



Healing the Inner Family

(Understanding Parts Work)

We all carry different “parts” within us—inner voices, feelings, or patterns that developed to help us survive and belong. Parts work helps us notice, understand, and care for these inner parts instead of fighting or ignoring them. When we learn to listen to them, we move toward wholeness.

1. The Core Self

This is the calm, curious, compassionate part of you.

It’s the inner “wise adult” that can hold space for every other part.

The goal of parts work isn’t to get rid of any part—it’s to help your Self lead with clarity instead of fear or shame.

2. Common Inner Parts

- **The Protector**
Keeps you safe by avoiding pain, risk, or rejection.
May show up as control, perfectionism, withdrawal, or caretaking.
Its intention: *“I’m trying to keep you from getting hurt again.”*
- **The Inner Critic**
Judges or shames you to maintain control or meet high standards.
Its intention: *“If I’m hard on you first, others can’t hurt you.”*
With compassion, it can become an inner coach rather than a bully.
- **The Inner Child**
Holds your early needs, emotions, wonder, and wounds.
This part often needs attention, comfort, and reassurance that it’s safe now.
- **The Firefighter**
Acts quickly to numb pain—through overworking, scrolling, sex, food, or substances.
Its intention: *“Let’s make the bad feeling stop right now.”*
- **The Exile**
Carries deep pain, shame, or fear from past experiences.
These parts are often hidden away for protection but long to be seen and healed.

3. How Healing Happens

1. **Notice** – “Who’s here right now?” (Name the feeling or thought as a part.)
2. **Understand** – “What is this part trying to do for me?”
3. **Compassion** – “Can I thank this part for its effort, even if it causes problems?”
4. **Integration** – Let your *Self* lead, comfort the wounded parts, and balance the protective ones.

Takeaway

Every part has a positive intention—even if its method causes pain.

Healing means *befriending* your parts, not silencing them.

Over time, they learn to trust your Self to lead with care, courage, and calm.

Suggested Readings & References

- Schwartz, R. C. (2021). *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model*. Sounds True.
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