Foundation for SELF Leadership

EMPOWERING LIVES THROUGH SELF-DISCOVERY

Stories of Transformation

SPECIAL 10TH EDITION *OUTLOOK*

Transform:

To change shape or form, perspective or outlook... To discover new insights that will change one's worldview or view of oneself...

In celebration of *OUTLOOK* magazine's tenth-issue anniversary, the Foundation for Self Leadership is pleased to publish this special compilation of ***Stories of Transformation***. It is a collection of stories written or shared by individuals or couples who have experienced a significant shift in their lives, driven by a new awareness or understanding of sorts.

Shifts are significant events. They require a notable jump from one set of conditions to another. On one end, quite intriguing and fascinating, is what science calls a first-order transition, like water to ice, where a discontinuous change happens in the order of things. Think in the extreme also of how butterflies push their way through their cocoons into a new state—with great discomfort and pain, we can only presume—after a physical metamorphosis, to emerge with remarkable grace, vivid color, and delicate wings, radically different from the caterpillars they used to be. Here we're reminded of the beautiful children's book by Eric Carle, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, now fifty years old, and also the Chrysalis Movement announced at the 2019 Spirit of Humanity Forum, where an adult human-size cocoon crochet was being stitched together to allow individuals to sit within it and undergo their own transformation.

In our collection of ***Stories of Transformation***, the change may be less obvious. While not physical, it is fundamental at times. It may have occurred in some cases as a result of a crisis—in response to which real change often, not always, takes place. Such a change generally follows a long struggle, dotted with moments of hope.

Change in shared human experiences is due to a newly gained deep awareness of one's inner state of mind, of what makes up one's human psyche, and of the depth of one's internal resources—at times hidden from view and consciousness.

FUTURE

As the demand from the external world and our daily grind and interactions exerts increasing pressure on us, we need to dig deep into our own source of hope and resilience to find ways to listen and be sensitive to our inside conversations and sensations. Then we can respond where appropriate, and accept and let go where necessary—always at ease with who we are and what our gifts and limitations are.

The IFS lens of parts and Self appears to focus our views on our inner world to reveal eye-opening and heart-opening critical nuance and detail, the way a magnifying glass shows us what we can't see with our naked eye or the way a prism breaks down for us the unifying colors of natural light showing beauty; rich, profound information; and special characteristics.

The stories in the coming pages reflect diverse experience in life and profession. The multitude of experiences we face in a lifetime often necessitate a period of reflection and integration. Incidents throughout our life span a wide spectrum from inconsequential to extraordinary. And, each one of us as individuals respond to circumstances in equally divergent manners. Sometimes we are able to undertake this process on our own, while other times we require the assistance of another's presence, support, and understanding to attain integration and transformation. In all cases, however, they were driven by an internal desire to overcome a serious obstacle, to heal and reach a higher, more lasting state of well-being.

These courageous authors share with us portions of their stories, bringing to readers a sense of real-life hope in healing the human spirit from adversities—some of which many of us have also either experienced directly or known someone who has. Each author's story conveys a shift in his/her own metamorphosis, a portion of a personal awakening process, and varying details of the rawness of life and healing.

When we initially formed the idea of this special insert, we hoped for ten stories to celebrate ten editions of *OUTLOOK*. Through the generosity and courage of our authors, we compiled twelve stories—with more still coming in for future editions. May reading the following ***Stories of Transformation*** fill you with courage, hope, and energy.

Whether living through frightening adversities such as PTSD (Finding My Way Out and Personalities from Our Traumas), or aerophobia (Fear of Flying to Freedom of Flight); or gaining awareness of how our own parts affect others through our professional endeavors (My Own Oxygen, First: A School Teacher's Perspective; Transformation from Down Under; Pause. Breathe. Respond: A Teacher's New Calling; Transformation as a Lawyer; and Fearlessness vs. Courage); or working through the intricacies of long-term marriage (A Couples' Transformation with IFS and IFIO and Love the Parts Your With); or discovering the impact of unblending from one's parts and living a more Self-led life (A Girl Like Me), or many similar experiences, these stories are sure to touch your heart and inspire a deep compassion. __TMH and MLG

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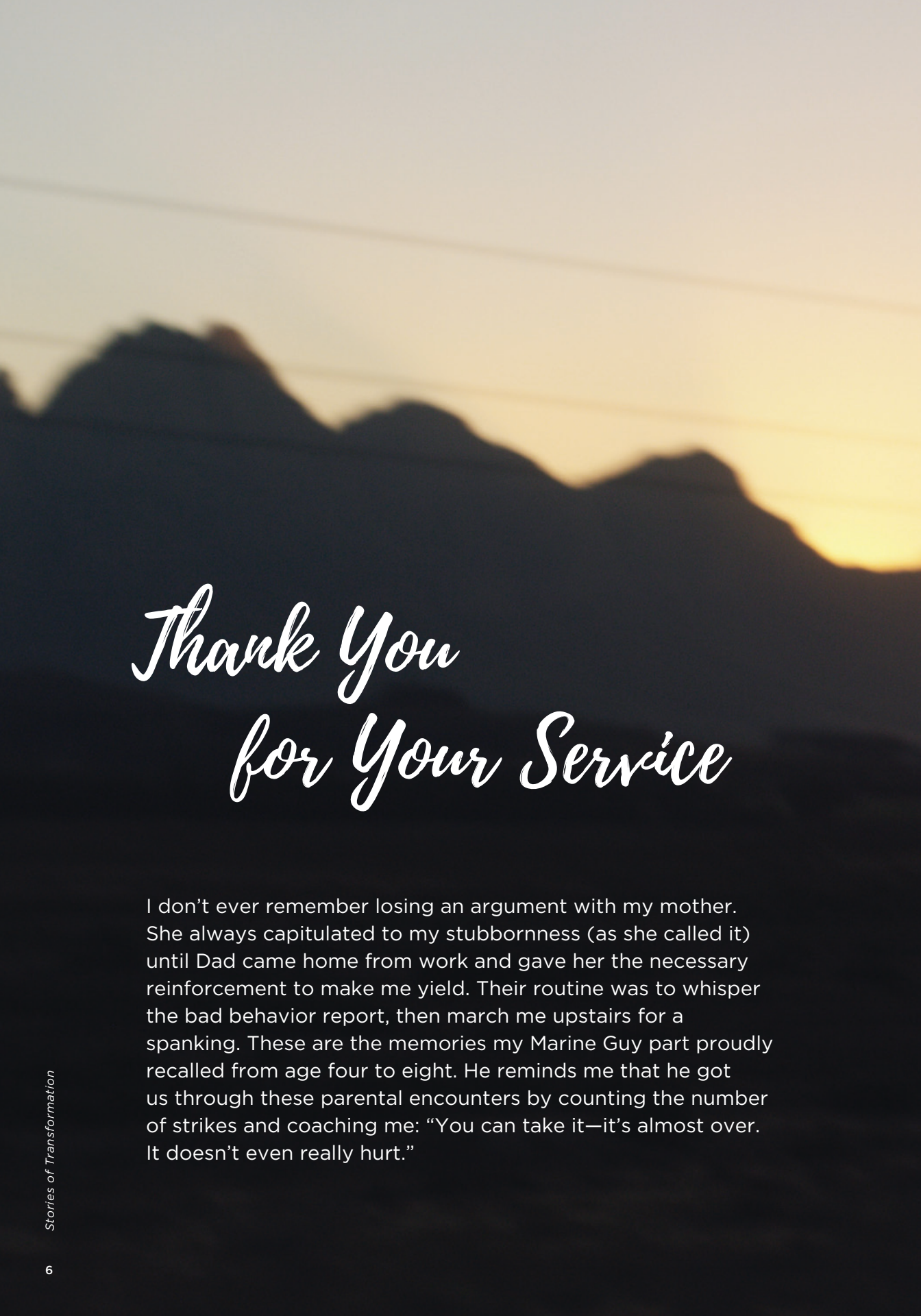
Please be advised that the content of some stories may be emotionally challenging to read. Within the stories, references are made to bullying, cursing, homophobia, anger, domestic and sexual abuse, accident trauma, child and adult PTSD, panic attacks, suicidality, violent ideation, agoraphobia, depression, aerophobia, death and dying, the justice system, gender discrimination, bigotry, emotional abuse, medical challenges, religious references, the Vietnam war, and the Holocaust. You may need to be discerning if and when you choose to read them.

