Questions Asked During Live Webinar Broadcast on 6/17/2018

Picking up the Pieces for Wholeness and Recovery

Presenter: Dana DeDolph

Has IFS ever utilized the SoulCollage® process to identify and work with the various parts of person?
A: One of the best things about IFS is it’s confidence in the SELF and it’s creativity. It is a community of therapists working with a model that encourages expansion and creativity not just for clients but for therapists. I attended a workshop a couple of years ago where the presenter included this. I would encourage you to connect with the Center for Self-leadership and join the conversations. Thanks for your question.

Has can we support a client who is craving - is acknowledging the craving part actionable enough? Or are there other strategies to support acting on the craving?
A: It is essential to teach a person how to recognize physical/body shifts that announce craving states. IFS recognizes that shifts in parts are manifested in the body, and this is especially true with craving states. Any appetite is similar: the body shifts and then thoughts of what will satisfy or still the discomfort arise...now there is craving. Also craving states can be dreamlike in that they change perception and feelings. The more that a person recognizes that craver, what IFS would call a “firefighter” the more likely he or she would be to know what it shows-up and be able to stay awake... to be a kind of lucid-waker... IFS is a tool for knowing oneself and knowing what the positive intentions of the parts are. The craver, for example, is trying to put out emotional fires or keep them from starting.... That doesn’t work any better than putting out fires with gasoline... but knowing the intention of the part helps one work to ease the craving and learn to put out the fire more consciously.

Recognition...which includes body-awareness, not just cognition, comes from the SELF and the SELF is not the craver. Finding one’s way to the SELF is paradoxical and comes as a result of recognizing parts that are elements of the human system, but not the SELF. We learn to recognize and know our parts the way we learn to recognize and know other people.... We know who is showing-up and then we find ourselves in SELF. When one is BLENDED with a part like the craver one loses connection with the self and sees and feels reality through the eyes of the craver. It is very hard then to even consider why it might make sense to stay sober. ONCE IN A CRAVING STATE ONE IS IN THE DREAM...WAKING-UP IS POSSIBLE IF ONE KNOWS ONE IS DREAMING...IF ONE LEARNS HOW TO BE LUCID. When one is in SELF---or LUCID—he or she has choice. The craver does not have choice. One gets to the SELF by knowing the part and in the SELF discovers compassion for all the parts, even the troublesome craver. The SELF is a SAFE place and from there a person can make a decision about what to do next. For folks who resonate with AA.... the meetings are a kind of externalized IFS example.... one brings one own addicted part to a safe place and gets acceptance and eventually compassion for the offending part. When one is blended with the craver than one is either drunk ....either wet or dry. Thanks so much for your question. IFS is an expansive way to work allowing the therapist all sorts of hope, friendliness, and presence with the person who is the client. It is possible to welcome the craver and teach the client how to do the same, and the effect is greater choice which supports sobriety.

IFS is a process like meditation, and awareness increases with time. It is an excellent framework for hope.

Do you advocate 12 step program with your therapy?
A: Yes. IFS works well with 12-step programs which are a venue for rejected, offending, and difficult parts. 12-step programs when working well are finding their way to the greater SELF that like breath is in every person. I feel this practice would be useful for a person who has been stable in recovery for a period of time, but confusing for someone just trying to get clean and sober. It seems REBT would be more appropriate for its simplicity. How have you seen this work with persons in early recovery?
A: It works well right away if the therapist doesn’t go into big explanations, but sees the substance-abusing part as a part rather than the person. The client doesn’t need to understand the whole model and will almost always find great relief in considering the PART that is abusing substances a part that takes him or her over and confiscates identity. Everyone knows he or she is way more than just the addicted part, and it facilitates sobriety to begin breaking the identification right away. It is not only a relief to consider the addicted part a part, but people know that it’s true...and that is why it is a relief. Also since addiction brings temporary relief to the body, one in early
recovery is at the mercy of the body and its distress. I think it helps to remember this model isn’t about intellectualizing… it is a model that helps one be aware of one’s own system and how it works in the body, mind, and relationships. There is more hope in knowing one has a part that is out of control than if one IS that part. With that, of course, comes the recognition that using or wanting to is a blended state where the addicted body looks like the person. I would say also that any tools are useful.

**Is it the parts that cause the stress of flight or fight?**

A: Flight or flight is sudden. A part can be triggered and the body responds. Now the part is present.

**Do you work with children?**

A: I don’t because I am a mother… and I find that this part of me is not a therapist but becomes activated when working with kids… It is just not something I want to do. IFS is very useful with children, however.

**Is self-leadership a possible outcome of IFS for Dependent Personality Disorder?**

A: Yes... So much more possible since the goals are to know, understand, and help the dependent part find relief from the burdens of fear and loneliness. Most folks who have been struggling like this already feel sufficiently wrong. IFS does not pathologize human experience and tries to avoid labels I which are really a list of symptoms but can stigmatize a person a prevent change.

You mentioned that you were involved with the dynamics of your parents when you were 4. Was this diagnosed as Emotional Incest?

A: I think that children are always involved with dynamics of their homelife. It is the first language of life. Having a part of a child that assumes burdens to fix things is not abnormal nor anything like incest. Diagnoses is most useful for insurance billing, but full of the potential for misunderstanding and judgement.

Often we speak of 'self destruction' or 'self sabotage.' It strikes me that parts work can be at the root of what we call 'self sabotage' - parts or a part of ourselves becomes larger or overbearing. Can you elaborate on this?

A: Yes, I think that a sabotaging part has an agenda.... probably to protect the vulnerable exiled inner child. It is so important to establish a relationship with the sabotaging part so that it can release its caretaking burdens. Parts like this drag a person into the past and are as powerful as they have learned to be afraid. Knowing them is so different than trying to lock them up and talk them out of what they are doing. If they tell you then you can help them grow and relax.

**Do you have to be certified to use IFS in therapy?**

A: No you don’t have to be certified. Certification is available. You can go to [www.centerforself-leadership.com](http://www.centerforself-leadership.com)

IFS trainings are available online as well as in retreat and class forms.

**Have you ever used IFS with families that have experience trauma, such as sexual abuse?**

A: Richard Schwartz, PhD, who developed the model was a family therapist for many years and realized that the family is internalized as well as in the room. The model is very helpful with couples and families, but sexual abuse and trauma has to be worked on first on an individual basis. IFS has library and video resources on their website and also on Youtube.

**What therapeutic modality are these terms based upon?**

A: When we learn to speak a language as children our brain internalizes it. Not just the words, but the assumptions and perceptions of reality implicit in the use of that language in the families in which we find ourselves. The family also...and actually the world...is internalized. A child might have an internal protector/parent and that part would have come to protect the internal, vulnerable child. All parts come for the survival and protection of the living human. Some of those parts, depending on when the come, can be very young but feel very old. IFS does not pathologize, but seeks to know, understand, and relate to one’s own system. The SELF of the client is the source of healing and integration, and the therapist is there to facilitate relationships between the client’ SELF and parts. IFS does not support leaving people in unsafe situations or ignoring domestic violence or abuse.

In cases of domestic violence, children often become parentified, protecting siblings, or the person being abused. Is it accurate to say their emotional development is greatly stunted and how would you draw a parallel to IFS regarding the child becoming the protector/parent?