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What is Internal Family Systems Therapy?

With many different modalities of therapy, it can be hard to keep track of everything! Below is an overview of Internal Family Systems (IFS), an evidence-based treatment founded by Richard Schwartz.

Overview

- Embody the Self and heal our injured parts so that we can live with confidence, guided by curiosity and compassion.
- When we embody more Self and listen to our parts rather than trying to eliminate these aspects of ourselves, our inner dialogues change spontaneously.
 - This allows their extreme voices to calm down, and they begin to feel good things: safer, lighter, freer, more open, more playful.
- We can no longer ignore our inner barbarians, those unwelcome parts who hate, rage, suppress, terrorize, betray, threaten, and engage in all manner of prejudice and greed– or those who have somewhat less abhorrent feelings like depression, anxiety, self-righteousness, guilt, and self-loathing.
- If we befriend our own extreme reactions (since befriending is more beneficial and effective than berating), we can listen to our parts rather than exile them. We don't have to work so hard and the parts are able to transform.

The IFS Model of Mind

- IFS therapy uses a plural model of mind: we all have internal systems of countless parts who interact internally with each other and externally with other people.
- We all have a core resource that is not a part, which is characterized by balance, curiosity, and compassion. This is “the Self.”
- Some parts take on protective roles in response to relational injury, which is ubiquitous and unavoidable in childhood.
- IFS attends to both parts: the protective and injured.

The Goals

1. Help your protective parts differentiate.
2. Befriend your protective parts and get permission to help wounded parts.
3. Form a positive relationship with wounded parts, witness their experiences, and help them let go of feeling states and beliefs that are extreme and damaging, so they can heal.