"And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

Anais Nin



Thank You for Your Service

I don't ever remember losing an argument with my mother. She always capitulated to my stubbornness (as she called it) until Dad came home from work and gave her the necessary reinforcement to make me yield. Their routine was to whisper the bad behavior report, then march me upstairs for a spanking. These are the memories my Marine Guy part proudly recalled from age four to eight. He reminds me that he got us through these parental encounters by counting the number of strikes and coaching me: "You can take it—it's almost over. It doesn't even really hurt."

Marine Guy was my place to go when I was chased in kindergarten by the "Green Kid's Gang," shamed by teachers, punished by principals, and scared playing high school football as a 110-pound weakling.

Marine Guy was about focus, defensiveness, and discipline. He would hold me in the college library till the work was done. He liked to jump out of bed and run track before class, sit in the front row, focus on every word, then run back to study notes after class—all discipline, time management, efficiency, endurance, frustration, tolerance, and no bullshit. He flew through four challenging years with much academic success, but then we got our draft notice!

Getting drafted in 1968 felt like a death sentence except that a part of me kept saying, "You can do this—you can survive. Fleeing to Canada is not an option. Shut up and go serve your country." So off to basic training we went, me and Marine Guy, leaving "everyone else (all other parts, especially those that were vulnerable) at home." I don't remember feeling fear or missing home or caring about anything. I do remember focusing on our survival. Marine Guy's beliefs ran my life because they worked in the military: *If you do your job, we will get along. If you respect me and yourself, I will learn to trust you. When I give an order, follow it. When there is an emergency, I'm in charge. We never lose. Emotion and empathy are for those guitar-strumming gutless hippies.* Marine Guy led us through training to become a medic, then an LPN nurse, then a cardiac care specialist so we were never needed in Viet Nam, yet we got to serve those who did, and that was heartbreaking, but Marine Guy got us through.

My soon-to-be ex-wife hated Marine Guy, as they both wanted to be in charge and because connection and love were just not part of his vocabulary. So, because of his key role in our suffering, Marine Guy was exiled. Psychodynamic therapy helped with that by teaching him control, which allowed us to behave in more prosocial ways—until he got triggered, which happened whenever we were disrespected, challenged, or ignored. At those times, I felt compelled to respond with an urge to speak up without weighing consequences ("Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead") or thinking about how to say things or how I would be heard. I would hear him speaking for us. Though my words seemed calm enough and properly muted, the listener often responded in defensive ways, which would piss off Marine Guy, who would begin to settle in for a battle, holding the rest of the system captive.

Unblending from Marine Guy was freeing but required much work and practice. Now, when I feel his trigger, I first turn inward and acknowledge that he is bringing guidance, and I appreciate that he comes from a place of high moral and ethical values. His coaching offers good advice, such as: *Only speak when you know the score. Own it as your belief. Be brave and state what you believe in. Be good at giving Self-led feedback to help others. Compassion is more disarming than military might. People don't want to fight—they just want to be heard.*

The Battle (work with an exile):

Edward Munch's *The Scream* connected with an exile of mine that felt the terror expressed by this painting. This was a shocking discovery to Marine Guy, who thought he "had it covered." I worked in individual IFS therapy to retrieve and unburden this terror-stricken part, the one who trembled when I would hear my father's red pickup truck pull into the driveway, the one who would run and hide, but there was no safe place except Marine Guy. My daily hiking practice provided quality time to be with that fearful part until I could feel it let go and turn to me.

I heard the many horror stories the fearful part was still holding and acknowledged Marine Guy's role in protecting him from that early emotional and physical war zone. Our child part had first appeared as a red devil being pulled around by a mother figure who was convinced we were "as dumb as a rock" and that we were a "selfish bastard

just like your father." After unburdening these and other beliefs, along with feelings of fear of being shamed, playfulness showed up. I could see it during trail runs: the kid just wanted to play, and so we did. One day I introduced him to Marine Guy and was surprised to feel Marine guy's humility and apology for being so gruff. To the child parts, Marine Guy's gruff and angry energy now feel like protective energy directed outside in things like political advocacy.

I measure the shift in my inner world by how I feel navigating the outer world. For the last six months, I have been volunteering at a veteran center—a service I never dreamed of because there were too many triggers whenever I thought of my service years. I sit on several planning committees and feel compassionate and confident for good things being done to help veterans and for what I can offer. Marine Guy has become a good listener, rarely seems triggered, and feels connected to the other marine guys as they try to come home from their respective wars. Things have changed for me, and for that I am grateful to IFS and the many people who have helped me learn and use the Model to help myself.

Ray Mount, PhD
Auburndale, MA

"Marine Guy has become a good listener, rarely seems triggered, and feels connected to the other marine guys as they try to come home from their respective wars. Things have changed for me, and for that I am grateful to IFS and the many people who have helped me learn and use the Model to help myself."

My Own Oxygen, First: A School Teacher's Perspective

As a teacher working to improve my practice, I joined a ten-month, 40-hour Internal Family Systems (IFS) program through my school district. I had been teaching in Minneapolis Public Schools for 25 years and, since my first year as a teacher, have consistently sought professional development and growth opportunities. Most trainings in my career had focused on math, reading, science, or social studies strategies, not on my own mental/emotional health. This was quite a shift; I even questioned (for a very short while at the first session) whether I wanted to continue or not.

I came into the program thinking that all my students, regardless of their circumstances, needed more-focused mental/emotional health support. Such support, it was my view, could build greater student resilience—a key to building an effective classroom community.

