



Internal Family Systems: A Simple Overview

A client-friendly introduction to parts, protectors, and Self.

Internal Family Systems (IFS) uses the idea of **parts**: different inner experiences that may carry feelings, beliefs, memories, protective strategies, or needs. The goal is not to get rid of parts, but to relate to them with more curiosity and compassion.

A SIMPLE MAP OF PARTS

SELF	MANAGERS	FIREFIGHTERS	EXILES
The calm, curious, compassionate center of awareness.	Proactive protectors that plan, control, prevent, or work hard to avoid pain.	Reactive protectors that act quickly to numb, distract, escape, or stop pain.	Vulnerable parts that may carry hurt, fear, shame, loneliness, or unmet needs.

THE 8 C'S OF SELF

Curiosity • Compassion • Calm • Clarity • Courage • Confidence • Creativity • Connectedness

THE 5 P'S

Patience • Presence • Persistence • Perspective • Playfulness

A PARTS-AWARE PAUSE

- What part of me is strongest right now?
- What is this part trying to protect me from or help me with?
- What does it fear would happen if it stopped doing its job?
- Can I bring even 5% more curiosity or compassion toward it?

Example

"One part of me wants to push through and get everything done. Another part wants to shut down and rest."
Both can be noticed without either one having to take over.