

**IFS Institute**  
**Level 1 Course**  
**15 sessions (fourteen 4-hour, one 4-1/2 day)**

**Instructional Methodology for the Training:**

Lecture  
Demonstration  
Audio/visual  
Experiential; practice of techniques  
Large and small group discussions

**Session 1: Introduction to the Internal Family Systems Model**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 1 includes a review of the history and development of the Internal Family Systems Model of therapy and the basic assumptions of the Model with regard to its non-pathological view of the mind's multiple sub-personalities known as "parts" and the concept of "Self". The goals of therapy using the IFS Model will be examined. The concept of unburdening the painful feelings and beliefs constraining parts will be applied as a strategy to restore harmony and balance to the inner system as a whole and transformation of parts.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the interpersonal matrix of the training group for the purpose of establishing safety and group norms
2. Cite the history and development of the Internal Family Systems Model of therapy
3. Describe the basic assumptions of IFS with regard to its non-pathological view of the mind's multiplicity and the concept of Self
4. Cite the key therapeutic goals of IFS therapy

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**Session 2: Systemic Principles of IFS**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 2 will expand on the systemic nature and theoretical concepts of IFS. Differentiation of the 3 primary roles of “parts” from “Self” will be examined in the context of their specific sequential and relational patterns, commonly presenting in therapy. Discussions of how changes in the internal system can bring about changes in the external system of an individual, family, or group will be explored.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Review and provide needed clarification of material from Session 1
2. Articulate the concept of releasing uncomfortable feelings and beliefs that burden the inner system, and the restoration of internal harmony and balance
3. Explain the concept of “unblending” and differentiating sub-personalities from Self in order to speak for, as opposed to from, reactive affective states
4. Describe the 3 common roles assumed by sub-personalities that most often present in therapy
5. Describe the relationship and sequence of interaction between the 3 common roles of parts of the personality
6. Explain how changes in the internal system will affect changes in the external system of an individual, family, or group

**Session 3: IFS in Action – The Flow of the Model**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

The core skills involved in gaining Self-led access to parts presenting in therapy are reviewed and examined. Strategies are identified for helping various personality parts transform to achieve therapeutic success. The skills of unblending and introducing parts language will be practiced.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Review and provide needed clarification of material from Session 2
2. Identify differences in the role of the therapist in the IFS Model compared to other models of therapy
3. Practice skills introducing IFS concepts and using IFS language with clients
4. Utilize the Six Fs (find, focus, flesh out, feel toward, fears, befriend) as interventions for differentiating a sub-personality and developing its internal relationship with Self
5. Demonstrate an enhanced understanding of the Flow of the IFS Model

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**Session 4: Self**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 4 focuses on the concept of Self and Self leadership and its relationship to parts. The 8 C's of Self leadership will be defined and explored. The skill of "parts detecting" will be presented and practiced.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Review and provide needed clarification of material from Session 3
2. Cite the IFS concept of Self and explain its role as the most effective leader of the inner system
3. Identify and describe the 8 qualities of Self energy (curiosity, calmness, compassion, confidence, courage, clarity, creativity, connectedness)
4. Identify clinical techniques that allow the experience of and the identification of the difference between parts and Self
5. Explain the IFS belief that all parts, even those that manifest with extreme behavior, carry a positive intention for the system

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**Session 5: Working with the Protective System: Managers**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 5 is dedicated to working with the “parts” that serve to protect and defend the system from threats and pain. Techniques to identify the protective parts in “manager” or “firefighter” roles and to uncover their positive intentions will be explored and analyzed. The 9 most common protector fears will be examined with corresponding interventions to create internal and external safety for these sub-personalities. An emphasis on building trust between the protective parts and Self will be emphasized for therapeutic safety and success. The core skills involved in gaining Self-led access to protective parts that emerge in therapy will be reviewed and examined. Strategies are identified for helping various personality parts transform to achieve therapeutic success. The main focus of this session will be on the pre-emptive “manager” role.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Review and provide needed clarification of material from Session 4
2. Identify aspects of the personality that interact in protective ways (manager role)
3. Explain the importance of working with protector fears to ensure therapeutic safety and success.
4. Use practice sessions to work with managers within a client system
5. Cite the common traits and behaviors of parts in manager roles
6. Identify techniques that assist in identifying manager parts
7. Practice techniques of “unblending” protective parts to establish direct Self-to-part relationships and increase protectors’ trust in Self leadership
8. Identify and discuss the 9 most common protector fears and how to effectively address each one

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**Session 6: Working with the Protective System: Firefighters**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 6 is a continuation of learning to work with protective parts, specifically focusing on the reactive “firefighter” role. Techniques to befriend firefighters and uncover their positive intentions will be explored and analyzed, as will interventions specific to working with firefighters. There will be an emphasis on building trust with the therapist and increased awareness of therapist parts that get in the way when working with extreme behaviors.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Review and provide needed clarification of material from Session 5
2. Describe how managers and firefighters are forced into their extreme roles in an attempt to protect and defend the system from pain
3. Explain the role of firefighters in the system
4. Identify and describe one’s own reactions in response to clients’ firefighter activity
5. Identify at least 2 techniques that help clients establish a Self-to-part relationship with firefighters
6. Identify at least 2 effective techniques to negotiate with firefighters
7. Define the term “backlash” as it relates to the protective system and state the importance of working with protectors to minimize its occurrence and impact.
8. Identify at least 2 ways to create internal and external safety for protective parts, with examples
9. Differentiate parts in manager roles from firefighter roles

