

THE 6Fs: THE STEPS WE USE TO HELP PROTECTIVE PARTS DIFFERENTIATE FROM THE SELF

The first three steps (find, focus, flesh out) involve helping parts to unblend.

1) **FIND** the part in, on or around the body.

- Who needs your attention right now?
- Where do you notice it?

2) **FOCUS** on it.

- Turn your attention inside.

3) **FLESH** it out.

- Can you see it?
 - If so, how does it look?
- If not, how do you experience it?
 - What is that like?
- How close are you to it?

4) How do you **FEEL** toward the part?

- This question is our Geiger Counter for Self-energy. Any answer that is not in the ballpark of the 8 C's means that a second part is influencing our thoughts.
 - We ask this second part if it is willing to relax so we can talk to the target part.
 - "If it is not willing to relax," we ask it what it needs us to know.
 - This process may lead us to a second (or third, fourth...) target part.
- Reactive parts often need to feel heard and validated. We stay with them until they are willing to let us get to know the target part.
- Once they agree, we ask the client, "How do you feel toward the (target) part now?"

5) **BeFRIEND** the part by finding out more about it.

- The fifth step involves learning about the target part and developing a friendly relationship. This builds relationships internally (Self to part) and externally (part to therapist).
 - "How did it get this job?"
 - "How effective is the job?"
 - "If it didn't have to do this job, what would it rather do?"
 - "How old is it?"
 - "How old does it think you are?"
 - "What else does it want you to know?"

6) What does this part **FEAR**?

- "What does it want for you?"
- "What would happen if it stopped doing this job?"

This key question will reveal any lurking polarization.

"If I stop feeling anxious, I'm afraid the suicidal part will take over." Or it will reveal the exile it protects.

"If I stop feeling anxious I'm afraid Jane will feel all alone and worthless."

OUR INVITATION TO PROTECTORS

Whether we use internal communication or direct access, once we have gone through the 6F's with a protector, we expect it will feel that the client's Self has a good sense of its job and its fears. If we have succeeded thus far, we have a relationship with the part and we can offer it an alternative solution to the underlying problem of the exile. Our invitation to hard-working protectors, whose efforts have usually brought mixed results at best, is to *try something new*. As incentive, we assert that the part's *risk in trying something new will be minimal* ("you can always go back to doing what you do"), the *wound can be healed* and *the part can be safe* with the client's Self.

WHAT WE SAY TO PROTECTIVE PARTS

"If this little girl no longer felt the pain of being alone in the world would you need to protect her?"

"There is a way to heal her. And once she is healed you would be free to do other things. Are you interested?"

Protective parts usually welcome the opportunity to give up the roles they were forced into once upon a time. We assure them that rather than wanting to get rid of them we want to help them get rid of their jobs. In this way, we offer them a new possibility and hope for a different future.

THE 6F'S GOAL

First we *find, focus* on and *flesh out* a protective part in order to help it unblend and notice the client's Self. Next we ask how the client feels toward the target part in order to help other parts unblend so the client's Self is available. Finally we *befriend* the target part, explore its *fears* and *invite* it to try something new. Our goal with protective parts is to get their permission to access and heal exiled parts.



ALL PARTS ARE WELCOME

DIRECTIONS: In IFS our credo is: All parts are welcome! Here is an exercise to help you welcome all of your parts.

Turn your attention inside and begin with this offer:

"I want to help anyone who needs help. To do that, I need to know all of you."

Then provide this information:

"If you overwhelm me, I can't be there to help you."

And make this request:

"Please be here with me rather than taking me over and, when you're ready, let me know who you are. I will write this down."

Write down the parts (thoughts, feelings or sensations) that you hear, see or sense inside (use extra paper if needed):



GOING INSIDE TO IDENTIFY PARTS

DIRECTIONS: Follow the prompts, and adjust as needed. You may want to write down or record what your notice.

- Settle into a comfortable position.
- Notice your back against the chair, your feet on the floor and your contact with the ground.
- Close your eyes and take a couple deep breaths if that feels comfortable. Notice.
- Focus your attention inside and notice any thoughts, feelings or sensations that show up.
 - You may notice physical sensations – some may be pleasant, others may be unpleasant.
 - You may notice one feeling or many feelings.
 - You may hear one thought or many thoughts competing with each other.
 - You may notice blankness or fogginess inside. That's okay.
- You may also notice your mind wanting to distract you and shift your focus away from that sensation, feeling or thought.
- Be curious about whatever you notice.
 - What does it want you to know?
 - What is it holding for you?
- If you can, send it gratitude for showing up, even if what you have noticed is negative.
- Notice how the part responds to your gratitude.
- When you feel ready, come back to the room.

Notice how your energy shifts when you focus your attention internally for a few minutes. Are you calmer, more peaceful or perhaps more agitated?

Meditation

GET TO KNOW A PART

This meditation is designed to help you get to know a little bit about a part that you want to help or change your relationship with.

- *If it feels good, go ahead and take a deep breath.*
- *And think of a part who you'd like get to know a little better.*
- *Go ahead and focus on that part wherever you find it, in, on or around your body.*
 - *If you can't focus on it, that's okay.*
- *Either way, notice how you feel toward it.*
- *If you feel anything other than curiosity or acceptance, ask the reactive part if it would be willing to separate from you and not interfere just so you can learn more about your target part. We're not going to let it take over, we're just going to get to know it.*
- *And keep doing that with reactive parts until you feel curious about the original part.*
- *You may find that you don't get there, that other parts won't separate, which is okay. You can just spend the time listening to their fears about separating.*
- *But if they do let you feel at least curious about the original one then it's safe to listen.*
- *What does that original part want you to know about itself?*
- *What has the part been trying to do for you? To you?*
- *What might it need from you?*

I'll stop talking for a little while now and let you get to know it and then come back with time to return.

- *Okay, in the next few minutes we'll begin to come back.*
- *Thank the part for letting you know about it.*
- *And let it know this doesn't have to be its only chance to talk to you. If it wants, you can come back to it another time.*
- *And before you come back to this room, make sure you thank all the other parts for letting you get to know this one or letting you know that they were afraid if they didn't.*
- *And when all that feels complete, you can, if it feels right, begin to take some deep breaths again and shift your focus back to the outside.*



DIRECT ACCESS

DIRECTIONS: Direct access is a two-way conversation in which the Self of the therapist speaks directly with the client's target part, periodically asking if the client's Self can be brought in on the conversation. In direct access, the therapist speaks to the part.

You can use direct access with clients or, for practice, you can conduct a role-play with a colleague or embody one of your client's protective parts by going back and forth between being the therapist and the client, either changing chairs or shifting a bit to one side and then the other on a couch. Try this exercise with a protector.

1. "I want to talk to this protective part directly. Are you there?"

2. "What do you do for _____ [Marianne]?"

3. "How long have you had this job?"

4. "How's it going?"

5. "What are you concerned would happen if you stopped?"

6. "If we could help that part (the one who would take over and do something problematic if this part were to stop), would you still need to do this job?"

Wounded Part (Belief) Protector Parts Activating Event (Trauma)

I am... _____

Managers _____

Firefighters _____

Symptoms

Confirming Events

- CBT Manage negative thoughts
 - DBT Coping skills for symptoms
 - Etc. "Trim leaves"
- IFS Identify and befriend parts
 - Etc. Learn triggers
 - "Identify damage"
- EMDR Heal trauma
 - Sensorimotor "Pull roots"
 - Etc.

