

# Melcome

I'm Dr Amber Johnston!

In addition to being the founder and director of Healthy Mind Psychology, I am an accomplished Clinical Psychologist, Neuropsychologist and Pain Psychologist with trauma specialty.



I am passionate about enhancing widely accepted knowledge to better understand components of psychology not often talked about and to break the stigma around individuals who seek guidance to support their mental well-being.

In this guide, I'll be diving into the key concepts of Internal Family Systems (IFS) and how it can guide us toward a more compassionate relationship with ourselves.

What is It 6.9

Internal Family Systems (IFS), is a transformative psychotherapy model developed by Dr. Richard Schwartz to understand our internal dynamics and achieve emotional healing.

Mono-Mind Belief

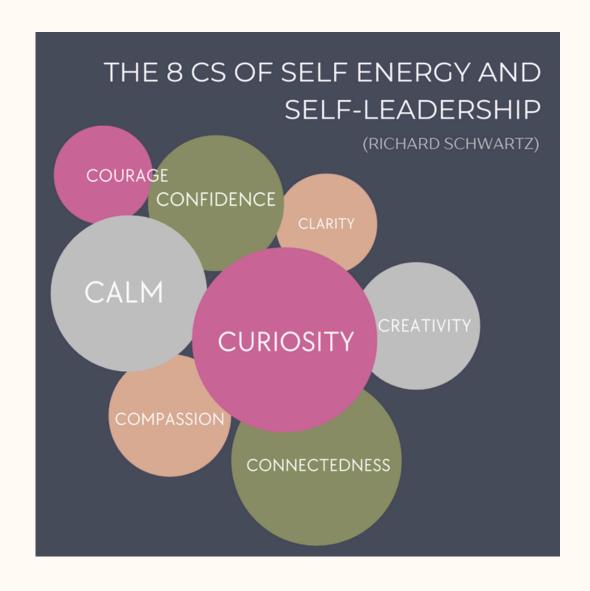
The idea that we have one single mind, which includes all of the 'unhealthy' decisions and 'negative' aspects of our personality alongside all the good, is called the monomind belief system. We're likely to have been brought up on this one-dimensional view of ourselves, and when we make mistakes or face regrets, this belief can lead to harsh self-criticism and damaged self-esteem.

According to IFS, however, our personalities are not monolithic but made up of multiple "parts". These parts are natural sub-personalities that form throughout our lives', each with its own emotions, experiences, motivations, and roles. By recognizing this multiplicity, we can look to move away from self-judgment and toward self-understanding.



IFS emphasizes the existence of a core 'Self' within each of us, which is inherently loving, compassionate, and equipped to heal.

The qualities of the Self include curiosity, calm, confidence, compassion, creativity, clarity, courage, and connectedness.



### Exploring Roles

According to IFS, parts are our natural, internal subpersonalities. They have important qualities that help us in our lives, but can be impacted by trauma and driven into more destructive roles:

#### **Exiles**

- Sensitive parts of us that carry burdens from past traumas, such as feelings of fear, shame, worthlessness, terror, or emotional pain.
- Exiles are often "locked away" to protect us from reliving those painful experiences.

#### **Managers**

- These parts are forced into protective roles, working to keep exiles hidden and 'contained', to prevent pain from resurfacing.
- They might manifest as hypervigilance, selfcriticism, numbness, or perfectionism.

#### **Firefighters**

- When exiles are triggered, firefighters leap into action.
- The goal of firefighters is to hide or distract you from pain, often leading to behaviors like overeating, substance abuse, or avoidance.



### Burdens

According to IFS, when we've experienced trauma, we often carry around 'burdens'. These are extreme beliefs or emotions that attach to our parts and drive the way those parts of our personality think or act. Burdens are frozen in time, carried over from a past trauma in which this extremity was necessary to protect ourselves, but is now no longer functional. They can be personal (stemming from direct experiences, such as terror from being in a car accident, a lack of trust when we've experienced abandonment as a child) or legacy-based (passed down through family or absorbed through cultural influences or our ethnic group).



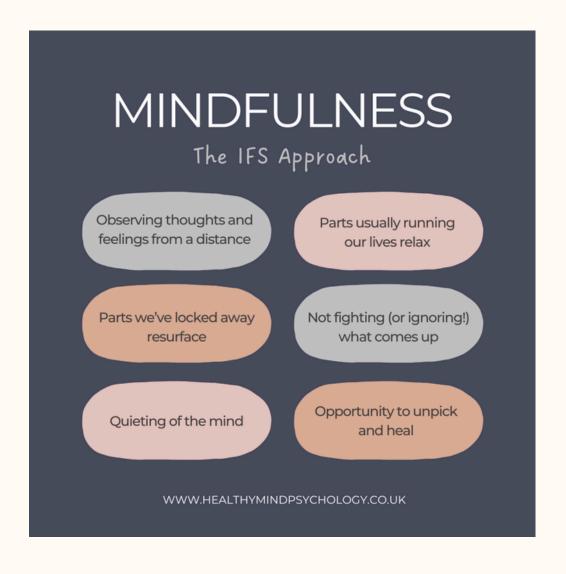
### Blending

Sometimes, parts of ourselves (our managers) can become extreme in their protective efforts to keep destructive thoughts and feelings at bay. Eventually, they 'blend' with the innately good qualities of your core Self, causing all those positive qualities of the Self to become hidden or replaced by the protective parts. Some parts are blended most of the time, and others blend only when they are triggered.

#### Mindfulness

Mindfulness plays a crucial role in IFS:

"The quieting of our mind associated with mindfulness occurs when the parts of us usually running our lives relax, which then allows the parts we have tried to bury to ascend, bringing with them the emotions, beliefs, and memories they carry that got them locked away in the first place". (Schwartz)



### Untangling the Gelf

The work of IFS is intended to create safety whereby all parts of us can come to the surface of our consciousness (for example, through practising mindfulness) and be healed. This, in turn, opens up space for our Self to be accessed and with that all its positive qualities. IFS works to untangle the roles these parts have taken on from the Self, understanding their protective nature and freeing them from past trauma. This process involves:

- 1. Identifying the part that has taken over.
- 2. **Listening** to its concerns and understanding its protective role.
- 3. Reassuring the part that the Self is capable of handling the situation.
- 4. Releasing the burdens that the part has been carrying.

When we connect with our Self, we're better equipped to lead our internal system with kindness and understanding, allowing us to un-blend from our protective parts and approach them from a place of compassion.



## - Kelp and Support-

Our psychologists at <u>Healthy Mind Psychology</u> are experienced in a wide range of treatment modalities. We understand that there's no standard protocol for everyone, and we provide you with a personalised treatment plan that ensures you are set up for long term success. For more information visit our website.

