

Syllabus

Internal Family Systems Therapy: A Contemporary Approach for Working with Individuals, Couples, Families and Groups

Robin Warsh, Associate Professor for Clinical Practice, BOSTON COLLEGE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Purpose: Students develop an understanding of the conceptual framework of the IFS Model, including the Protective System, Exiles and the Self. The six-step protocol is demonstrated and practiced. Students explore specialized clinical techniques, such as direct access, working with legacy burdens and polarizations, and negotiating with protectors. Students learn the application of the IFS model to specific topic areas and populations including couples, families, groups, trauma and dissociative disorders, addictions and phobias.

Required Texts:

Schwartz, R. (1995). Internal Family Systems. Guilford Press.

Sweezy, M., Ziskind, E., & Schwartz, R. (2013). Internal Family Systems Therapy: New Dimensions. New York, NY: Routledge.

Unit 1: Theory and Concepts

Week 1: What is IFS?

Week 2: Defining the Internal System

Week 3: The IFS Protocol

Week 4: Fine-Tuning (polarizations, direct access, legacy burdens)

Week 5: The Parts of the Therapist

Unit 2: Applications of the Model

Weeks 6 and 7: Working with Couples

Week 8: Working with Families

Week 9: Working with Groups

Week 10: Working with Trauma and Dissociative Disorders

Week 11: Working with Addictions

Week 12: Working with Phobias

Week 13: Outcome Effectiveness, Research and Evaluation

Assignments:

1. A mid-term paper asks them to apply their learning to a case that instructor provides.
2. The final paper requires them to apply course concepts to one of their own cases from their field placement.