As the program unfolded, I quickly became convinced that staff members/teachers who work with students must be more resilient themselves in order to effectively deliver on the promise of public education. I learned that I could transform my own teaching practice by creating, through the IFS "parts" thinking, a safe space of trust in the classroom and by guiding each student (and me as a prerequisite) to embrace and deepen the desire to grow emotionally.

Three insights emerged for me from the experience and open, profound conversations with my colleagues: **(1)** understanding trauma and its impact on student learning may shift how I motivate and evaluate student success; **(2)** establishing affective connections is key to developing a truly welcoming classroom environment; and **(3)** using "parts" language and concepts can positively influence student attitudes and achievement.

These led to the biggest source of change in my classroom: identifying resilience (mine and my students') as a key contributor to my students' success. I started seeing every student as a system of active protector parts and hidden hurt emotions surrounded in the classroom by other systems of active protector parts and hidden hurt emotions. I found that I needed to be attentive to parts while planning lessons in order to allow students to act and behave from a different place—a place of calm, comfort, and feeling connected. For example, a "part" can quite often take a stance that exhibits risk-avoidant behaviors, while it was important to take daily risks for the student to advance socially and academically.

I am now focused on introducing and modeling these concepts. While we have not yet used specific "parts" language with students, we have begun to explore the uplifting qualities of Self that each of us hosts within. As a matter of practice, students now openly compare such qualities and contrast them to less-desirable qualities during our normal week of learning.

We have also started incorporating the IFS paradigm into our district-supported social emotional learning mechanisms, from the classroom circle work to the Second Step curriculum. I generally had difficulty tying these curricula together; however, with the focus on resilience offered through my IFS work, it has become much easier. Now, when I explore the much-welcome qualities of Self with my students, outcomes connected to social-emotional growth are much more sustainable.

Oftentimes, during a school day, interactions among students can be problematic, necessitating individual interventions. Since discovering IFS (and my own inner system), I've been leading these interventions with more curiosity, thinking carefully about which "parts" are taking the lead. I ask the student and myself which parts are present and how they are manifesting the sort of behaviors we're seeing.

This technique allows students to talk through challenges they are facing—without too much drama. As one student put it, "You let us talk through stuff like we're in charge of the talk." These conversations are made possible by my preliminary understandings of "parts" work.

Student reactions have been overwhelmingly positive. In the coming school year, I plan to incorporate mindful breathing as a transitional exercise to remind students to be aware of their inner conversations as they move throughout their day.

The main obstacle I still face as I infuse the IFS approach into my teaching is the higher-than-expected level of student need. It is critical for us to scale this thinking up to a classroom model compatible with the day-to-day teacher-student dynamics. At a time when we as teachers are experiencing ever more pressing demands from all directions, we are perhaps being called upon to focus a bit more on our students' overall emotional development and figure out how to incorporate it into the overall educational experience, especially given the universality of the student experience in the classroom. Of course, we need to start with ourselves…only then might we be able to change the classroom culture.

On a personal level, I'm now able to sense when my extreme parts (where I become distracted and act on my impulses) arrive and show themselves. I am learning how to calm myself and consciously focus on these parts so that I can tap into my positive energy, keeping it where it needs to be—attuned to student achievement.

As I end my first year of work connected to the IFS Model, I walk away with a key goal as a teacher: To become more attentive to my own inner conversations, with the intent to create harmony among my own "parts," becoming hence more Self-led. What may follow from this harmony within me, recognizing that Self energy begets Self energy, is possibly greater harmony within my students and within my classroom.

Tim Jungwirth, MEd, is a 5th grade teacher at an elementary school in South Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. This summer, Tim has begun to see connections between his parts work and another passion of his: gardening.

"What may follow from this harmony within me, recognizing that Self energy begets Self energy, is possibly greater harmony within my students and within my classroom."

Transformation from Down Under

"Make it good!" this one says. I sense this part that wants to impress is satisfied with the response I provide before I begin writing this piece – "If we accept and show who we are, it's already worthwhile and inherently good." When speaking to others about the impact of IFS in my professional and personal life, I often state that it's been a game-changer. What's changed is the way I can be present with myself and others, including my clients, with a kindness and warmth I didn't know was there inside. Before learning IFS, I engaged with clients in counselling with a somewhat forced agenda to make change happen, to do more of the work than the client, or adopt an expert position.

I first came across IFS in Bessel van der Kolk's book, *The Body Keeps the Score* in early 2014. It seemed at the time that IFS wasn't known in Australia, and when the first online workshop appeared that year, taught by Bonnie Weiss, LCSW, my Never Stop Learning part jumped into action. Following that, I was fortunate to be involved in many of Bonnie's workshops in Melbourne in 2015 and 2016, as well as engaging in the IFS Online Circle program.

I went on to complete my Level 1 training with Paul Ginter, EdD, in Australia and then my Level 2 with Richard Schwartz, PhD, and Frank Anderson, MD, in Boston. Within sixty seconds of walking into the Level 2 training room on the first day, I received the first of many hugs.

The way the IFS community supports and accepts is different from any other community I've ever been in. Learning IFS and being in the IFS community has inspired and energized my therapeutic practice and my therapist parts, and softened other therapist parts who previously pushed for change or poured 'expertise' into the conversation.

Learning IFS has also emboldened me to step out and step up in ways I couldn't imagine several years ago, such as creating and running a Women's Trauma Recovery Program based on IFS concepts with my colleague Danielle Williamson, DPSYCH. I continue to deepen my IFS through supervision with Cece Sykes, LCSW, ACSW, and commencing a PhD at Swinburne University exploring the question: How might Internal Family Systems Therapy conceptualize and treat adults with attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety? Since learning IFS, I sense that my internal elastic band of compassion, when I'm really sitting in Self energy, could stretch and lengthen on and on and never snap.

"Since learning IFS, I sense that my internal elastic band of compassion, when I'm really sitting in Self energy, could stretch and lengthen on and on and never snap."

The embrace of acceptance that IFS has given my system has been warm and healing. In the first online workshop with Bonnie, my Never Stop Learning part shot my arm up in the air to volunteer for a demonstration session. I remember this demo with extreme clarity to this day because of the surge of compassion, acceptance, and tenderness I was able to show my fourteen-year-old self in response to his humiliation and shame from being bullied about being gay.

That afternoon, I stumbled around in a daze, my parts shifting and shunting across my internal landscape in all directions. It was more than an aha moment, it marked the beginning of a transformation.

My arm has shot up to volunteer for demos since that first time. I often think now that you don't do a demo, rather, a demo does you or chooses you. One particular demo centered around legacy burdens of one of my exiles—a black withered heart, barely beating, almost dead, holding the burdens related to being gay: shame, loneliness, rejection, and stigma. It appeared alongside the black, withered hearts of other gay men—a community of withered hearts together, stretching across time. But the collective heartbeat grew stronger and faster with unburdening and the mantra, "You're allowed to be here," was breathed in by all. I opened my eyes, and one by one participants stood and said, "You're welcome. You're allowed to be here." One participant, a mother, said that her gay son texted her during the demo telling her how much he loved her and thanking her for accepting him. This demo still reverberates in me in so many different ways. Finding our own Self energy through IFS is inherently healing. Perhaps the connection of our collective Self energy could be a community game-changer...or even a global game-changer.

