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Feelings Toward a Target Part

This exercise is related to Step 4 of the Six F's in IFS. If you haven't done so already, please complete this after working on the first three exercises. Locate a target part, focus on, and flesh it out, and then ask:

What is the target part I'd like to focus on?

How do I feel about it?

If the answer is one of the feelings (or some simile) in the list below that indicates Self-energy, move on to befriending the part.

Feelings that indicate you have Self-energy for the target part:

- Curious
- Open
- Kindly
- Caring
- Connected
- Compassionate
- Concerned
- Loving

If, however, the answer is "I understand," you need to notice whether you are hearing from a manager who forestalls feelings by staying in thoughts and telling a story that sounds plausible; or if you really have a heartfelt connection with the part and you are aware of how it feels.

If you are not sure where this "I understand" comes from, tell the target part what you understand and ask if you've got it right.

If, on the other hand, you hear "I agree with this part" then the part is not yet differentiated enough from you to have a conversation. Ask it to separate so you can talk.

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And if the answer is any other feeling (for example, hatred, anger, fear, embarrassment) ask the part who feels that way: "What are you concerned would happen if you were to relax and let me talk to (*insert the target part*)?"

Reactive parts commonly fear the target part in some way. Write down whatever you hear:

If the reactive part fears the target part gaining too much influence, ask:

"If (*insert the target part*) would agree not to take over, would you let me talk to it?"

If the reactive part replies:

"That will never work," you can reassure it in two ways. First by asking, "Can we hear from (*insert the target part*) directly about whether it's willing to not take over?" And then by saying to the reactive part, "You're the boss. I'm not trying to make you do anything you're not comfortable with. But if you let me hear from both sides, I can help with this conflict between you and (*insert the target part*)."

Adapted from: Frank G. Anderson et al. *Internal Family Systems Skills Training Manual*.