

# humantold

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## What are Parts in Internal Family Systems?

With many different modalities of therapy, it can be hard to keep track of everything! Continuing in our IFS series, this worksheet will explain Parts work.

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### Protective Parts

- All protective parts are trying to get rid of intense negative feelings and beliefs of wounded parts with the goal of warding off more harm and keeping us safe. However, protectors differ in that they are either proactive or reactive in response to emotional pain.
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### Two Categories of Protective Parts:

#### Proactive Parts

- We call these parts the “managers,” because they try to manage our lives in ways that keep emotional pain out of consciousness.
  - These managers encourage us to improve, work hard, be productive, and be socially acceptable.
  - Extreme managers can use tactics like perfectionism, intellectualizing, one-sided caretaking, obsessing about appearance, conflict avoidance at great personal cost, or trying to control or please others.
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#### Reactive Parts

- We call these parts the “firefighters,” because they try to distract from or stop emotional pain as soon as possible without consideration for consequences.
  - Examples include bingeing, purging, addictions, numbing, dissociation, and cutting, as well as thoughts and behaviors related to suicide.
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### Caveat on Proactive Protectors

- Any behavior that is used to prevent emotional pain is proactive.
  - Example: addiction is usually a reactive behavior that distracts us from intense negative feelings and can be used to prevent us from having feelings at all. If a person goes from binge drinking to daily drinking, their reactive behavior has been recruited to the proactive role of preventing the feelings that drinking suppresses.
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### Vulnerable Parts: Exiled

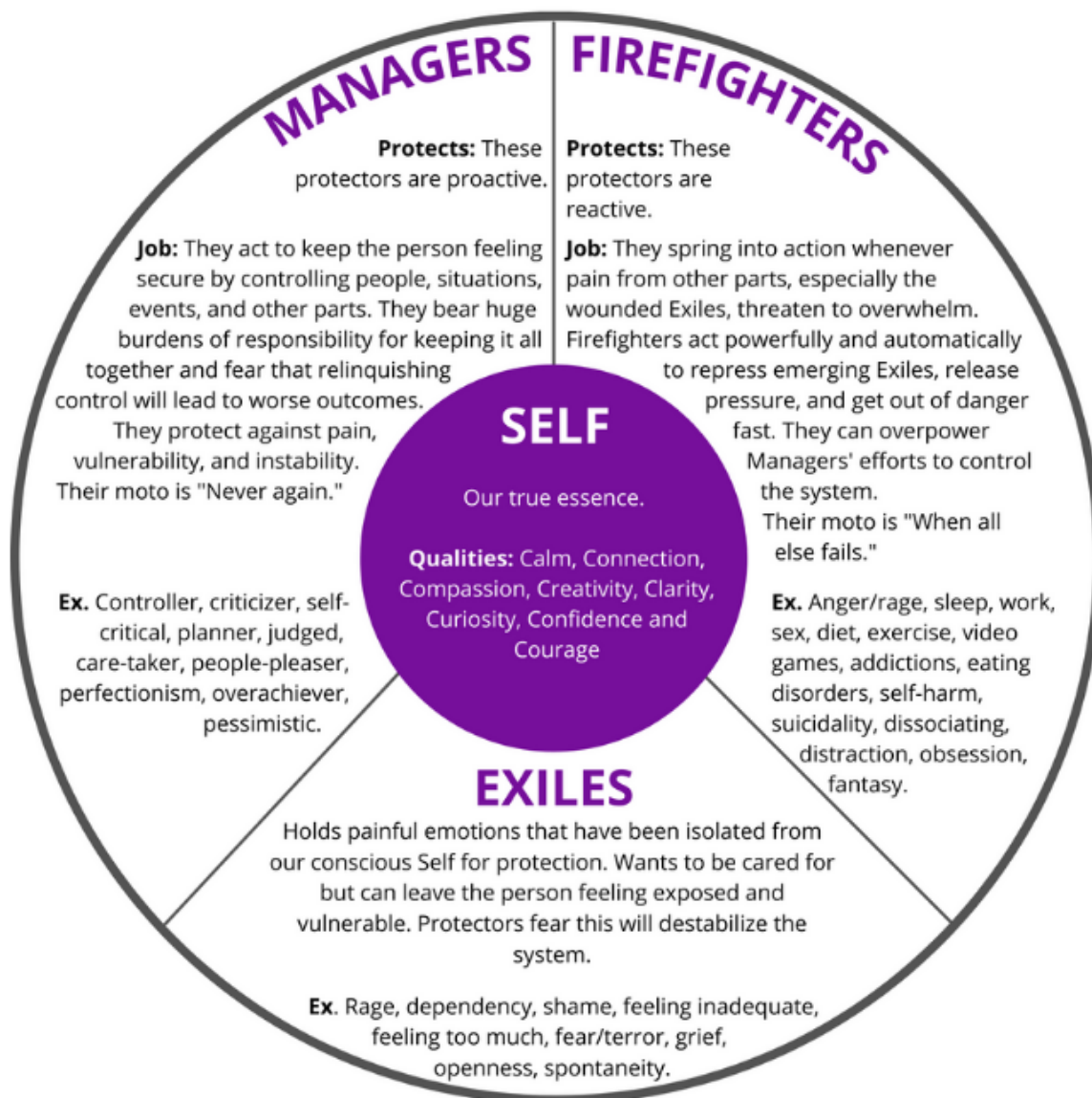
- When children become shamed, vulnerable young parts can develop overwhelmingly threatening beliefs like “I’m unlovable” and “I’m worthless.”
- Protectors step in to keep toxic beliefs out of consciousness and, as a result, vulnerable parts end up permanently alone, forgotten, and often trapped in the past.

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- They long for help but when they push into consciousness with negative feelings, beliefs, sensations, and memories, protectors again experience them as a hazard.
- Exiled parts are not your wounds. These parts will revert back to their natural state of curiosity, creativity, and playfulness once they are unburdened of trauma-derived beliefs.

## Defining The Self

- The Self is the core of psychic balance, the seat of consciousness, and inner source of love.
- Everyone has a Self, and it can show up in the energy of certain feeling states (curiosity, calm, courage, compassion, love) or with the sense of an individual being present.



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