David Eckel, MSW, is an accredited mental health social worker in Melbourne, Australia. He has been using IFS for five years and attended Level 2 training in Boston recently.

David Eckel with Frank Anderson

A Couples Transformation with IFS and IFIO

Pam

I felt like I'd been in a loveless, sexless marriage for three decades! Sure enough, I'd brought my own long-term intimacy and sexuality issues to the relationship between John and me, but the initial connection we'd established in our early years was completely gone. John was constantly angry, resentful, frustrated, and bitter and that led me to feel worthless, emotionally unsafe, and filled with shame when I was near him. At our lowest point, I couldn't stand to be in his presence and divorce was just around the corner.
I suggested counseling and John said he'd go—for one session.

That was our introduction to IFS. Our therapist skillfully and intuitively introduced us to the principles of IFS within the IFIO framework (Intimacy From the Inside Out). John and I both learned to nullify the toxic dynamic between us, work through our individual emotions openly and in front of each other, and gain some initial self-understanding and self-compassion. We got familiar with the 8Cs – compassion, calmness, curiosity, clarity, confidence, creativity, courage, and connectedness—and were able to use them when interacting with our own and each other's exiled parts.

There have been a number of significant moments of transformation for me, but the softening of John's heart is one of the most poignant. When I get hijacked by my parts, he's now able to be empathetic, sensitive and compassionate toward me—and in turn, he's also more vulnerable when sharing about his own parts. And so, the amazing transformation for me is that *I can be vulnerable with him.* What a precious gift for me to be able to talk vulnerably with my husband about my feelings, knowing that I'm being heard and understood. It feels so good!

"When I get hijacked by my parts, he's now able to be empathetic, sensitive and compassionate toward me—and in turn, he's also more vulnerable when sharing about his own parts."

I've tried lots of different types of therapy: the one where the therapist takes notes and doesn't say much; the one where you have a mutual dialogue; and others besides. But IFS has been the only therapy that has made a genuine difference. We've been together for over 40 years now, but having discovered IFS three and a half years ago, I can honestly say: I don't know where we'd be without it.

John

I remember when my wife told me that she wanted to go to counselling as a last resort before separating. I was shocked! From my perspective, I had no issues except getting frustrated and angry occasionally and then yelling every once in a while. Big deal! Yelling was normal for me! My mother died when I was very young and I was left with my dad who was angry and controlling. Fear and spankings with his belt were typically how he disciplined his children and I was blamed for everything and could do nothing right. Pam wouldn't listen to me or change—she wanted me to change! We were stuck in a loveless, hopeless marriage and we weren't even friends.

I agreed to go to this IFS thing for one session. What harm could that do? But it felt like Ann, our counselor, understood me. One session followed another and before long I was looking forward to them and I started to have the feeling that this could work. I was learning about my parts, how to unblend from them, and I learned that I did not have to be hijacked by my past. I discovered I was not my father! While in counselling, I could listen to my wife where she showed incredible courage to share with me that my anger and yelling scared her. I realized I had a problem, but this time I had the tools from IFS to change. I could see my issues, work with them and change them.

One of the turning points for me was when Pam was yelling at me from 100 feet away when I was working in the garage. Previously, I would have assumed I was doing something wrong, but this time I realized that I didn't have to take it personally, protect myself by yelling back, or get angry with her. Instead I went into the house, approached her calmly and asked her if there was anything I could do to help. She was so shocked and we both realized that we'd turned a corner.

> "If there is an issue it is *our* issue. It's not my wife versus me."

Now I feel I have learned more by listening to our intimate parts, our conversations, and feelings in counseling than I did in 40 years of marriage. Now I have a choice. I can choose to relax my parts, to listen, and ask if I can help. If there is an issue it is our issue. It's not my wife versus me.

I am so grateful to Pam for suggesting that we go to counseling. I also thank myself for agreeing to go! It's been three and half years now. Finally, I thank IFS for the process and our counselor, Ann. My changes would never have happened without you.

Pam and John
Franklin, Massachusetts

Personalities from Our Traumas

Labels, or naming things, have helped my daughter and me. For example, certain labels—like post-traumatic stress, my critical part, and my daughter's worried part—have brought relief and healing.

I've been in IFS therapy for nine years, and my eldest daughter has for seven years. It has transformed and elevated our lives. I am now a blessed mother of three children, but IFS came into our lives because of an accident that centered on my oldest two daughters.

One morning approximately nine years ago, when Ariana (almost three years old) was at the kitchen table eating breakfast, Bella (five months old) laid on a mat in front of Ariana. A babysitter was "watching" the girls as I recovered from nursing Bella throughout the night.

We often placed Bella on the table because we had two 60-pound dogs that we were afraid might actually step on Bella. This one morning, however, Bella rolled for the first time. With the babysitter in the adjacent laundry room, Ariana witnessed Bella roll off the table onto the hardwood floor and immediately ran to tell me.

As soon as I realized what happened, I left Ariana with the babysitter to take Bella to the pediatrician, later the emergency room, and then the intensive care unit. For these few—*most miserable*—days, my husband and I were focused on making the best medical decisions for Bella. The babysitter was also traumatized from the accident but stayed with Ariana and described Ariana as being her usual self: "so helpful, playful, happy, silly, and wonderful."

Over time, a collection of subtle changes had me concerned. First, Ariana started developing frequent tummy aches. The most painful ones would occur at large birthday parties. Second, when Ariana and Bella were among large groups of kids, especially outside our home, Ariana became less of her normally carefree three-to-four-year-old self. Instead, she acted like a "helicopter" parent around Bella: hovering to protect Bella.

One beautiful day at our country home when I took photos of Ariana and Bella dressing up, I saw a lot of worry and burden on Ariana's face. These pictures were a tipping point for me. During my mothers' group, I shared these concerns. The therapist who leads the group thought that Ariana and I had post-traumatic stress from Bella's accident. It resonated as true, and it brought relief to recognize what was happening to us.

Soon after this, Ariana started therapy, including IFS. She was four. Through her artwork, I was struck by the accuracy of details she recreated from Bella's accident: about the room, Bella's placement on the table, when Bella rolled off the table, and the moments that followed. While Ariana was too young to explain her feelings, IFS helped her name her emotions—like her

> "I think it helped because I could talk about it. The conversations helped me to remember, to realize that I was worried, and to understand what happened because I didn't really understand. So, I guess it helped me become less worried."

worried, scared, jealous, and angry parts. I noticed that on the walk home after every session, Ariana seemed more open, more relaxed, and even more loving toward me (though she was always loving).

