

A scenic landscape featuring a river with a stone bridge in the foreground, rolling green hills in the middle ground, and a blue sky with white clouds in the background. The scene is peaceful and natural.

A Step-By-Step Guide to
Creating Wholeness and Healing Your Inner Child
Using IFS, A New, Cutting-Edge Psychotherapy

Self-Therapy

Companion Workbook

Self-Therapy

A Step-By-Step Guide to
Creating Inner Wholeness Using IFS,
A New, Cutting-Edge Therapy

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Identifying the Parts at a Trailhead

Choose a trailhead that you are interested in exploring. Using the approach described above, make a list of each of the parts involved with that trailhead. For each part, write the following if you can:

Name of part _____

What it feels emotionally _____

What it looks like _____

What it feels like in your body and where _____

What it says _____

How it makes you behave _____

What it wants _____

You haven't fully explored these parts, so don't be concerned if you don't know much about them. Just fill in what you do know. Add information to your description later as you get to know the part better.

Accessing a Part that Isn't Activated

Pick one of your parts that isn't activated right now. Imagine that you are in a situation in which the part is activated and notice how that feels. From that place, try accessing the part using each of the channels—feeling, body, image, and internal voice. Write down what you experience.

Name of part _____

What it feels emotionally _____

What it looks like _____

What it feels like in your body and where _____

What it says _____

However, remember that it isn't necessary to achieve access through all channels.

Accessing Parts from a Trailhead

Pick a trailhead that is important to you in your life. If it isn't activated at the moment, imagine yourself in that trailhead situation or remember a recent time when you were. Notice what you feel in that situation. Access each of the parts you are aware of that are related to that trailhead, one at a time. Use as many channels as you can. For each part, write down what you experience.

Name of part _____

What it feels emotionally _____

What it looks like _____

What it feels like in your body and where _____

What it says _____

Noticing a Part in Real Time

Choose a part that is activated with some frequency in your life that you want to learn more about. _____

Over the next week, practice noticing when this part is activated. It will help to know what cues will tip you off that it is activated. What body sensations, thoughts, or emotions will let you know it is up—for example, a tight stomach, revenge fantasies, or feeling teary like a child? _____

What behavior will cue you that the part has taken over—for example, withdrawing from your partner, taking over a conversation, or eating too much? _____

What situations or people tend to activate this part—for example, meeting someone you are attracted to, giving a talk, or being disobeyed by your son? _____

When are these likely to occur during the next week? _____

Set an intention to be especially aware of whether this part becomes activated during those times. Each time you notice the part is triggered, access it briefly and take down brief notes about it.

If you can't stop at the moment to make notes, do it at your next break or as soon as you can. You want it to be fresh in your memory. At the end of each day, take a few minutes to review the day for moments when the part was activated. Add to your notes at this time. This daily review will also help you to keep this exercise in mind the next day.

Notes to take each time it happens:

Situation: _____

How you experience the part: _____

What about this situation triggered the part: _____

Don't expect perfection. You probably won't catch all the times this issue is activated or be clear about what is going on each time. That is very difficult to do. You may be driving or trying to get a project finished or talking with someone, for example, so it may be difficult to be aware of much else. That is fine. Just do the best you can.

Daily Parts Check-In

For the next week, take a little time each day to check in with your parts. Notice which parts are activated at that moment as you learned to do in Chapter 4. By doing this regularly, you will get used to paying attention to your inner family. Plan a certain time each day to do this exercise. Some people prefer to do it first thing in the morning, others at night before they go to bed. Make a list of each part that is activated at that time. For each one, fill in the following answers, if you know them:

Name of part _____

What it feels _____

What it looks like _____

Where it is located in your body _____

What it says _____

How it makes you behave _____

Don't be concerned if you don't know all this information about the part. Just fill in what you can.

Keeping Track of Your Parts

Look at the list of parts you made in Chapter 4. Add to this list all the new parts you have discovered since then, with descriptive paragraphs for each. Add information to the descriptions of the old parts, reflecting anything new you have learned about them since then. For each part, include the following information (if you know it):

Name of protector _____

What it feels _____

What it looks like _____

Where it is located in your body _____

What it says _____

How it makes you behave _____

What it wants _____

What situations activate it _____

What concerned parts react to it _____

Other information _____

Each time you do a session or exercise, add to your list and descriptions.

