

## Client Exercise

### Getting to Know a Manager

Managers are proactive and future-oriented parts who want you to improve and make progress. Toward this end, they may engage in a variety of behaviors like perfectionism, self-criticism, analyzing, approval-seeking, planning, striving, minimizing, controlling, moralizing, and overworking. This exercise guides you to befriend a manager part whose activity feels familiar to you. Choose any part who would like your attention; it doesn't need to be extreme.

1. First, get comfortable. There is no right way to do this exercise. Just follow your breath to your inner world, and when you're ready, ask for a manager part who would like some attention.
2. Once you've identified a manager, place that part on the other side of a one-way mirror. Invite it to be active and do what it usually does while you observe. Notice its body language and facial expressions. Listen to what it says. For example, you may begin to observe a part who is always planning: when to shop for groceries, what time to retrieve the children, when to walk the dog, how to fit in extra tasks, how to complete a work project, and so on. Tell that part that you're right there watching and you want to know more. If you don't see the part because it's more auditory than physical—for example, a perfectionist part who shows up as a voice in your mind or as a buzzing pressure near your head—you can still let it know that you're listening or feeling its energy and you're open to its message.
3. If at any point another part activates, ask it to relax and offer to check on it later, then return to the manager who is your target part. Whenever reactive parts emerge in this manner, ask them to relax. When you feel open and curious, return to the target manager and resume listening. Notice how you feel toward this manager, and if you're still feeling curious, here are some questions to ask:
  - When you pressure me to \_\_\_\_\_ [*fill in the blank with the manager's usual behavior, such as planning ahead, making no mistakes, making sure my supervisor is happy, etc.*], how are you trying to help?
  - How long have you been helping me this way?
  - How old are you?
  - Do you remember a time when acting like this became especially important? What was going on then?

- Was there ever a time when you couldn't help me to act this way? If so, what was that like for you and what happened?
- What are you afraid would happen if you took a break or stopped doing what you do? How long have you had these fears and concerns?
- Have you ever been in a situation where these fears actually came true?
- Have you ever tried to take a break from doing what you do? What happened then? How did you return to your role and get things back on track?
- When you look at me, whom do you see? (Sometimes the part sees another part. For example, it might see you as an eight-year-old child or as an acting-out firefighter part.)
- What else do you want me to know about you?

As you ask these questions, you might find that some manager parts use language to talk back to you, as if you are conversing. Other parts communicate nonverbally by showing you images to answer your questions or explain their motivations without using words. Whatever communication you get from the part, check to see if your heart is open. If so, let it know that you're paying attention and that you understand what it's telling you. If you don't understand, ask it to clarify. Some people find it helpful to respond to the part with words like, "Now that makes sense to me. I get why you want to be sure I don't fail. I appreciate your hard work."

When you understand the part's intentions and fears, thank it for sharing and acknowledge its hard work. Let it know that you want to stay in touch and help out so it's not alone. If it doesn't seem to know or trust you, acknowledge that this can easily be the case because relationships take time; let it know that you're prepared to be patient. Finally, notice how the part responds to your support, offer to stay connected, and take notes for future reference.

## Client Exercise

### Getting to Know a Firefighter

Firefighters are protectors who react to manager overreach and to the surfacing of exiled pain. The most common firefighter activities involve self-medicating with alcohol, drugs, food, or sexual practices, including looking at pornography. Other firefighter parts also use gambling, shopping, screen time, exercise, physical violence, and self-harm behaviors, to name a few. Many people combine firefighter options (e.g., drinking and engaging in unprotected sex). However, this exercise guides you to befriend *one* firefighter part whose activity feels familiar. The part's behavior doesn't need to be extreme, and it can be a former behavior, like smoking in high school.

1. First, get comfortable. There is no right way to do this exercise. Just follow your breath inside, and when you're ready, ask who would like your attention.
2. Once you've identified a firefighter, place that part on the far side of a one-way mirror and invite it to be active and do what it usually does while you observe. Notice its body language and facial expressions. Is it happy and relaxed? Tense and over-stimulated? Drowsy and checked out?
3. How do you feel as you watch this part engage in its usual practice? If you notice judgment, fear, or embarrassment coming up, ask those parts to step back and offer to check on them later. Tell them that you (the Self) are merely connecting with this part, not encouraging or endorsing its behaviors. When you feel open and curious, return to the target firefighter part and ask these questions:
  - When you pressure me to \_\_\_\_\_ [*fill in the blank with the firefighter's usual behavior, such as having a few beers or bingeing on late-night movies*], how are you trying to help?
  - How long have you been helping me this way?
  - How old are you?
  - Do you remember a time when acting like this became especially important? What was going on then?
  - Was there ever a time when you couldn't help me by acting this way? If so, what was that like for you and what happened?

