an IFS therapist doesn't mean that you stop and you do a piece of work in front of your client but what it does mean, especially if you have a part that keeps coming up over and over again is that you use that as a trail head so that's our offering to you, is that this becomes a piece of work that you do later with your own coach or your own guide or your own therapist.

But when I think about what makes a really good therapist, what I believe is the ability to be present. I also believe that presence is congruence and it makes me think of Carl Rogers' work where he talks about congruence being my experience of myself on the inside is the same as what I project to the outside. In other words, if I'm anxious, I know that I'm anxious. If I'm full of joy, I know that I'm full of joy and that I'm not hiding from myself in any kind of way.

Presence to me is not the absence of parts. Presence to me is the ability for us to be able to cultivate a relationship with our parts such that they trust us enough to stay unblended. I think sometimes when we're talking about unblending, we can confuse people with this notion that we're wanting to get those parts out of the way, to get them to go away and that actually we're human beings and human beings, as that we're human beings, we have personalities, we have feelings and that's what makes us human, makes us so wonderful.

Being present, in my mind, is to be able to track yourself and your client at the same time. It's a wonderful gift to our clients when we're able to do that and I also believe it's a wonderful gift to ourselves. I have the great fortune of living with horses. In order to have a close relationship with a horse, you need to be present and you need to be congruent. I have lots and lots and lots of practice with a non human and it's a lot easier to do that with a non human because horses or mammals, social mammals, although they can resonate, they don't have a cortex so they don't have a story about you.

It's been a wonderful, wonderful learning for me about what it means to stay very congruent because horses, like humans, depend on a trusting relationship and how they trust you is if you know what's going on inside of you. Horses are actually parts welcomers. They would far prefer you to be angry and know that you're angry, be sad and know that you're sad than to try to get all of that out of the way. That's been a wonderful gift for me in my life.

Being able to be congruent, I'm not hiding from myself. That I'm able to look in the mirror and recognize parts of myself. I'm able to track my parts while I'm working with clients and stay unblended. I know what I think. I know what I feel and can be present with all of it while staying present with the client. We say, "Therapist, you must monitor yourself." Some of the questions that you might ask yourself during a session that could be really, really helpful to

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you, so you can keep these questions, write them down and of course, you have these slides is, how am I feeling toward the client?

We're always asking the client, "How are you feeling toward your part?" You can start to ask yourself, "How am I feeling towards this client right now? Do I feel friendly toward their protectors?" It's totally common and totally normal to have parts that start feeling irritated with your client's process. It's going too slow, it's going too fast, it's doing this, it's doing that, I have to go to the grocery store. It's all part of it. It's all part of the process but do you feel friendly toward their protectors? Do you feel friendly towards your own protectors?

Another big one for me is what's happening in my body. My body is my petri dish for parts so I know that my stomach and my shoulders and my diaphragm will all begin to feel energy in those parts of my body when parts of my body, when parts are starting to take over and so I pay very close attention. What's my breathing? Where are my shoulders? Are they up in my ears? Are they down? Am I leaning forward? Am I leaning back?

I pay a lot of attention to what's happening in my body when I'm doing a session. Another question that you could ask yourself is, "Do you feel open hearted enough to receive feedback from your client?" I know that for some parts, that can be a scary prospect because they're going to probably answer you from a part and some of their parts are going to love you. Some of their parts are going to hate you. Some of their parts are going to be afraid of you.

Some of their parts are going to feel ashamed that they're revealing so much to you so just to ask yourself and I think it's a great thing to do from time to time, to ask your clients to give you feedback about how the session is going. Then of course, how do you feel towards your own parts? What happens to you after a session for instance? I know there are times where I trudge upstairs to the kitchen and I meet my husband and I have a part that says, "I was a bad therapist today." We want to just find parts like that and pay attention to what's happening that they're coming up and taking you over when they do.

We're going to ask you to monitor yourself but we're also going to invite you to love yourself. When you can, take a pause, breathe in, breathe out and see if you can turn some of that kindness and compassion and self care toward the parts, the therapist parts in you that work really hard and try to help you out when they're not necessarily needed. To end this segment, I want to read a little bit from the book *New Dimensions*, from Dick Schwartz's chapter on a therapeutic relationship.

He says, "The IFS bumper sticker should be, Self Heals. The essence of the therapeutic relationship is in this affable, touching of spirits, being meeting itself, the self to self connection. Humanists, trans personalists, Buddhists and some current analysts use different words to describe it but we are all getting at the same essence. IFS is but one map to that sacred place. It is,

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however, a clear non pathologizing, empowering user friendly map.

It is relational in multiple dimensions and promotes healing connections at all levels of the client's system. Most crucially between the client's self and parts but also between the therapist's self and the client's whole system." That is the essence of the information that I've been trying to impart to you in this segment. In the segment following this, we're going to do a meditation on focusing on and loving your parts. See you then.