It wasn't until preparing this article, however, that I learned that Ariana, who is now eleven, had been checking on Bella's head bump for years. Ariana also said that while she was worried, the grown-ups around her didn't seem worried about Bella, so she thought she shouldn't worry, either. I understood how lonely it is to ignore one of our parts, such as a worried part. I later said to Ariana, "I realize now how worried we've each been in our own silos!"

Ariana says that after a while she didn't remember why she was checking Bella's head. She eventually stopped. After asking Ariana how IFS may have helped her, she responded: "I think it helped because I could talk about it. The conversations helped me to remember, to realize that I was worried, and to understand what happened because I didn't really understand. So, I guess it helped me become less worried."

For me, the IFS approach has become an emotional meditation enabling me to notice the different parts that drive me (like when I'm with my kids or working), to explore their distinct personalities, stories, and burdens (most of which were born from minor to major traumas), and to label them. The storytelling opportunities from recognizing these parts have unburdened my mind, body, spirit, and energy. Having these stories heard has brought significant healing to Ariana and me.

The IFS approach allowed us to deconstruct our complex emotions, to understand and articulate how the nuances of our experiences impacted—and continue to shape—us, and to liberate us from being stuck in our unprocessed trauma. IFS empowers us to connect more with our Self and to have Self (rather than our stuck parts) lead our life experience.

Anonymous
New York

"P.S. This article brought significant healing to my daughter and me. She has blossomed tremendously since we talked more for this article. This was an incredible opportunity. **Thank you, Lisa, for bringing this to us!"**

Finding My Way Out

Though I have generally had a strong ability to stand up for myself, most of my life I've dealt with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, bouts of depression, fear of being alone in public places, and lack of self-confidence. Whether it was shopping for groceries or driving my children to and from school, my PTSD would shut me down. Panic attacks occurred often and I was forced to leave places to get back to baseline. Many times, even thinking about doing these activities would bring on a panic attack, forcing me to stay home.

When I first experienced IFS therapy approximately eight years ago, it felt weird and I wasn't sure if it helped me in any way. But then, I hit a hard bottom three years ago, where I became afraid that I was suicidal and potentially violent to others, despite not wanting to be. I felt extremely low, lost, and terrified. I am blessed to have a sister who is a certified IFS practitioner. She searched high and low for someone that would offer pro-bono or very "low-cost" sessions for me, but was unable to find anyone. I was stuck with nothing. Fortunately, due to my dire situation, she invited me to stay with her for a few weeks rather than seek psychiatric hospitalization.

"The terrified person I once was faded and I became more confident through healing the younger parts of me who had experienced plenty of pain."

Together, we worked through my traumas. Although people may find it hard to believe this possible, her parts gave abundant space for her Self to fully be present for me. The IFS sessions we did were truly transformational. I was able to go to places inside that I never imagined were still burdening me. I returned home with hope, excitement, joy, peace, and healing in my heart and mind. The terrified person I once was faded and I became more confident through healing the younger parts of me who had experienced plenty of pain. I was able to go out and meet complete strangers, make friends, and even go back to school. I also continued to do daily check ins with my parts to maintain inner connection.

Recently, I started having more memories come up that were impairing my ability to function at the level I desire and I had a few more sessions. I can say that my nervous system went from feeling wired to calm and grounded. To this day, I have reservations about IFS therapy, but I know that comes from a part of me, not all of me. This tells me there is more work that I can do with my parts to help heal and transform my life even more.

Today, I am a health and life coach and am able to help others achieve their goals. I'm able sometimes to remember to check inside with parts when I have a strong response or feeling about something or someone. Prior to IFS, I would have remained blended with those feelings and been stuck. I am deeply blessed that I was able to go be with my sister, choosing that option and transforming my life with this modality of healing.

N.D.
Portland, Oregon

Pause. Breathe. Respond. A Teacher's New Calling

Using the IFS Model has changed my entire life. I've seen a tangible difference, a real shift with my students in the last few months. Even the communication between staff has improved and people appear to be taking more risks as opposed to keeping things in. Overall, there is more kindness and awareness with how we talk to each other.

As a teacher, I have studied and practiced IFS as both a client and a participant in a pilot program seeking to integrate IFS in schools. As a member of my district's Well-Being Committee, I took part with 20 of my colleagues in an extended process to learn about Self leadership and look for ways to incorporate it in our lives as teachers, in our classroom, and across our school.

My struggles had been reflected in my students' daily lives. I kept searching for a way to have calmness, trust, and connection in the classroom. I had often felt like I was losing control of my own emotions and flipping out over the small stuff, which in turn made my students do the same. I knew I needed to make a change—for my students and for me.

My inner explorations with IFS led me to discover how to connect with my parts, giving them space to feel heard and time to pause. Listening in a friendlier way to

my parts affirmed to me that my emotions are trying to protect me. IFS has helped me reframe the way I process thoughts and feelings; I now set boundaries without feeling bad about them. There is a reason I am feeling this way that may not be obvious to me right away. Pause. Breathe. Respond.

I started to model Self leadership skills learned in the school context in front of my students. They observe how I recognize my parts; I pause to allow myself to be curious and compassionate towards those parts. My students see firsthand how I self-regulate when I am frustrated, angry, or stressed. Over the last year, I have seen firsthand how IFS can improve classroom management, reduce stress, and deepen connectedness by creating an environment where curiosity, calmness, and compassion are a priority.

Here are two stories of how my own awareness of Self and parts has impacted my students (and, just as importantly, me):

1. While practicing a staff presentation one afternoon about which I was nervous, a student barged in through the closed door without knocking. My initial reaction was to yell; Lily was rude for not knocking and needed to leave. Instead, I felt the IFS shift: I paused, curious and compassionate about my parts that were being triggered. My annoyance had to do with my nervousness not her actions. With that awareness, instead of yelling, I inquired why she was here after school and learned she had an interview at a private high school that afternoon and was extremely nervous! Speechless, I realized how my part would have gotten in our way to connect and unintentionally stopped me from helping her find calm and be ready.

2. At recess, I noticed Tyler and Drew approaching a group of classmates with anger in their gait and facial expressions. I was able to intercept them and calmly said, "Take a breath and a pause." They looked at me annoyed and yet stepped back and did what I'd urged. They confidently echoed what we'd talked about in class: "Respond. Don't react. Don't flip our lids." We then discussed and resolved the situation. A simple practice, a desirable outcome.

And there are myriad such anecdotes: trivial on the surface, profound in terms of effect.

My hope is that we shift the mindset of our school teachers and students through emotional empowerment. The classroom needs to be a place for everyone to understand and strengthen the "mental muscle" for bringing the focus back where we want it, when we want it. We need to develop an understanding of our parts, recognize what they're experiencing, and change how we respond to them.

I envision our students becoming self-aware, befriending their parts and enabled to gradually change behaviors wisely. Every teacher and every student, who do not often have the skills to adapt to change or tough times, can benefit. Let's change the way we teach our children so they know how to self-regulate instead of shutting down or using anger. Let's teach them how to be resilient when faced with adversity by taking a pause and checking in with their parts before reacting poorly.