- What are you afraid would happen if you took a break or stopped doing what you do? How long have you had these fears and concerns?
- Have you ever been in a situation where these fears actually came true?
- Have you ever tried to take a break from doing what you do? What happened then? How did you return to your role?
- When you look at me, whom do you see? (Sometimes the part sees another part. For example, it might see you as an eight-year-old child, or as a critical manager.)
- What else do you want me to know about you?

As you ask these questions, you might find that some firefighter parts use language to talk back to you, as if you are conversing. Other parts communicate nonverbally by showing you images to answer your questions or explain their motivations without using words. Whatever communication you get from the part, check to see if your heart is open. If so, let it know that you're paying attention and that you understand what it's telling you. If you don't understand, ask it to clarify. Some people find it helpful to respond to the part with words like, "Now that makes sense to me. I get why you want to numb me from these painful emotions. I appreciate your hard work."

When you understand the part's intentions and fears, thank it for sharing and acknowledge its hard work. Let it know that you want to stay in touch and help out so it's not alone. If it doesn't seem to know or trust you, acknowledge that this can easily be the case because relationships take time; let it know that you're prepared to be patient. Finally, notice how the part responds to your support, offer to stay connected, and take notes for future reference.

### Therapist Exercise

## Try Banning a Soothing, Distracting Firefighter Part to See How It Feels\*

The purpose of this exercise is to notice and identify which parts of you activate when you are permanently deprived of a favorite activity or behavior. This will help you understand the reluctance and fear many clients exhibit when they are told they must get sober or never engage in a particular activity ever again. Remember that all parts serve a purpose, and for clients with addictive processes, the prospect of banning a soothing or distracting firefighter can be frightening.

First, get comfortable. You can lie on the floor or sit up if you prefer. Begin by focusing on your breathing. If it feels comfortable, put one hand over your heart and the other on your belly. Take a few moments to breathe deeply into these two emotional centers. When you're ready, think of an activity you particularly enjoy. It might be something like watching funny movies, cooking, eating a favorite food, exercising, walking in the woods, or reading. Don't choose an activity or food item that is controversial for your system. Pick one that brings you genuine enjoyment without any conflict attached to it.

Now, watch yourself engaging in this activity. Notice your facial expressions and body language. When you're ready, connect to the part associated with this behavior. How much does it enjoy engaging in this behavior? How important is the behavior to the part? Perhaps it feels very important, somewhat important, or even unimportant.

Then ask the part if it is willing to play a game that may cause some distress but will teach you some important information. If it agrees, say that the game is beginning, and tell the part that it can never engage in this favorite behavior again. Not ever. If the part tries to negotiate for more time with this behavior, be very firm and insist that the behavior can never happen again. It is completely over.

Notice any reactions to this news in your body, including any thoughts as you say, "No, never again." If any parts protest to the ban, tell them they are bad if they can't agree to stop the behavior. You may notice some activation in your belly that feels

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\* The concept for this exercise originated from IFS Senior Trainer Mary Kruger.



### Therapist Exercise

## Explore Your Reaction to the Words *Addict* and *Addiction*

This exercise is designed to mildly activate any parts of you that hold conscious or unconscious bias about the words *addict* or *addiction*. Since these terms are commonly used in the field of substance use treatment, this exercise is designed to help you explore any unseen reactivity that these words elicit. If you think it will be too activating for you, do not do this exercise alone. Invite a friend or colleague to do it with you and support each other.

Find a quiet place and make yourself comfortable, taking a few minutes to adjust your position until you feel physically at ease or at rest. If it feels okay, close your eyes, inviting even your eyes to rest and enjoy doing less. Then focus on your breathing, and try extending your inhalations and exhalations to the count of seven, eight, or nine. Notice your deeper breath as your body settles. Take time to enjoy this feeling of self-regulation.