Getting to Know a Protector

Choose a protector to get to know. Do a session in which you follow all four steps you have learned so far, P1-P4. Use the Help Sheet from Chapter 6 to keep track of the steps. If you are working with a partner, the partner should also follow along on the Help Sheet. When you are finished, write down what you learned about the part:

Name _____

What it feels _____

What it looks like _____

Where it is located in your body _____

What it says _____

How it makes you behave _____

What situations activate it _____

What concerned parts react to it _____

What its positive intent is _____

What it is protecting you from _____

Other information _____

Working with a Trailhead in Real Time

Choose a trailhead that you are curious about. _____

The exercise is to notice, over the next week, when this trailhead is activated and then access the parts involved. It will help to know what cues will tip you off that it is activated. What kinds of situations or people tend to activate this trailhead? _____

When are these trigger situations likely to occur during the next week? _____

Set an intention to be especially aware, during those times, of whether this part becomes activated. _____

There are also other ways to notice a trailhead. What body sensations, thoughts, or emotions will let you know it is up? _____

What behavior will cue you? _____

Each time you notice the trailhead, access each part briefly and make a list of them. _____

If you can't stop at the moment to make the list, do it at your next break, or as soon as you can. To help you keep on track with this exercise, take a little time each night before you go to bed to think about whether this trailhead came up that day.

If so, did you access the parts involved? _____

If you didn't, what kept you from doing this? _____

Did you fail to notice that it was activated? _____

Did you notice but not do the exercise? _____

If you did the exercise, what did you learn from it? _____

Take notes and try to answer the above five questions each night. This daily review will also help you to keep the exercise in mind the next day.

Don't expect yourself to catch all the times this trailhead is activated or to access the parts each time. This is very difficult to do. If you are driving or in the midst of a conversation, for example, it's hard to pull your attention away and tune into the workings of your mind. Just do the best you can.

Developing a Trusting Relationship with a Protector

Do a session in which you get to know a protector, using steps P1-P5 that you have now learned. Pay particular attention to step P5 from this chapter. Follow the Help Sheet to keep track of the steps. When you are finished, write down what you have learned about the part:

Name _____

What it feels _____

What it looks like _____

Where it is located in your body _____

What it says _____

How it makes you behave _____

What situations activate it _____

What concerned parts react to it _____

What its positive intent is _____

What it is protecting you from _____

What you understand or appreciate about the part _____

How the part responded to your saying that _____

Gaining a Part's Trust

Choose a protector that you have tried to work with that hasn't been responsive to you.

In what ways has it not responded to you? _____

First make sure that you are in Self with respect to this part and not blended with any concerned parts. If you discover any concerned parts, ask them to step aside so you are truly in Self.

Concerned parts _____

Check to see if this protector will now talk to you. If it still won't, work with it as discussed in this chapter and see if you can gain its trust. Answer the following questions about this work:

What does the part not trust about you? _____

What happened in the past to make it mistrustful? _____

This may take more than one session.

Helping a Protector to Relax in Real Time

Think of a situation in which a protector gets triggered that causes you to behave in a problematic way. _____

Do a session in which you get to know the protector that is causing the difficulty. Form a trusting relationship with this protector.

Name of protector _____

Describe how it behaves _____

If you were able to act from Self, how would you like to behave? _____

Ask the protector if it will let you lead the next time you are in such a situation. (Make sure you have the life skills to pull off the positive behavior you are aiming for.) If it says no, ask why, and then work with that protector to get to the point where it will agree.

Think about when this situation is likely to occur over the next few weeks. _____

Set an intention to be aware of whether this protector takes over at those times. When it does, work with it as described above to help it relax and let you lead. If this works, take notes on what happened as soon as you can. What did your behavior look like when you were leading from Self? _____

What were the results? _____

Continue to track this kind of situation over the next few weeks, doing this exercise each time the part is activated. Each evening before you go to bed, review the day to see if the situation arose, and take notes (or expand your notes) on what happened when you did this exercise. If the protector allowed you to lead and things turned out well, check to see if it now trusts you more. If you didn't notice the situation at the time or you didn't do the exercise, explore what got in the way. If this is a situation that doesn't come up very often, it wouldn't make sense to do this review every night. You might decide to review once a week. Choose a time frame that is appropriate.

Getting Permission to Work with an Exile

Do a session in which you practice getting permission from a protector to work with the exile it guards. If possible, choose a protector that you have already become acquainted with. Re-access the protector, make sure you are in Self, and finish discovering its positive intent and developing a trusting relationship with it, as covered in Chapters 7 and 8. Then recognize who the exile is and work on getting permission to contact it, as covered in this chapter. Once you have permission, invite the exile to tell you or show you what it feels. Take notes on what you discover:

Protector _____

Positive intent _____

What it is afraid would happen if it didn't play its role _____

Exile _____

What the protector is afraid would happen if you contacted the exile _____

What the exile feels _____

Getting to Know an Exile

Do a session in which you get to know an exile. If possible, start with one that you already have permission to work with, and then proceed through Steps E1-E5. Use Help Sheet 2 below (along with Help Sheet 1) to guide you through the steps. If such an exile isn't ready, start with a protector. Go through the steps to get to know it, discover the exile it is guarding, and get permission before proceeding through the exile steps. Then fill in the answers below that are relevant to your work.

