

Despair Protocol by Michael Elkin

This protocol is for use with parts that seem to react to hope as a threat, and experience hopelessness and resignation as a resource. Because the therapist is very active, the part is likely to blend or embody and respond as to Direct Access, it is often useful, to make a special effort to communicate to the part through Self, and to keep checking in with the client's state.

Protocol:

It is very common for parts to learn to embrace despair as a resource, and therefore, to begin to see hope as a trap to be avoided. This can occur when a part is experiencing unrelenting pain. At first the part makes determined attempts to find and execute strategies to relieve the pain, but as these continually fail, the part begins to experience these attempts as making things worse.

Every try at improving the situation fails, thus adding to the already excruciating chronic situation the added pain of disappointment, and the shame of failure. Because a major component of trauma is the feeling of helplessness, the part is desperate to feel that it can have some impact on its situation. At some point, it discovers a way to feel some sense of instrumentality: it decides to stop trying to make things better!

While the chronic pain remains, this decision lets the part experience the ability to end the pain of disappointment, and the shame of failure. Cold comfort though it may be, it is important to understand how much relief it can be for the part to feel that can effect its circumstances. Once the part makes this decision, then hope and possible solutions will be perceived as a trap exposing it to the danger of disappointment and shame.

What the part does not realize at the time is the price it pays, and will continue to pay for this slight, if significant modicum of relief: it relinquishes **possibility**. In other words the cost of this relief is infinite. I often use the analogy of buying a living room set in a ghetto furniture store. You immediately get something you want, and at first, the price seems affordable, but years later, you have a shabby wreck, and you are still paying, and will always pay.

What the part cannot know at the the time of their decision, is that it will have far greater resources in the future, and that a situation that seems immutable and infinite now might be easily solvable in the future. But this decision is often made buy a child who cannot possibly have the perspective to see this. It is a terribly reasonable mistake to make.

Happily this part now has the limitless resource of Self at its disposal. If it wishes, it can ask Self to unburden it of its understandable miscalculation, and bring possibility back into its life.