

Zen and Internal Family Systems

Working with Parts

Phase 1

Step 1: Noticing parts.

Whenever you are operating from Self, your experience will be characterized by 8 “C’s”

- Calm
- Curiosity
- Compassion
- Confidence
- Courage
- Clarity
- Connectedness
- Creativity

Therefore, when you are *not* experiencing these qualities, you may be blended with a part, or several parts.

Step 2: Find the part in or around the body. You might discover first a feeling, an image, a sensation, movement, voice or words, or an energy. There might be a contraction in some part of the body, or a vague sense of confusion or agitation, tiredness or doubt.

Step 3: Focus on the part. See if you can witness the part and simply pay attention to it.

Step 4: Feeling. How do you feel towards the part? How does the part experience that feeling?

Phase 2

Step 4: Befriend the part. Get a fuller sense of the part. See what you can discover out about it, for example, about how old it is. Allow it to show you or tell you what it wants you to know. Find out how it is trying to help you. See if you can learn what its concerns or fears are.

Step 5: How do you feel towards the part as you get to know it better? Is your feeling toward it now based in Self, or another part, perhaps a protector or manager?

Step 6: If the part were not burdened by its present role, what would it prefer to do? Would it be interested in that possibility, even if it can't imagine how that could happen?

Phase 3

Step 7: What other parts are concerned with this part? How do they relate to it? Are there parts in collaboration with this part? Are there parts that dislike or oppose this part? Are there parts protecting or managing access to this part?

Step 8: How can you facilitate a healthy relationship among these parts? What might need to happen so that they might trust you, and each other? Allow the parts to speak for what they need, and listen from the place of Self.

Writing for the Parts: Protectors and managers

Protectors and managers are parts that have two different functions: managing our lives so that we can be safe and comfortable and avoid pain, and rushing in once we have gotten triggered to try to “put out the fires.” You might recognize a manager or protector part in strategies such as planning, organizing, procrastinating, and so on, while parts acting as firefighters might rush in after we are upset with strategies such as eating too much, surfing the internet, drinking or drug use, or other kinds of self-soothing behaviors. See if you can identify a protector or manager part in you. Write some brief notes describing how you first sense this part. How is its presence known?

1. What are the bodily sensations or felt sense of the part? See if you can be precise in capturing this experience of the part. Even a few brief phrases can be helpful.
2. Write a few sentences about how you feel toward the part.
3. Write a few sentences about how the part feels toward you.
4. If your feelings are not aligned with the 8 C’s above, they indicate the presence of another part. At this point, you may ask that part to stand aside for a little bit, or you may choose to turn toward that part, in which case you begin with 1. again.
5. Describe, as completely as possible, whatever you can discover about the part. In the same way you might be curious about someone you are meeting for the first time, see what you can find out about the part. Make some notes about what you learn. Let the part know that you are writing down what it is telling you so that you can be sure you get it right, and so that you can remember what it wants you to know. You might ask how old the part is, or when it first appeared. You might also ask what it believes its job is, how it is helping you. What might happen if it was not doing this job? What concerns or fears does it have? Here are Jay Earley’s questions (in a slightly different order):
 - What is its role in helping you manage your life and the world?
 - How does it relate to other people?
 - What is its positive intent for you?
 - How does it protect you?
 - What is it trying to protect you from?
6. Bonus question: Does it like its job, or would it rather be doing something else if it could?
7. As you listen or attend to the part, and make notes, does your feeling toward the part change? Can you let the part know what you are feeling? How does the part respond, knowing how you feel toward it? Is there anything else it wants you to know?