Exile _____

What the exile would be afraid of, if it separated from you _____

Concerned parts and their fears _____

Exile's feelings _____

What situations cause it to feel that way _____

How you feel toward the exile _____

How the exile is responding to you _____

Noticing an Exile in Real Time

Choose an exile that you have already gotten to know. Over the next week, notice when this exile becomes activated. To help you with this, think of the kinds of situations that usually trigger this exile. _____

When are those situations likely to occur this week? _____

Each time you are in one, pay careful attention to see if the exile is triggered. If it is, what does it feel? _____

Does a protector become activated to guard against this exile? If so, which protector and how does it act? _____

If there is no protector, how does the exile act? _____

Accessing and Witnessing a Childhood Memory

Do a session in which you access the childhood memory of an exile and witness it. If possible, start with an exile that you already have permission to access and have worked with to some extent. If you don't have one this far along, start with a protector and go through the steps to get to know it, discover its exile, and get to know her. Then access and witness the childhood origins of her pain as you have learned to do in this chapter.

Exile _____

Exile's feelings and beliefs _____

What happened in childhood _____

How that made the exile feel _____

How you feel toward the exile now _____

Does the exile feel that you understand how bad it was? _____

Reparenting and Retrieving an Exile

Do a session in which you give an exile the reparenting and retrieval it needs. If possible, start with an exile that you already have worked with to some extent. If you don't have one, start with a protector, get to know it, get permission to work with its exile, and witness the childhood memory. Then reparent the exile as you have learned to do in this chapter, and also retrieve it if appropriate. Use Help Sheet 3 below (along with 1 and 2) to guide you in this session.

Exile _____

What happened in childhood _____

How that made the exile feel _____

What form of reparenting you gave the exile _____

If the exile needed to be retrieved, where did you take it? _____

Reparenting an Exile in Real Time

Choose an exile that you have already given reparenting to.

Name of exile _____

Original childhood situation _____

How you reparented the exile _____

You will continue to reparent this exile in real time over the next week. In order to be aware of when the exile is likely to be triggered, answer the following questions:

What kinds of situations or people tend to activate this exile? _____

When are these likely to occur during the next week? _____

Set an intention to be aware of whether this part becomes activated during those times.

There are also other ways to notice an exile.

What body sensations, thoughts, or emotions will let you know she is triggered? _____

When you notice that the exile has been triggered, take a moment to tune into her and find out what she is feeling and what she needs. Most likely, she will need the same form of reparenting that you have already given her in a session.

This makes it easy to do because you already know what she needs. Give the exile the reparenting in the moment.

Notice how she responds to this. _____

Unburdening an Exile

Do a session in which you unburden an exile. If possible, start with an exile that you have already worked with. If you don't have one, start with a protector, get to know it, get permission to work with its exile, and proceed through the steps, culminating with the unburdening you have learned to do in this chapter. Use the Help Sheets to guide you.

Exile _____

What happened in childhood _____

How that made the exile feel _____

What form of reparenting you gave the exile _____

If the exile needed to be retrieved, where did you take it? _____

Burdens the exile carries _____

Where it carries the burdens in its body _____

What element the burdens were released to _____

Positive qualities that emerged _____

Releasing a Protector

Choose an exile that you have already unburdened, if possible. If you don't have one, choose one that you have worked with to some extent, and carry the IFS process through to unburdening. Then re-access the protector of that exile and help it to release its protective role as you have learned to do in this chapter.

Protector _____

Protector's role _____

Exile _____

Exile's burden _____

Is the protector now ready to let go of its role? _____

If not, why not? _____

If so, what new role would it like to play? _____

Are there any parts that are uncomfortable with these changes? What are their concerns? _____

How did you reassure them? _____

When you imagined the external situation, what did you feel? _____

Were any parts triggered? _____

Does any future work need to be done? _____

Follow-Up with the Protector

Choose a protector that has released its protective role. You will be checking in with it during the week, whenever it is triggered.

Preparation

To help yourself be aware at those times, answer the following questions:

What kinds of situations or people tend to activate this protector? _____

When are these likely to occur during the next week? _____

What body sensations, thoughts, behavior, or emotions will let you know it is triggered? _____

During the Week

In those situations in which the protector is usually triggered, notice whether or not it becomes activated. If it doesn't activate, notice how you feel and act that is different than before. _____

Appreciate the changes you have made. Celebrate your success.

If the protector does become activated, check in to see what triggered it and what it is afraid of. _____

Keep track of this so you know what additional work is needed in a future session to complete the transformation of this protector.