When you are ready, focus internally on your thoughts and emotions. Take your time simply focusing on your inner experience. Now say the word *addict* to yourself a few times or repeat the word *addiction*. As you do this out loud or internally, notice your body, feelings, and thoughts. Notice any images that come to mind. Perhaps a real or an imagined “addict” came to your mind’s eye. If so, how do you feel toward that person? What do you notice yourself thinking about that person? Do you have the urge to get away from that person or take care of them?

Maybe the word itself, without any images, activates some parts in your system. Do these parts feel sad, angry, fed up, frustrated, hopeless, or helpless? Notice all the parts who react to the words *addict* or *addiction*. Say hello to these parts, and if it feels right, be curious and ask them to share the origin of their reaction to those words. When you understand, let them know.

When your exchange feels complete, appreciate them for sharing with you. Then bring your attention back and take some time to draw or journal about your experience.

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## Therapist Exercise

### Get to Know Three Sets of Parts

Therapists who are learning the IFS approach to addictive processes will encounter three sets of parts who have different interests and needs. In this exercise, we invite you to notice and reach out to each set of parts. You can do all three sections at once, but if that feels challenging, feel free to go more slowly and do each section at a different time. Read through to the end of this exercise before making a decision on how to proceed. If you think you would benefit from having someone to talk with, ask a colleague to do the exercise with you or to be available for a check-in once you've finished.

Here are the three sets of parts:

- Therapist parts who aim to learn new interventions and get new ideas for reaching your clients.
- Parts who focus on your family members or other loved ones who suffer from various addictive processes.
- Parts who focus internally, on your own addictive processes, whether in the past or currently. (If you can't think of a personal struggle that rises to the level of an addictive process, we invite you to think of any activity that causes some measure of internal conflict. For example, perhaps one part likes a certain activity but another part wants you to stop.)

Get ready to inquire into these three sets of parts. First, take time to find privacy, get into a comfortable seated position, and relax. If it's okay with you, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Breathe fully and deeply, stretching your inhalation all the way down your back and feeling the chair or floor that supports you. Then breathe out slowly. Repeat a few times.

Next, welcome your therapist parts—the ones who want new ideas for your clients. What do they want to learn about the addictive process? What are their strengths? What are their challenges? Are they preoccupied with any particular clients today? Do they hold any clients with addictive processes, even from the past, in your heart? Do they react to or find it hard to connect with any particular clients? Listen to these parts. When you're ready, write down their answers. How do you feel

toward them now? Tell them you've been listening. Thank them for whatever they shared. Let them know they can stay in relationship with you.

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Now, turn to any parts who focus on family members or loved ones who have struggled with addictive processes in the past or who struggle now. Notice the images or memories they hold. If you'd like, write down the name of each family member or loved one. What do your parts want you to know about this person? How have they been affected by this person? Has your connection with this person changed at all (that is, gotten better or worse)? If so, what happened?

Take time to record what your parts are holding for each of the people mentioned. How are these parts doing now? Listen carefully. Do they notice you? What do they want you to learn from this manual? Thank them for whatever they shared. Let them know they can stay in relationship with you.

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Finally, when you are ready, invite any parts who promote some type of addictive process to serve you. What do you notice about them? How do you feel toward them? Do you notice any other parts reacting toward them? If so, ask the reactive ones to step back and trust you. How have they tried to help? What do the addictive parts need from you today? What do they want you to understand or learn from this manual? Take time to record their answers and thank them for whatever they shared. Let them know they can stay in relationship with you.

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## Triangle Mapping for a Polarized System

Once you identify a client's addictive polarity, map it onto a triangle, which will show the client how their exiles and protectors interact. To begin, invite the client to draw an inverted triangle. Label managers at the top left point and firefighters at the top right point. Place the exile (or exiles) at the bottom point.

Then invite the client to turn their attention inside and notice their managers. List these parts at the manager point of the triangle. Next, have them once again turn their attention inside and notice their firefighters. List these parts at the firefighter point of the triangle. Finally, invite them to notice any exiles that come up during the exercise and to list these parts at the bottom of the triangle. (Instead of writing down their parts, the client may prefer to draw their parts or choose figures to represent their parts using sand tray toys, IFS-inspired cards, magazine cutouts, and so on.)

