



THE TRUE SELF & YOUR PROTECTIVE PARTS

A Quick Guide to Understanding Your Inner System

We all have different “Parts” inside us—some confident, some scared, some protective, some critical. These Parts are not flaws; they are adaptations that learned how to keep you safe. IFS (Internal Family Systems) teaches that beneath all of our Parts lives the **True Self**, a grounded, calm inner leader who can guide the system with compassion and clarity. Use this guide to help you notice when you’re in **Self-energy** versus when an **Unhealed/Protector Part** is taking over.

8 C’s of the True Self	Unhealed / Protector Parts (Inner Critic, Controller, Avoidant, Exiled, etc.)
Calm: Grounded, slow, steady.	Reactive / Controlling: Panic, urgency, micromanaging, hypervigilance.
Curiosity: Open, non-judgmental interest in inner experience.	Judgment / Narratives: Inner critic, assumptions, harsh evaluations, rigid stories.
Compassion: Warmth toward pain; “You make sense.”	Shame / Harshness: Self-blame, punitive messages, unworthiness spirals.
Clarity: Seeing things as they are; reality-based perception.	Distortion / Catastrophizing: Black-and-white thinking, fear lenses, trauma-driven interpretations.
Confidence: Steady internal trust; “I can handle this.”	Impostor Syndrome / Collapse: Self-doubt, overcompensation, fawning, “I’m not enough.”
Courage: Turning toward discomfort or conflict.	Avoidance / Defensiveness: Withdrawal, shutting down, arguing, emotional numbing.
Creativity: Flexibility, openness, multiple possibilities.	Rigidity / Perfectionism: Fear of mistakes, tunnel vision, rule-bound behavior.
Connectedness: Belonging, attunement, openness to self and others.	Isolation / Fusion: Pulling away, fear of intimacy, codependency, “I’m alone/unworthy.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Use these anytime a strong emotion, reaction, or pattern shows up.

1. **What Part is showing up right now?** Name it gently (inner critic, avoidant part, perfectionist, protector, etc.).
2. **What is this Part trying to protect me from?** Fear of rejection? Shame? Feeling out of control? Old hurts?
3. **How do I feel toward this Part?** Curious? Annoyed? Compassionate? Judgmental? Afraid? If the feeling *toward* the Part is negative, another Part may be blended.
4. **What does this Part want me to know?** Often the message is: “I’m scared,” or “I’m trying to keep you safe.”
5. **How long has this Part been doing this job?** This opens tenderness and perspective.

6. **What would help this Part feel less alone or less burdened?** Reassurance, boundaries, rest, slowing down, checking facts, asking for support.
7. **Which of the 8 C’s can I bring to this Part right now?** Choose even one—calm, curiosity, compassion, or clarity—to shift the moment.

A Closing Reminder

You don’t heal by fighting your Parts.

You heal by noticing, listening, and bringing your True Self forward.

Every Part has a positive intention. Your Self is here to lead.