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**Session 7: Working with Exiles**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 7 is dedicated to working with parts of the personality that become “exiled” and how this phenomenon occurs. Ways to identify “exiles” by their common traits and behaviors is examined with an emphasis on building a trusting relationship to Self. IFS techniques to negotiate with exiles and prevent affect overwhelm are practiced to increase trust therapeutically and within the client’s system. The 8 primary steps to unburdening exiles are examined extensively. A focus will be on exiles’ transformation and its positive impact on systemic harmony and balance. The core skills involved in gaining Self-led access to parts that emerge in therapy will be reviewed and examined. Strategies are identified for helping various personality parts transform to achieve therapeutic success.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 6
2. Identify parts of the internal system that become exiled and how this phenomenon occurs
3. Examine the qualities of exile parts and explain their role in the system
4. Define and describe the relationship between protectors and exiles
5. Role-play exercises that safely allow an experience of one’s own internal system
6. Outline the 8 steps of unburdening exiles
7. Explain when and how to check for willingness from exiled parts to “not overwhelm” the client’s system

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**Session 8: Working with Exiles (continued)**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 8 is dedicated to deepening understanding of how to identify and work with exiles parts of the personality. The transitions from working with protector to exiles will be practiced. Negotiation skills around affect regulations, obtaining protector permission and the 8 primary steps to unburdening exiles will be the continued focus. The integration steps to address systemic harmonization will be highlighted and practiced.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 7
2. Describe at least 2 ways to identify exiles in the client system
3. Describe the concept of “drive for redemption,” and explain how it affects the exile’s relationship with the external world
4. Identify at least 2 strategies of obtaining protector permission to access exiles
5. Identify and examine parts of the therapist that often emerge when working with exiles
6. Describe the practice of integrating changes, post-unburdening with exiles and protectors

**Session 9: Review and Integration**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 9 is dedicated to review and integration of IFS theory and beginning skills. The skills of unblending client and therapist parts, relational development with parts, and understanding IFS as a constraint-releasing model will be the focus. Differentiating Self from parts and the flow of the model will be expanded on through participant self-evaluation and practice.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the 3 common roles assumed by sub-personalities that most often present in therapy and the relationship between them
2. Identify the most important things to know about working with manager parts
3. Identify the most important things to know about working with firefighter parts
4. Role play the 8 steps of unburdening exiles demonstrating the flow of the steps
5. Identify transition points from working with the protective system to working with exiles

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**Session 10: Insight and Direct Access**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 10 is dedicated to learning the difference between “insight” and “direct access”. In IFS there are two different levels of working with parts. The more extreme the internal system of parts, the greater the need to use direct access. Strategies will be learned and practiced to identify when direct access is needed and how to flow between the two levels of working with an internal system.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 9
2. Explain and describe 2 fundamental techniques – “in-sight” and “direct access” and explain when a therapist might apply either intervention
3. Practice the core skills of “direct access” when working with protectors
4. Identify at least 2 direct access methods for working with exile parts
5. Identify common “stuck points” in using the IFS Model and describe strategies for resolving these therapeutic issues

**Session 11: Dynamics of the Internal System: Polarizations and Alliances**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 11 focuses on the complex relationships parts have to each other with emphasis on polarizations, alliances and hierarchies in the internal system. Ways to identify when a polarization is impeding the therapeutic process will be analyzed with techniques to mediate the conflict between parts through the client’s Self leadership. Common internal polarizations are described and their impact illustrated within the context of external relationships, including polarizations that may impact the therapeutic relationship. Strategies are identified for helping various personality parts transform to achieve therapeutic success.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 10
2. Define and examine polarizations, alliances, and hierarchies in the internal system
3. Describe the nature of polarizations and their protective role in the system
4. Identify polarizations, alliances, and hierarchies in the internal system, with examples
5. Identify at least 2 techniques that facilitate the client’s Self as a mediator between polarized parts or groups of parts
6. Use small groups to role-play working with polarizations with a client



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**Session 12: Dynamics of the Internal System: Polarizations and Alliances (continued)**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 12 focuses on deepening the understanding of polarizations, alliances and hierarchies in the internal system, and learning to “broker” polarization relationships. The core skills involved in gaining Self-led access to parts that emerge in therapy will be reviewed and examined. Strategies are identified for helping various personality parts depolarize to achieve therapeutic success.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 11
2. Identify techniques that externalize the relational dynamics of the internal system with sculpting or mapping
3. Use small groups to role-play working with polarizations with a client
4. Identify at least 2 issues related to parts of the therapist that emerge working with multiple parts during a therapy session