As for my intention: To coach teachers to support them in making stronger connections with their students and giving them the tools to use IFS concepts in the classroom.

"My hope is that we shift the mindset of our school teachers and students through emotional empowerment."

Amy Shaefer, MFA, who has been recognized as Teacher of the Year, is an art teacher at Frank Ward Strong Middle Schools, Durham, CT, USA. She is an outdoor enthusiast, who loves cooking, reading, and snuggling with her 13-year-old Australian Shepherd.

Fear of Flying to Freedom of Flight

The ceiling, floor, and sides of the plane closed in on me, as I gasped for air. “Stop this right now! You’ve never had a panic attack on a flight,” my Inner Critic yelled at me. I squeezed by a passenger and sat down in my seat. I saw myself breathing quickly and gasping for air as I stood up and yelled, “Get me out of here!” To this, the flight attendant told me I had to get off the plane because I was panicking.

I have been flying alone since the age of seven. I have always enjoyed flying. However, when my son was a toddler, I became panicky when thinking about flying and I stopped flying. The solution, I thought, was to take him the next time I flew. Six months later, my son, partner, and I boarded a plane. As soon as the engine started, I screamed, “I need to get off of here!” While the plane made its way down the runway, my mouth became dry, my heart raced, and body became like a limp rag. Again, I cried out, “I am going to pass out! There is no way off, I’m trapped!”

Admittedly, I had developed a flying phobia. I didn't understand it, nor did I like it. I couldn't drive even under tunnels or ride in elevators. This panic began to interfere with all my travels. I tried EMDR and other therapeutic approaches to get rid of my phobia to no avail. Then one day, my Level 1-trained IFS therapist, Jenn, introduced me to IFS for my anorexia. I asked her, "What do you mean anorexia is a part of me?! I've been in recovery for over a decade. She is me and I hate myself for this relapse," I whimpered. After working with my Anorexic part, I noticed my claustrophobia naturally began to dissipate through other unburdenings. My Anorexia part and I are now friends. She no longer restricts food and has a new role within my system.

A couple of years later, my Fear of Flying part, Pami, wanted to work in the IFS session. I told Jenn that Pami's job was to protect my Three-Year-Old part, even though the Three-Year-Old had other protectors, and that Pami was ready for the fear of flying to be lifted. Those other protectors were not ready for this exile to be unburdened yet, and so it was decided that work would need to be done later, while still allowing Pami to heal.

In the session, I witnessed why Pami developed. My son was around three when my phobia started. I was the same age when I began to be the victim of sexual abuse from an uncle that lasted for many years. Pami developed panic attacks to protect the Three-Year-Old me from having to fly to where the abuse took place. Both parts were frozen in time, thinking the abuse was happening again. After witnessing Pami's story a week later, she unburdened. With the sound of the rolling waves, smell of salt air, and the shaking of Jenn's shamanic rattle, she spoke, "To the winds of the south…" Jenn invited Pami to place all of the panic and fear of flying into the stones laying on my body. With that, I started to feel lighter. Birds came and lifted Pami to the air. There she saw Jenn dip the stones and a crystal of mine in the Pacific Ocean to charge them with potent healing energy. In turn, Pami's panic and fear were offered to the Pacific Ocean, animals, and plants to transform into energy to help other people and nature. Then Pami invited adventure, freedom, and nurturing as qualities that integrated into my system.

Never in a million years, did I think I would be able to fly again—at least not without a total panic attack! A year after this unburdening, I flew to spend time at the ocean where Pami's unburdening took place

"Never in a million years, did I think I would be able to fly again—at least not without a total panic attack!"

and to work with Jenn. I promised to keep the Three-Year-Old in a safe place during the flight, which helped not only Pami, but the other protectors. Pami is excited to go on her next flying adventure. In September, I have two flights scheduled. First, I will be flying to attend the 2019 annual IFS Conference, then to participate in a Level 2 IFS training. I hope to assist others to have their own IFS transformations.

Tiffany Morgan, MA, MS, LAC, MEd, IFS Practitioner
Arizona

A Girl Like Me

It was a beautiful Sunday morning. My siblings, mother, and I were just getting out of church, and we were heading to our pastor's home to have brunch. It was like any other Sunday except, little did I know, my life would completely change forever. I was sent to the store with a man whom we trusted. I was a 7-year-old girl, and that day, I was brutally raped.

A few months later, I again was sexually abused but by a different individual who lived at my home. This went on regularly until I was 15 years old. When I finally gathered enough courage to tell my mother, she didn't believe me. So, I thought, "If my mother won't believe me, how is anyone else going to?" And I kept quiet.

Throughout those years, that wasn't the only bad thing happening. I was a witness to a shooting where a young man died in my arms while asking me to help him. My brother was also shot. Every day in my home, there was yelling and violence; my father would abuse my mother in front of me, and there was nothing I could do but cry and tell my mom to stop fighting. I was dealing with so many things at the same time. I wanted to die. I felt suicidal. I felt as if I couldn't take it anymore.

At the age of 16, I moved out of my mother's home and started living with some friends. I became close with their mother, and she helped me a lot. A little later that year, I met the father of my children. Although we did stay together for five years, it was five years of violence. He was always in and out of jail. In 2016, he was convicted of a crime and in 2019, he was sentenced to life in prison. During the trial, I was put in an impossible position; in order to force me to testify against him (and perhaps leave my children fatherless), the prosecutors threatened me with incarceration. Either way, I thought my children would lose.

It was in the middle of all this that I decided to go back to school. I arrived at the Salinas Adult School broken, out of control, and ready to give up, but I needed to take care of my children. I believe that it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

I spent a little more than a year in Tim's classroom. During that time, my schoolmates and I didn't just learn about

> "After all the talks, I came to realize, I have a chance."

academics, we all learned how to take care of ourselves emotionally and to love ourselves—even the parts we hated the most. Everyone felt welcomed in the class. Little by little, we became less afraid and began to reveal what was inside of us. Every one of us had a story, and everyone was still welcomed no matter what that story was. We also saw people who came back to class and shared their inspirational stories. All of this gave us hope that there was a new way that was open to us. Because of this, we became close as a classroom, and because of this, I learned that I wasn't alone.

Tim listened to me talk every school day for a year, and I got to know parts of myself that I didn't know before. I went through so many changes in his classroom, and he was there. When I was feeling suicidal, he was there; when I had to make difficult decisions, he was there; and when it was finally time to let me go he said, "I will always have a chair for you." This taught me how to be there for myself and for others as well.

As writer Joan Didion said, "I think we are well advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be, whether we find them attractive company or not. Otherwise they turn up unannounced and surprise us, come hammering on the mind's door at 4 a.m. of a bad night and demand to know who deserted them, who betrayed them, who is going to make amends."

