

about a difficult conversation with your boss or having frequent judgmental thoughts about people. Even the absence of thought sometimes indicates a part. For example, if your mind suddenly goes blank, there is usually a part causing this, perhaps because it doesn't want you to continue with a train of thought that it considers dangerous.

Behavior. An action or pattern of behavior can indicate a part—for example, withdrawing or becoming pushy. The avoidance of behavior also indicates a part. For example, if you find yourself avoiding a phone call or a project you need to work on, that comes from a procrastinating part.

Desires. Certain types of desires come from a part. One part may want closeness or success. Another might want to be seen and appreciated. A third might want to be left alone. A lack of desire could also come from a part that doesn't think it is safe to want things.

Let's look at a more detailed example of a trailhead. When Betty visited her grown son's house, she felt that he was being verbally abusive to his son, and she was considering talking to him about this but kept hesitating. In order to explore this, I asked her to imagine bringing it up with him. Here is a list of the parts she accessed:

1. One part wants to avoid talking to her son about this. This was attended by a strangling feeling in her throat that was intended to stop her from speaking because she might otherwise make a mistake and cause her son pain.

2. A loving part cares about him and her grandson.

3. A part is sad and regretful because she hasn't communicated well before.

4. A part feels disappointed and embarrassed about how he treats her grandson.

5. A part is angry at him and protective of her grandson. It wants to say "How dare you?!" and push her son away.

6. A part is afraid of the angry/protective part, and that is reflected in her stomach feeling very disturbed. This part is afraid of being overwhelmed by the angry part and making hurtful statements to her son. This disturbed part kept her from being aware of the angry part for a while.

You can see from Betty's experience that many parts may be activated by a single trailhead, and they interact with each other in attempts to influence her feelings and behavior. This brings up the question of how you tell one part from another. If two feelings seem very different or if they are

opposed to each other, they are clearly different parts. For example, Betty's love for her son and her anger at him are so opposite that they clearly come from different parts. If one part seems to be blocking or protecting against another, it means they are different parts. For example, her disturbed-stomach part blocked Betty's awareness of the angry/protective part for a while.

However, what if two parts seem similar? For example, the strangling feeling and the disturbed-stomach seem to have roughly the same attitude, so they might be coming from the same part or from two different parts. This can't be determined intellectually. Betty will only find out when she explores them in more depth.

Exercise: Identifying the Parts at a Trailhead

Choose a trailhead that you are interested in exploring. Using the approach described above, make a list of each of the parts involved with that trailhead. For each part, write the following if you can:

Name of part _____

What it feels emotionally _____

What it looks like _____

What it feels like in your body and where _____

What it says _____

How it makes you behave _____

What it wants _____

You haven't fully explored these parts, so don't be concerned if you don't know much about them. Just fill in what you do know. Add information to your description later as you get to know the part better.

In order to allow you to more easily write out the answers to this exercise and all the others in the book, I have created a Companion Workbook that you can download for free from my website www.personal-growth-programs.com/ifs-book.