Once the client finishes listing all of their parts, ask them to jot down the intentions and fears of both protective teams and of the exile. The client may wish to draw solid lines between parts who are particularly allied and broken lines to show which parts are most in conflict. When the triangle drawing is complete, here are some questions you may want to ask:

- What do you observe now?
- How do you feel now?
- Which part-to-part relationships stand out?
- Which parts are most polarized?
- How do you feel toward your exile(s)?
- Have you met all of these parts before?
- Which part (or polarity) wants your attention first?
- What does this part (choose one specific part to focus on) want from you?

When this process is complete, thank the parts who showed up and save the triangle for future sessions. If the client wants, they can take it home and keep adding parts or details about the motives of the parts they know to date.

## Strategies for Helping Polarized Parts Unblend at the Same Time

When protectors can't trust each other because they are extremely at odds, we ask them to unblend at the same time. The techniques described here—the conference table, the two-hand scale, connecting in the body—all facilitate simultaneous unblending.

### 1. The Conference Table

The conference table is a user-friendly exercise in which the client's Self welcomes their risk-taking firefighter team, their controlling manager team, and their exiles to sit together at a table. This can become a recurring intervention that the client can evoke at home as well.

First, ask the client to sit at the head of a big conference table. Next, invite the protective teams to sit on opposite sides of the table, while exiles take a seat across from the client's Self, at the foot of the table. Once everyone is arranged, be sure that the client's Self is present at the head of the table. If not, the client can ask the part who is sitting in for them to join its team and to let the Self sit down.

Next, guide the client to validate both the firefighter and manager teams for their positive intentions, and assert that each of them is needed. They may want to get rid of each other, but the Self intends to keep everyone on board. Invite them to shift their gaze away from the others, look to the Self, and consider the possibility that they no longer have to challenge or fix each other because the Self will help the exiles they protect and set them free.

Then ask who needs attention first. When a target part (or team) volunteers, ask the client how they feel toward this part (or team). If they say something negative, help the reactive part unblend. You might need to facilitate some shuttle diplomacy to illustrate that the Self can handle both teams. Then listen to the target part (or team), validate its good intentions, explore the pros and cons of what it does, and ask if it is ready to try something new. Then do the same with the other side.

Finally, ask if it would be good for everyone if the Self could help the exiles that these two teams protect. When they agree, ask the client what they notice in their body now. If protectors are unblending, they will name a sense of space or calm or something along those lines. If exiles activate, invite them to sit with the Self. Reassure everyone that the Self is committed to the whole system and that no one is alone.\*

## **2. The Two-Hand Scale**

The two-hand scale is another way of helping polarized protectors unblend at simultaneously. To practice this exercise, invite the client to hold their hands palm up. Then instruct the client to close their eyes as you say, “Don’t think. Put one part in one hand and the other part in the other hand. Which hand weighs more?” Then ask each hand, “What is your message?” End by asking the client, “How do you feel now toward these polarized teams now?”

## **3. Connect in the Body**

Connecting in the body is another way to help polarized parts simultaneously unblend. To guide clients through this exercise, invite them to identify two parts (or teams of parts) who are in conflict with each other—where do they show up in the client’s body? Then ask the parts if they notice the client. If not, ask if they are willing to notice the client.

Once they are willing, ask which part needs attention first, and guide the client to send breath, or perhaps a thread of light, to that part while saying, “You are not alone.” What does this part want the client to know? It may use words or any preferred way of communicating. Do the same with the second part or team of parts. Assert that there is plenty of space in the body for all parts.

End by asking the client how they feel toward these polarized parts now and what they notice in their body.

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\* Our conference table exercise adapts a technique developed by Richard Schwartz’s early IFS collaborator, Michi Rose.

## Other Ways of Visualizing Gatherings for Polarized Parts

Any image can help polarized protectors unblend if it brings space, clarity, and an opportunity for perspective-taking. We offer some ideas here, but you can also invite clients to think of other options.

- Self sits with polarized protectors at a kitchen table or a banquet table.
- Self and polarized protectors gather around a campfire.
- Self sits on the floor with a classroom of polarized protectors who face each other.
- Self coaches or acts as the referee for polarized teams who gather on opposite sides of a net or a playing field.
- Self conducts an orchestra and polarized protectors are the musicians.
- Self is at a ranch and each group of parts has their own corral.

## Externalizing and Personifying Polarized Parts

This exercise inquires into the motives and feelings of polarized parts by interviewing one part at a time. You and the client may be able to cover two parts in one session, but sometimes it's better to focus on just one. Let your intuition be your guide.