My parts used to arrive unannounced. I had no idea where they came from or why I was acting a certain way. After all the talks, I came to realize, I have a chance. I will get through this because I am great. That little girl in the car is great. That young girl who made bad choices did so because she loved me, and she is great too. I never even knew she was still in there waiting for me until I went to Tim's class.

I'm twenty-three now and things are finally changing in my life. I started seeing a therapist, I graduated, I am attending college, and I have an awesome boyfriend who is supporting me. Life couldn't be greater for a girl like me.

Sunflower
California

Tim Amaral, a high school equivalency teacher in Salinas, California, teaches an IFS-informed classroom in a "one room schoolhouse" setting. There he teaches math, history, science, English literature and composition, in addition to emotional resilience to adults who did not graduate from high school. Every day, together they face complex issues such as incarceration, immigration problems, learning disabilities, mental illness, homelessness, racism, unemployment, addiction, extreme violence, cultural illiteracy, and the challenges of single-parent households.

"For some, this may not exactly sound like 'educational heaven,' but it is for me because we focus on the family element of Internal Family Systems," Tim explains. "At the beginning of each semester, students complete a week-long lesson on social-emotional learning that touches on parts and Self, needs and skills, attachment, and compassion. We learn the language of a healthy family, and together we work to create one." A Girl Like Me is the story of one student from that family.

Transformation as a Lawyer

My training as a lawyer and mediator—working primarily with people in conflict over family, employment, or business issues—led me to think that clients would negotiate rationally. But experience taught me that they were led more by emotion than logic, particularly in divorce cases. Unfortunately, my training did not equip me to understand those emotions, which I viewed with dismay as unwelcome obstacles to the resolution of conflict.

To get a better understanding of my clients' (and my own) psychology, I turned to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), behavioral economics, and research about cognitive biases. But each of these theories pathologized the people that I was working with and created distance between my clients and me, rather than empathic engagement.

The trailhead that led me to IFS came into view in 2010, when I was invited to speak at a symposium about *The Negotiation Within* where I had a eureka moment! Perhaps the IFS Model that my wife was using in her work as a psychotherapist could be adapted for use by lawyers and mediators.

I dove into the IFS literature, presented a paper on IFS as a conflict resolution tool (with input from Richard Schwartz, PhD), and—following the adage that we teach what we want to learn—began presenting workshops with Dick for lawyers and mediators. At the same time, my own practice as a lawyer and mediator became a laboratory for me to learn about how IFS techniques could help me and my clients. Through this Model I learned to unblend, be curious, calm, compassionate, and access my Self energy. Two short stories illustrate my experience in this regard.

Case #1: Employment termination. A fired employee, who had been a high-level manager in a pharmaceutical company, had a tough choice to make. The company's final offer of settlement was $250,000USD, and she badly needed the money. But she believed strongly that her termination was discriminatory, based on her gender. I sat with her and her lawyer while the company's representatives were in another room. "It sounds like there's a part of you that would like to fight the good fight here, and stand up for women's rights," I said to her. "Absolutely," she said. "And, I am also hearing that there's a part of you that is concerned about paying the bills and trying to be practical about the risks of a trial," I continued. "Yes, that too," she said. I softened my voice a bit and said, "I think we all have an 'inner mediator' that can listen to the various parts inside and help them arrive at a wise decision. Can you feel that mediator inside you?" Her voice softened too, as she said, "Yes… I know I need to settle this and move on."

As I look back on this settlement, two lessons stand out. First, the power of metaphor (in this instance, introducing the idea of Self energy as an 'inner mediator') and second, the way that IFS permits the mediator to step out of the role of 'problem solver' or 'advocate for settlement' and instead empower the parties to chart their own course.

Case #2: Mediators are people too. I have frequently found myself getting reactive when people interrupt me. Emotionally charged interruptions are common in mediation. In one unskillful moment, I stormed out of a mediation because one of the lawyers wouldn't stop interrupting me. After learning more about IFS, I became acquainted with a wounded seven-year old part of me that carried painful memories of being interrupted or ignored at the dinner table by my father, who seemed to believe that children should be seen and not heard. Bringing curiosity and compassion

to my seven-year-old's story and pain, I found it easier to manage my irritability about interruptions and give those trigger-ready protective parts other roles, such as being watchful managers of the anger arising in *other* people in the mediation when one of them was being interrupted.

I have recently completed a Level 1 IFS training. It has deepened my understanding of my clients' complexities, and helped me see that my clients are more than the sum of their parts. I have also begun introducing the IFS Model to the law students whom I teach. For example, in a course on *Diversity and Dispute Resolution*, my students have found it to be eye-opening to shift from thinking about people as inherently bigoted, to an awareness that we all have bigoted parts that received negative messages at an early age about people who are different from us, and that those parts need curiosity and compassion for healing. My goal as a lawyer and mediator is to bring peace into the room, and IFS has transformed my practice—and my life—by giving me far better tools for doing that.

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Fearlessness vs. Courage

It's a summer night in 1980 and I'm 11 years old facing another spinal surgery after two previous cervical fusions failed. I'm in a dark, cold hospital room 104 miles from home dreading the general anesthetic and fearing death. The room smells of antiseptic and isolation. But I'm not alone.

My toddler roommate lies face down in his crib, sobbing. No one comes for him. "Nothing can be done for him—this will pass," the professionals said. So, I don't bother with the call button anymore. I can't think of anything to do for him either. I feel like he does.

Fear is crushing me and I'm desperate. "I cannot be like this helpless baby tortured with fear, that will kill me!" And so somewhere in the darkness, my fear vanished from awareness and relief came to me.

That third surgery was successful and after 90-days in a body cast, my body recovered. I didn't die. And I didn't feel afraid. Fear was largely a stranger to me.

As I grew into adulthood, my fearlessness had a number of advantages. I was clear-headed in emergencies, analytical and efficient. I could take on many new situations and challenges that others avoided out of fear. I was a high-achiever. Attorneys could never rattle me as an expert witness. I intimidated them. And I chased the aggressive dogs that ran loose in my neighborhood. I prided myself on my courage. But there were things missing.

Recreation was so difficult for me—I was having trouble enjoying so many good things in my life and I was burning out. So, I read philosophical books on the meaning and purpose of play. *That* didn't help.

"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, as the kingdom of God belongs to such as these," Jesus said to us in Matthew 19:14. My understanding of this was almost purely intellectual. This whole Christian idea of being childlike with its intrinsic dependency had little room in my system. Some protectors didn't get it and some despised it. And so, I was missing a sense of awe and wonder and security in life.

In 2016, my 16-year old son spun out on ice on the freeway. I couldn't connect with him in his fear afterward. I just didn't understand it. He responded so differently than I did at 16 in similar situations. I didn't like the disconnect. I knew something was wrong.

While at my IFS Level 1 training, I connected with the exile that held my fear during an unburdening. And not just the fear from the surgery, but the fear from all the other life challenges that my managers found inconvenient and dumped on him. I wasn't fearless, really. I was just disconnected from my fears. Now I had the opportunity to love the part that held my fears—that took courage.

