Internal Family Systems (IFS) Quick Reference

Dr. Richard Schwartz | Linda Curran, BCPC, LPC, CACD, CCPD

Parts Categories

Part Type	Role	Common Behaviors
Managers	Proactive protection	Control, perfectionism, caretaking, intellectualizing
Firefighters	Reactive protection	Substance use, self-harm, rage, dissociation, bingeing
Exiles	Hold pain & trauma	Carry shame, fear, worthlessness, abandonment
Self	Core essence	Compassion, curiosity, calm, clarity, confidence

The 8 C’s of Self

Quality	Description
Curiosity	Open, interested stance toward parts
Calm	Centered, grounded presence
Clarity	Clear perception, not clouded by parts
Compassion	Caring for all parts without judgment
Confidence	Trust in Self and the healing process
Courage	Willingness to face difficult material
Creativity	Flexible, innovative approaches
Connectedness	Sense of connection to parts and others

The 6 F’s Protocol

Step	Purpose	Key Questions
Find	Locate the part	“Where do you notice it in/around your body?”
Focus	Turn attention to it	“Can you focus on that part?”
Flesh Out	Get to know it	“What does it look like? How old?”
Feel	Check relationship	“How do you feel toward this part?”
beFriend	Develop relationship	“Can you let it know you’re interested?”
Fear	Discover its fears	“What is it afraid would happen if it stopped?”

Session Language

Accessing Parts: - "Is there a part that feels..." - "What comes up when you think about..." - "Can you notice where you feel that?" **Checking for Self:** - "How do you feel toward this part?" - If not curious/compassionate: "Can we ask that part to step back?"

Working with Protectors: - "What is this part trying to protect you from?" - "What would it need to feel safe enough to relax?" - "Can you thank it for its hard work?" **Unburdening Exiles:** - "What does this part want you to know?" - "What does it need from you?" - "Is it ready to release what it's been carrying?"

Complex Trauma Considerations

Issue	IFS Approach
Multiple Exiles	Work with one at a time, get permission
Extreme Protectors	Build trust before asking to step back
Dissociative Parts	Go slowly, ensure Self-leadership
Legacy Burdens	May need to unburden inherited pain

Core Assumption: All parts have positive intent. There are no "bad" parts—only parts carrying extreme roles or burdens from the past.

Schwartz, R.C. (2021) *No Bad Parts* | www.ifs-institute.com