To begin, invite the client to place polarized parts in separate chairs (or different spots on a couch). Let the client know that they are going to embody one part at a time. Then ask all other parts, if they are willing, to relax back. If they have concerns, listen to and acknowledge these concerns until they're willing to step back. When everyone is ready, the client can sit in one chair and let that part take over. Then interview this part with the following questions:

- What is your job?
- Why do you do this job?
- What would happen if you stopped doing it?
- What do you want for the client?
- How old were you when you got this job?
- What is it like to do this job?
- Whom do you protect?
- What do you want the client to know?

When one interview feels complete, the client can go back to their original seat and describe the experience. When they are ready, or during the next therapy session, they can do the same for the opposing part. After these interviews, ask the client what they learned. How do they feel now toward the polarized parts?

Client Exercise

## Welcoming Both Sides of a Polarity

In your mind's eye, seat yourself at the head of a large table. Be sure that you are *there* at the table, not simply looking at yourself from afar. Then bring to mind a firefighter part (or a team of parts) who your managers don't like or trust. This doesn't have to be your most difficult firefighter part. Visualize this part (or team of parts) sitting on one side of the table. Describe how you feel toward them.

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Next, think about the manager parts that are in opposition to those firefighters. Invite them to join you as well, sitting opposite the firefighters at the table. How do you feel toward the manager parts?

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Are you still at the head of the table, noticing the teams on either side? If so, what is it like for them to be with you without them taking over? What is it like for you?

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Instead of glaring across the table at each other, ask each team to shift their gaze and look toward you. Ask them: Would it be good for them if, going forward, they didn't have to do what they do to handle each other? What if, going forward, they were not alone because they all had you to help out? Would they be interested? Describe how they respond to your attention.

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## Therapist Exercise

### Draw Your Triangle

Many therapists in this line of work have had a complicated journey with their own firefighter activity. This exercise helps you identify your inner polarities and clarify the connections between your protective teams and your exiles. It invites you to notice and befriend (have an open-hearted exchange with) all of the parts involved: the firefighter parts who enjoy substances or some other escapist or soothing practice, the manager parts who worry about the practice, and the sensitive exiled parts who are being kept out of awareness. By getting familiar with your own polarities, you get better at spotting and accepting your clients' inner conflicts.

As you participate in this exercise, be aware that anxious managers may feel nervous about letting you connect with a firefighter part who they deem potentially out of control, as if just acknowledging its existence will awaken the dragon and invite a flood of shaming. Remind them that you aren't connecting with firefighters to endorse their behavior. Rather, you want to understand their motives and give them new options. By the same token, the Self can help exiles let go of the sense of shamefulness and feel better.

**To begin, identify one of your soothing firefighter parts.** You can choose a part who is active now or who has helped out in the past, whichever feels most doable for you. Visualize your part engaging in its favorite activity (or activities)—perhaps lying on a sofa, eating, and watching TV; scrolling through social media with a drink in hand; or smoking cannabis (or nicotine). View this part as if through a one-way mirror. Notice its facial expressions. Is it happy, worried, or checked out? Notice its body language. Is it relaxed, tense, exhausted?

How do you feel toward this part? If you are open, ask it what it wants you to know. If you don't feel open, check in with the parts who are blocking you and closing your heart. Ask if they are willing to unblend and trust you. If they are, continue getting to know your firefighter. How is it trying to help you? What function does it have in your inner world? What is it afraid would happen if it didn't do this job for you? Tell it you're listening. Write what you learn in the *firefighters* box at the end of this exercise.

**Next, notice any parts who react to this firefighter.** These parts may appear in the form of a voice delivering a message or some anxious activation somewhere in your body. You may notice a controlling manager who wants to limit how much time or money you spend engaged in this soothing firefighter activity. You may notice a judgmental manager who says the firefighter part is morally bad, too risk-taking, or weak. You may notice a worried manager who fears the firefighter part will get out of control or who remembers times when the firefighter did go too far. How do you feel toward this reactive manager? If you are not open, check to see if the firefighter part has unblended thoroughly.

When you are able to feel curious about the manager, ask what it needs you to know. Listen to it closely. What are its concerns? Reassure it that *you* are not the one who is engaging in firefighter behaviors; you are the one who listens to everyone. Acknowledge and validate its concerns—managers often have a good point! What does it want when it comes on so strong? What is it afraid would happen if it relaxed and let you take care of this firefighter part? Write what you're hearing in the *managers* box at the end of this exercise.