**Session 13: Dynamics of Working with Internal Family Systems and the Body’s Reaction**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 13 is dedicated to the somatic nature of IFS and understanding how parts use and present in the body. The systemic impact of parts and Self energy on the body is explored. IFS concepts are integrated with body-centered techniques throughout the flow of the Model. The core skills involved in gaining Self-led access to parts that emerge in therapy will be reviewed and examined. Strategies are identified for the therapist to use physical symptoms and body-centered techniques when working with parts.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 12
2. Recognize how the IFS Model views the relationship between parts, Self, and the physical body
3. Describe skills in body-centered techniques that increase kinesthetic awareness in working with parts and accessing Self
4. Identify at least 2 ways to facilitate clients in identifying and being present to parts in or around their body
5. Role-play exercises that facilitate awareness of how parts may communicate through movement or sensation

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**Session 14: Cultural and Legacy Burdens**

**Contact Hours:** 4.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Session 14 is dedicated to learning about cultural and legacy burdens. Internal systems are influenced and burdened by extreme cultural and family beliefs. Cultural and legacy burdens will be defined and how burdens are passed down the generational line or absorbed by the culture will be explored. The application of the IFS model will be presented as a therapeutic model to address and heal cultural and legacy burdens.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 13
2. Define and identify legacy and cultural burdens, and describe how they are held in the system
3. Identify the transmission process of internal systems taking on cultural and legacy burdens
4. Role-play exercises that facilitate awareness of cultural and legacy burdens

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**Session 15, Module 1: The Therapeutic Relationships**

**Contact Hours:** 14.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Module 1 comprises Days 1-2 of this session, and closely examines the significance of the therapeutic relationship from the perspective of the IFS Model. The multiple levels of relationships between the client's internal system and the therapist's will be examined as they pertain to issues of transference, counter-transference, and projections. Therapist parts that commonly emerge in therapy are explored and analyzed in terms of effectiveness or interference. The Model's approach to therapeutic ruptures is discussed and analyzed. The 5 Ps (patience, perspective, presence, playfulness, persistence) of a Self-led therapist are discussed. Skills for maintaining Self leadership when working with clients are identified and practiced. The experiences of sympathy, empathy, and compassion are compared and contrasted relative to their impact on the therapeutic relationship. The core skills involved in gaining Self-led access to parts presenting in therapy will be reviewed and examined. Strategies are identified for helping various personality parts transform to achieve therapeutic success.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 14
2. Describe the significance of the therapeutic relationship existing on multiple levels
3. Describe the qualities of a Self-led therapist according to the IFS Model's 5 P's (patience, perspective, presence, playfulness, persistence)
4. Explain transference and counter-transference from the IFS Model's perspective
5. Differentiate between states of empathy, sympathy and compassion relative to the therapeutic relationship
6. Identify and describe common therapist parts that may emerge in session and their possible impact on the therapeutic process, especially with difficult client systems
7. Explain at least 2 ways to increase the presence of Self energy in therapy sessions, both for the therapist and for the client
8. Examine and explain unblending as it applies to the therapist during IFS therapy sessions
9. Use role-play to allow for greater self-understanding and self-compassion while working with clients
10. Cite at least 2 ways to detect and unblend one's own parts in relation to client
11. Identify at least 2 qualities of Self-led relationships with clients, significant others, and in the training group
12. Identify common therapeutic ruptures and cite 2 ways to approach therapeutic repair with clients.

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**Session 15, Module 2: Integration and Completion**

**Contact Hours:** 14.00 hours

**Description of Activity:**

Module 2 comprises Days 3-5 of this session, and focuses on steps of the session post-unburdening including the integration of transformed parts and ending a session. The challenges of ending an “incomplete” IFS process are discussed and strategies provided to allow safety and continuity between sessions. Circumstances under which burdens return to the client’s system are analyzed from the Model’s perspective. The Unburdened Internal System is discussed in view of the Model’s assumptions that all parts can transform and offer positive contributions to the client. The parallels between ending the training program as it relates to treatment endings is explored. Difficult cases will be examined and strategies from the IFS Model reviewed. The core skills involved in gaining Self-led access to parts presenting in therapy will be reviewed and examined. Strategies are identified for helping various personality parts transform to achieve therapeutic success.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Summarize and provide needed clarification of material from Session 14
2. Identify challenges for ending “incomplete” sessions and how these can be addressed
3. Explain why burdens may “resurface” in clients after completing an IFS healing process and describe strategies that address these occurrences
4. Identify concepts from the Unburdened Internal System for recognizing the gifts and strengths of Self-led parts
5. Explain the completion process in IFS therapy and its relationship to ending the training program
6. Use role-play exercise to work with those parts affected by treatment termination
7. Identify at least 2 strategies for clients to practice between sessions to maintain gains achieved in therapy
8. Describe the post-unburdening skills of Invitation and Integration for the purpose of achieving harmony and balance in the client’s internal system
9. List at least 2 common mistakes made by IFS therapists in ending an IFS healing process, with suggestions for resolution
10. Identify at least 3 difficult clinical situations
11. Use small groups to appraise, process and review the IFS Model of therapy
12. Identify post-training opportunities