So, a whole new vista opened. My Self could embrace this little exile in me and love him. He could share his fears with the whole system and we could work through them. I could then be childlike, with awe and wonder and rejoicing—and then I could play!

I could begin to depend on God. St. Therese of Lisieux's* little way of spiritual childhood now made sense on an *experiential* level. I experienced greater freedom from having to be self-sufficient, so I became younger. Now I can connect with the fear of my children and clients much better. I can invite their fearful parts into our space together because I'm now much more familiar with my own fears and not nearly so threatened by their fears tapping into mine.

There isn't any virtue in fearlessness, even though fearlessness can be practical and useful. I still chase aggressive dogs away and am clear headed in emergencies.

"I can invite their fearful parts into our space together because I'm now much more familiar with my own fears and not nearly so threatened by their fears tapping into mine."

Courage, however, is a virtue and one of the 8Cs of Self. Courage acknowledges and accepts fear, embraces it, and even needs fear to grow. So now, I'd rather seek courage than fearlessness because I love my parts and I want to love others' parts, as well, especially their suffering parts.

** St. Therese of Lisieux is a French Carmelite nun who lived in the early 20th century. She is renowned for her writings on spiritual childhood, intimacy with God, and prayer and was named a Doctor of the Catholic Church in 1997.*

Peter Malinoski, PhD, is a clinical psychologist in Indianapolis who integrates IFS with a Catholic worldview.

Love the Parts You're With

Parts of me were feeling very frustrated. As a licensed psychotherapist, I had worked for over thirty years with many individuals and couples, helping them tackle difficult, often painful issues in their relationships. Yet here I was, unable to apply in my own marriage the knowledge and skills that had been helpful to others. Likewise, my husband, Tom, a mindfulness teacher with a thirty-year, daily meditation practice, was feeling equally stuck. At different junctures in our time together, we had sought assistance. Therapists often praised us for how much we knew and how articulate we were, but what we needed was more than just an intellectual understanding of our dynamics.

Tom: I knew we were in for something different when the IFS therapist explained that she would be working with only one of us at a time while our partner observed. The observer's job was to listen with more curiosity and less judgment, which was very similar to my daily meditation practice. In so doing, I found myself able to feel Yvette's pain in resisting all the attempts to have her be a compliant child. Much of that was tied in to her parents' background as Holocaust survivors and the words "...after all we've been through..." which she heard whenever she disagreed with or disobeyed them. I had heard her tell those stories many times. But hearing them from that witnessing mode opened my heart in a much deeper way than I had felt before.

While many of our differences still frustrate and irritate me, since those sessions, I am much more often able to feel compassion when I see Yvette struggle with issues related to exiled parts of her. That compassion enables me to often, but not always, express my feelings to her in a less judgmental tone, which increased chances for a more positive exchange. At those times, we are more likely to speak for, rather than from, our triggered parts. And, when we do have a *speaking-from-parts-battle*, we catch ourselves and recover from those times much more quickly than in the past.

"For me, developing the skills I learned though IFS is like graduating from snorkeling to scuba diving, where you

can see things you hadn't been able to see before, and you see things that had been there more clearly."

Yvette: At the time we decided to seek outside intervention, we had reached another milestone in our journey together. It was 2011 and both of our kids were living productive lives. We were bona fide empty nesters! But who were we, where were we, as a couple? And how do we deal with those many differences that had caused us much conflict from the beginning of our relationship? Differences in arenas like comfort versus security; social needs versus solitude; fast versus slow; and on and on and on. So much had been swept aside during those child-rearing years.

At our second IFS session, Tom volunteered to take the hot seat first. I felt relieved until our therapist turned to me and explained that witnessing was the more difficult job. I soon came to understand what she meant. Tom's vulnerability was palpable. He opened up while I witnessed. The therapist part within me witnessed our therapist's every statement and move. It wasn't until she turned and asked how I felt about seeing how much pain Tom's exiled part had been expressing that I realized I had been more interested in observing her than in *being with* what my husband was sharing.

Flooded with shame, it took some time for me to acknowledge the wall that often emerged when conflict in intimacy surfaced. Over time, with much kindness and patience, I was helped to see that the wall served me in a protective way. As with Tom, my father and I had a very close and at times contentious relationship. His unexpected death when I was thirteen was devastating. I came to see that the wall's intentions were good; it didn't want me to suffer. It simply needed to be brought into present time. In bringing curiosity and compassion to those fear-laden parts, that wall has greatly softened.

Through the lens of IFS, Tom and I have increasingly become our own parts' detectors and become more skillful at unblending from a part that clearly does not serves us. When in the midst of a fight, Tom finds himself embodying his sarcastic father or I my hysterical mother, our recovery time has greatly improved. More importantly, we no longer fall into the familiar hole of looking to each other as the healer of our exiled parts. As a result, we are able to laugh more readily and move on with greater ease.

***Tom Bassarear, EdD**, a retired math education professor who developed a popular university course on mindfulness, still teaches mindfulness in New Hampshire at local centers, schools, a county jail, and through a weekly blog. He is gradually weaning himself from watching so much sports on TV.*

***Yvette Yeager, LICSW**, who has become an IFS therapist following an eclectic therapy practice, loves creative writing, dancing, attending conferences, and consulting regularly with their two adult children who are social workers. Tom and Yvette enjoy video calls and time with their spectacular two-year-old granddaughter!*

Stories of Transformation are a collection of personal growth and healing stories through the use of the IFS Model, graciously shared by each author as a special insert for the September 2019 edition of *OUTLOOK*. The Foundation extends our deepest appreciation to each author for the courage exhibited in bringing these stories to the world. For more about the September 2019 edition, please click ***here.*** To submit your story of transformation, please email Michelle Glass at ***OUTLOOK@FoundationIFS.org***.

GLOSSARY OF IFS CONSTRUCTS APPEARING IN STORIES:

Blending – When the feelings and beliefs of one part merge with another part or the Self.

Burdens – A set of extreme beliefs, feelings, and sensations that are carried by parts and govern their lives. Burdens are left on or in parts from exposure to an external person or event.

Exiles – Parts that are sequestered within a system, for their own protection or for the protection of the system from them.

Managers – Parts that try to run a system in ways that minimize the activation (upset) of the exiles.

Parts – The term used in IFS for a person's subpersonalities. Parts are best considered internal people of different ages, talents, and temperaments.

Self – The core of a person, which contains leadership qualities such as compassion, perspective, curiosity, and confidence. The Self is best equipped to lead the internal family.

Trailhead – A term used for the starting point in curiosity of getting to know a part or cluster of parts around a triggering issue, event, or person.

Unblending – The process whereby the feelings and beliefs of a part separate from either Self or another part and are differentiated. Unblending facilitates building a relationship between Self and parts.

Unburdening – A process in IFS where the burdens a part carries are released.

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