**Continue by asking each protector who steps forward to describe how it got started in this role.** How long has each protector been doing its job? What do they fear would happen if they had to entirely stop doing their jobs? They may express common worries of falling apart, reliving the past, or feeling overwhelmed with shame. Once the protectors have shared their fears, ask them whom it is that they protect. Then invite the protectors to consider this option: What if the Self could take care of the sensitive exiled parts they're protecting? If the protectors agree, ask if it's okay to briefly connect with these exiles. If not, acknowledge their concerns and accept their decision, but ask permission to keep the conversation going and to prove that you could do this safely.

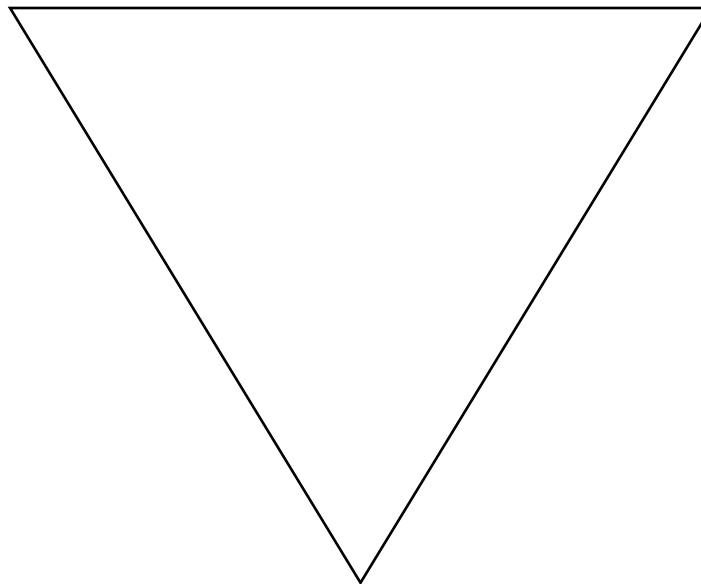
If protectors are willing to step back, welcome and pay attention to the exile. You may see an image of a younger version of yourself, like a snapshot located someplace in your past, or you may simply feel sadness, pain, or the urge to shrink away or hide in your body. Regardless of how the exile shows up, focus on that. Breathe yourself bigger to make room for the part. Let it know that it's not alone because you're here now. What is it like for the exile to have you nearby? How do you feel toward the part now? If a protector shows up, ask it to step back just enough so you can connect again, just for now.

When you feel open again, ask the exile to share one thing that will help it feel understood in this moment. Take that in. If your protectors feel comfortable, spend more time listening to the exile. Pay attention to any sensation of anxiety in your body. If anxious protectors activate, thank the exile for showing up and ask where it would like to go that's safe and comfortable until you can return. Then write what the exile shared with you on the corresponding box marked *Exiles*.

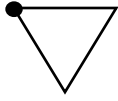
**Finally, review the filled-in table as a new map of your parts.** Notice each protector team. How do you understand them now? Do they see each other differently? Remind these parts that they don't have to try to fix each other anymore because they can strategize for the good of everyone with you. Point out that you know the exile now, you understand its burdens, and you're here to help. Then send love and compassion to your exile. Thank it for showing up. Appreciate how long it's been waiting for support and how courageous it has been. Let it know that, going forward, you and all these protectors aim to work together to establish safety, and that you will stay in relationship and be available to everyone. No one needs to be alone anymore.

**Managers**

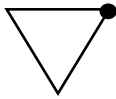
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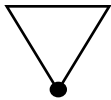
**Exiles**



**Managers**



**Firefighters**



**Exiles**

## Creating Safe Connections with Exiles

### A One-Way Connection

The one-way connection, which includes a firsthand experience of warmth, acceptance, and connection, introduces the exile to the Self and demonstrates that no strings are attached. For many exiles, this experience is novel. Some are immediately relieved, while others are skeptical. They see that the Self is different from protective parts and their controlling or distracting agendas. The Self offers kind attention, the opportunity to belong, and the promise of ongoing support. Every Self-to-part connection increases stability within the system. As the Self-to-part bond strengthens, it develops into a more complex, two-way street relationship. To begin creating a safe one-way connection with an exile, invite your client to try the following:

- Identify a vulnerable part.
- Guide a connection to the Self via imagery or activation.
- Check for Self-energy and reassure the part that it is not alone anymore.
- Send care and compassion to the part.
- Let the part know that you can't hear its whole story now.
- Ask the part what it wants to share just for today.
- Reassure the part that you will return.

