

IFS & the Window of Tolerance

- Self makes all the difference.
- Nothing is too much for Self. **Self** has an **enormous window of tolerance** and can be with anything.
 - The calm **Self-led presence of the therapist/practitioner is co-regulating**. “I’m here, I’m not afraid, this is not too much for me.”
 - Protectors are the ones who get scared/overwhelmed. When a client is highly blended, it’s the therapist’s role to be Self for the dyad.
 - As practitioners, we do not have to be afraid of the client feeling overwhelmed during the ‘witnessing’ of the trauma. Self is present with the exiles and their experience is held in **dual awareness** - being both “*here and there, inside and outside, at once*”.*
 - **Blending lies on a continuum** – so even if there is only a small amount of Self it can be enough.

* p. 265 Schwartz, *Internal Family Systems*, 2nd Edition

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- We don't use typical grounding or calming techniques because it colludes with managers, ignores firefighters, and further exiles the part asking to be heard. **Exiling a part only makes it more extreme.**
- The part who is overwhelming the system **has something important to say.**
 - We acknowledge this to the part and ask it to 'pull its energy back a little,' so other parts are not frightened, with the promise that if the part agrees then Self can be with them and hear what they need to say/show/express.
 - These parts want to be heard, so they agree. If they don't agree at first, we stay with them long enough to address their concerns and then they do.
 - We can invite parts to see that when they flood it feels worse and feels better with Self present.
- **Self is contagious – so are protectors:** Therapist needs to do their own work.
 - Only through deeply being with our own experience can we deeply be with the client's experience.
 - The **Cornerstone** of the Model is that we are in **Self** – this can't be 'taught' as a therapy approach, it must be embodied by the therapist

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- **Every system is self-correcting.**
- Client and therapist negotiate safety together, instead of “the therapist always has the last word on safety”.
 - Practitioner continually assessing level of Self energy in the client’s system – “Is this ok to be with?” and “How do you feel towards?”, etc.
 - Therapist is also continually assessing level of Self energy in our own system.
 - We can let protectors know that Self (of the client and of the therapist) can be with the exiles, they do not have to do the witnessing.
- Therapist is on the lookout for pushing parts.
 - We only go ahead with permission of protectors.
- Practitioner available outside of session if/when backlash occurs, while trusting the system knows how to take care of itself.