



Identifying and Addressing Common Protector Fears

1. Fear of overwhelm (Fear of getting stuck in pain)

They fear the person will be pulled into a black hole from which there is no return – exiles will take over, overwhelming the system.

“There are ways we can help that (target) part not have to take over, and to control the intensity.”

“If something really feels too much, you can come back in and stop the action.”

2. Fear that nothing can help, that it won't matter to go to target part

They don't see any possible benefit from going into the pain. Exiles can't change, damage has been done, there is no point. “That was then, now is now, don't look back.”

“I know that you've tried many ways to deal with this already and yet there's another way/another resource inside (Self) that will be able to tend to the (target) part and help it heal.”

“It's understandable that you're skeptical. Would you be willing to let us try this other way?”

3. Fear of triggering a dangerous firefighter (suicidal, self-harming, raging, addiction, etc.)

Doing internal work with painful parts could set off extreme firefighters that could further jeopardize the person.

“We can work next with that firefighter and do so safely, to help it not have to take over.”

“We won't go any further until you agree it's safe to do so, but if you could give us a chance to get to know that firefighter for just a moment, we can help it not take over.”

4. Fear of therapist's reaction (judgment, disgust, abandonment, hopelessness, overwhelm)

The protector fears the therapist won't be able to handle the exiles or other intense/feared parts. The protector is worried the therapist will be contaminated/repulsed/overwhelmed and will reject/abandon/betray the client.

“I do have parts, so if you see any reaction in me like impacts any of your parts, please let me know. Any reaction in me is about my parts and not about you.”

5. Fear of losing their job, becoming obsolete

Parts fear they will lose their job, be eliminated, lose power.

“We're not trying to get rid of you. It's impossible and there will be times when you will be necessary”.

“What if you could do your same job more effortlessly, or only part of the time?”

“What would you rather be doing with your energy if you didn't have to work so hard protecting like this?”

6. Fear of finding out something new about the past (new secrets revealed)

Secrets will be exposed that the system (internal or external) can't handle.

“That's not our goal, but if it does happen, we can help relieve the parts that are carrying pain from those times.”

“You don't have to make any decisions about what would need to change (i.e. take legal action, cut off contact), let's just help the parts that might be hurting, vulnerable, etc.”

7. Fear of external constraint (someone else might not want a part to change)

The external world doesn't support the change. Without it, they will become too dependent, needy and vulnerable.

(Depending on the kind of external constraint) “We can help you deal with that person in a way that won't be at odds with your healing.”

“And if this other person objected, what are you afraid would happen? What if we could make it so that you're less vulnerable to that person's reaction? Would you let us help this other part then?”

8. Fear of exile getting hurt again (by client, therapist or another part)

“Of course, you are worried about that; we are here to help.”

“You can come back in and stop us if you think that is happening.”

“We can make sure that other part doesn't interfere and hurt the exile.”

9. Self-energy is dangerous.

Explore early experiences of Self energy being shamed, punished.

Agree to introduce part to Self-energy gradually so that part can begin to trust on its own.

10. Therapy will end; loss of relationship with therapist.

Assure client that there is room for their Self energy and for relationship with therapist.