

Internal Family Systems (IFS) Resource Guide

A Practical Guide for Understanding Inner Conflict and Restoring Self-Leadership

Understanding Your Internal System

You are not one single voice inside. You are a system—and every part of you has been trying to protect you.

Most people experience internal conflict.

One part of you wants to move forward. Another part holds you back. One part seeks connection, while another protects you from vulnerability.

You may wonder:

- **Why do I feel pulled in different directions?**
- **Why do I react in ways I don't fully understand?**
- **Why does change feel difficult even when I want it?**

This is not a sign that something is wrong with you.

It is how the mind naturally organizes itself.

Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy helps you understand these inner dynamics. Instead of fighting yourself, you learn to understand, organize, and lead your internal system.

You are not broken.

You are a system capable of healing and integration.

Signs You Might Benefit from IFS Work

You may benefit from IFS-informed therapy if you notice:

- **Strong internal conflict or indecision**
 - **Harsh self-criticism or perfectionism**
 - **Anxiety, overwhelm, or emotional reactive**
 - **Avoidance or emotional shutdown**
 - **Patterns you understand but cannot change**
 - **Shame or negative self-beliefs**
 - **Feeling disconnected from yourself**
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Self-Assessment Reflection

Take a few minutes to reflect:

- **What different “parts” of you do you notice in conflict?**
 - **When do these parts tend to show up?**
 - **What does each part seem to want or protect?**
 - **Which part feels most dominant right now?**
 - **What would it feel like to respond from a calm, clear place?**
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Nervous System Regulation Exercises

1. Notice and Name the Part

When you feel triggered:

- **Pause and notice what is happening internally**
- **Say: “A part of me is feeling ___”**
- **Create some distance from the experience**

This reduces overwhelm and increases awareness.

2. Slow Down Internal Reactivity

When multiple parts feel activated:

- **Take slow, steady breaths**

- **Allow space before reacting**
- **Observe rather than immediately act**

This helps your system settle.

3. Return to Grounded Awareness

Reconnect with your body:

- **Feel your feet on the ground**
- **Notice your breathing**
- **Bring attention to the present moment**

This helps you access a more stable internal state.

Practical Tools for Working with Parts

1. Get Curious Instead of Critical

Instead of judging yourself, ask:

- **“What is this part trying to do for me?”**
- **“What is it protecting me from?”**

Curiosity reduces internal conflict.

2. Identify Common Types of Parts

You may notice patterns such as:

- **A self-critical or perfectionistic part**
- **A part that avoids or withdraws**
- **A part that becomes anxious or overwhelmed**
- **A part that seeks comfort or distraction**

These parts developed for a reason.

Understanding them helps them change.

3. Strengthen Your “Self” Leadership

At your core is a stable, grounded state often described as your “Self.”

This state can be understood as having the following qualities (The 8 C’s & the 5 P’s):

- **Calm**
- **Curiosity**
- **Compassion**
- **Confidence**
- **Clarity**
- **Courage**
- **Creativity**
- **Connectedness**
- **Presence**
- **Patience**
- **Persistence**
- **Perspective**
- **Playfulness**

The goal is not to eliminate parts—but to lead them from this stable place.

Mini Worksheet: Internal Parts Awareness

Trigger Situation:

What Part Showed Up:

What That Part Felt:

What That Part Was Trying to Do:

What I Might Try Next Time:

Preparing for Your First IFS Therapy Session

Beginning IFS therapy can feel both insightful and new.

Before your first session, it may help to reflect on:

- **Patterns or reactions you want to understand**
- **Internal conflicts you've noticed**
- **Areas where you feel stuck**
- **What you hope to experience differently**

You do not need to identify all your parts ahead of time.

This process develops naturally in therapy.

How to Get the Most Out of Therapy

IFS work is most effective when approached with openness and patience.

Helpful approaches include:

- **Being curious about your internal experience**
- **Allowing parts to be explored without judgment**
- **Practicing awareness between sessions**
- **Moving at a pace that feels manageable**

Change happens through understanding—not force.

Recommended Books and Apps

Books

No Bad Parts — Richard Schwartz

Self-Therapy — Jay Earley

Parts Work — Tom Holmes

Apps

Insight Timer

Calm

Reflectly

Closing Encouragement

You are not defined by your internal conflict.

You are a system that developed to protect you—and that system can change.

With the right support, many people begin to experience:

- **Reduced internal conflict**
- **Greater emotional stability**
- **Increased self-compassion**
- **Stronger clarity and decision-making**
- **A deeper sense of wholeness**

You are not broken.

Your system is ready to be understood—and led.

You can become more grounded, more integrated, and more fully yourself.