### A Two-Way Connection

A two-way connection between the Self and exiles is free-flowing and trusting. The exile shares important stories and is, in turn, nurtured by the Self's validation and acceptance. In order to unburden, the exile may just need to share painful experiences and feel validated, but if it's stuck in the past, it will need the Self to come back to that time to do what it needed someone to do for it then. With each

interaction, the Self earns more trust and license to lead. To begin creating a safe two-way connection with an exile, invite your client to try the following:

- Identify a vulnerable part.
- Guide a connection to the Self via imagery or activation.
- Check for Self-energy and reassure the part that it is not alone anymore.
- Send care and compassion to the part.
- Invite the part to share whatever it is holding.
- Witness and honor the part's experience.
- Spend time gazing at, reflecting with, and embracing the part.
- Reassure the part that you will return.

## An Intervention Option after Recurrence

This exercise is intended to help the client step back from fear and self-condemnation and understand why their parts are once again using a substance or engaging in a compulsive practice in a problematic way. Here we address a blended system and ask protective parts to step back and trust us. A sample script is provided for you throughout, as well as some guiding prompts to walk you through each step of the intervention.

1. Remind the client that the addictive cycle makes sense and that by inquiring together, you can get to the bottom of the most recent recurrence.

*When protective parts get worried, they fall back on the old tactics they trust. Firefighter parts might begin drinking, gambling, bingeing, using drugs, or engaging in any other compulsive behavior that aims to soothe or distract. In turn, manager parts might step in with shaming or expressions of disgust. This is normal and predictable. When this happens, we can ask firefighter parts about their intentions. They generally say they're worried that exiles will overwhelm the system with painful emotions, old memories, or untold secrets. In this exercise, we will invite them to explain their reasons. If a compulsive behavior alarmed any other parts, we can help those parts too.*

2. When the connection between the client and therapist is firm, guide the client to invite their protective parts to a meeting.

*Let's have a summit meeting. Let's invite all the parts who need to be here right now to join us. Invite the compulsive firefighter parts and the critical manager parts to come sit at a big table with you. They are all welcome. Who needs your attention first?*

3. Hear from whatever part needs the client's attention first. For example, a critical manager might share about their fear of chaos and emotional overwhelm. A stirred-up firefighter might discuss their fears of exile overwhelm and managerial shaming. Either way, reassure the part that you are here to listen.

*We are not here to control or criticize you. We want to understand your intentions. What are you concerned about? How were you trying to help?*

- If a firefighter is reacting to a manager:

*If we could help that manager part stop controlling or caretaking or overworking, would you need to \_\_\_\_\_ (use substances, gamble, overeat, watch pornography, etc.) in the same way?*

- If a manager part is reacting to a firefighter:

*If we could help that using part so it would \_\_\_\_\_ (keep its agreements, find a more benign way to distract, etc.), would you need to keep attacking it?*

- If either protective part is afraid of an exile:

*If you saw there was a safe way for that injured part to feel wanted and loved, would you be willing to downshift a bit?*

4. Ask both protector teams to let the client's Self help the exile they protect (it may be the same exile or different exiles). When they agree, welcome the exile by beginning with a one-way Self-to-part bid for connection.

*Let that hurt young part know that you are here, that you are paying attention. Let it know that it's not alone. How does it respond?*

5. If the Self and the exile connect and protectors are still supportive, continue with a two-way connection and witness the exile.

*What does this part want you to know? What caused its hurt, loneliness, or sense of shame? Are you taking this in? Let it know. Can it feel your concern and care? How does it respond?*

6. When this feels complete, clarify the cycle of disconnection by inviting the client to draw and discuss their addiction triangle. Which protectors react to each other? Which exiled part(s) get triggered? Does this feel familiar or new? Then draw and discuss another triangle that depicts what happens when the client's Self is in the lead.

*Do the parts feel connected to you now? What do they need from you to keep toning down? Thank them for taking the risk of being with you today. Do they want homework or a set plan to work on before next session?*