

Would That Part Be Willing to Step Back?
Three Techniques for Helping Difficult Parts
To Unblend (A Belated Handout)

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I presented these techniques at workshops at the past two IFS conferences. The feedback was for the most part very favorable, but more than a few participants churlishly mentioned that they would have found the workshop more useful if a handout was available, so that they could have a more concrete version of the content. What a concept! I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the sole reason for the lack of a handout was sloth on the part of the workshop leader. The following is the result of my (partial) characterological rehabilitation.

TECHNIQUE #1--LOOK INTO MY EYES

Context

When a part is resistant or mistrustful, and you want to address its concerns directly.

When you want to assess how much Self Energy is available. When you feel a part needs leadership or reassurance.

Procedure

Ask the client to ask the target part to look in your (Client's Self, or whatever is available at the moment) eyes, and see if it can trust you. If "Yes," proceed to Technique 2; if "No," ask the client: "What it does it see in your eyes that makes it reluctant to trust you?"

The part might say: "I see fear (or judgment, or uncertainty, or whatever)." Then ask the client to ask the fearful (or judgmental or whatever) part to unblend. And ask again.

"I don't trust anybody." Then ask the client to say: "Of course you don't, but I'm going to ask that part to really look you in the eye. Really look rather than see what you are expecting to see, and see if this is different."

"You've let me down before." Then ask the part to look into your eyes, and see if see if you are really who the part thinks you are.

Using the feedback you get from these questions, get blended parts to back up until the target part trusts the client, which is a pretty dependable indication that a Critical Mass of Self is manifest. Then proceed to:

TECHNIQUE #2 -- SEE YOURSELF THROUGH MY EYES

Tell the client: "Now that the part trusts you, ask it if it would like to look at itself through your eyes, and see how it looks to you." If "No," "Ask the part what it is afraid will happen if it were to see itself through your eyes."

The client might say "I don't know how to do this." Then say "You don't have to do anything, just invite the part to look through your eyes. I don't know how it does it, but it can do it."

Once the part agrees, there are myriad possibilities.

After a time, ask if the part has done this. If "No"--What is the part afraid of..., etc. If "Yes"-ask the part what that was like for it.

If the client has a critical mass of self, the part will see some representation of innocence or purity—a baby, a being of light, an idealized version of itself, etc. If the client sees anything else, there is a part blended with self. Examples: The part says it did not realize how pathetic (or sad, frightened, angry, whatever) it looked. The part sees how powerful it is. The part sees itself as ugly. Then say "It seems there is a part which sees this part as pathetic (or whatever) blended with you. See if this part is willing to unblend and step back." Sometimes the part that stays blended is sympathetic and compassionate, but it is still important to get it to unblend.

This technique is the most dependable part detector and Self checker I know. It also frequently leads to spontaneous partial or complete unburdenings. It is very useful with parts which interfere with your work with a target part, and it can also be used to help a very volatile exile become available for witnessing.

TECHNIQUE #3 – HELPING HYPERVIGILANT PROTECTORS UNBLEND

This is a direct access technique, but I pretend I am speaking through the intermediary of Self. Sometimes I use it when there is considerable Self Energy available in the client, but a protective part is impeding the work. There is danger of trickiness here. The technique MUST come from Self Energy, or it will exacerbate mistrust, so I urge extreme diligence in keeping your clever, competitive parts out of this.

"Please ask this part if it knows who I (the therapist) am, and what I am doing here."

The part will usually say "Yes"-but yes or no, the next move is the same. "Ask the part if it would be willing to share its understanding of who I am and what I am doing?" The part will usually say either that I am there to help, or that I am trying to get rid of it.

"Ask the part if it is willing to listen to my idea about what I am here to do?" If "Yes" proceed. If "No" What is it afraid... etc. "I am here to act as a coach and a consultant to Michael's (the client's) Self. My goal in doing this is to mobilize his Self to provide help and leadership to all his parts including you. And I have an impression of you which I would be willing to openly share with you on one condition."

So far, no part has been able to resist asking about the condition. "The condition is that you listen to my impression very critically and skeptically, and scan it for the slightest flaw or inaccuracy. I have no investment in my impression being right. My investment is to be able to develop an accurate understanding of you and your concerns, so that I can be more effective in helping Michael's Self to help you, if you wish."

Again, I have yet to have a part reject this condition. By the time I employ this technique, I have a wealth of information about the part, having spent considerable time unsuccessfully persuading it to unblend, and let me get on with the work. The following impression is generally accurate of most stuck protectors. Of course, you will alter it to fit the specific part you are working with.

"You are extremely vigilant, conscientious, and loyal. I would not be surprised to find out that you never take time off, or relax. You spend all of your time anticipating possible threats to Michael, and acting to neutralize them, and yet, you can never feel safe, or successful."

"The problem is that you have long ago realized that the tactics (list tactics here) you are using to keep Michael safe are ineffective, and might even put Michael in more danger, but your understanding of your duties, and the situation do not allow you to change or even to reconsider your tactics, so you are stuck in a situation in which you are working yourself to death employing methods you know are going to be ineffective, at best, so you feel frustrated, helpless, and angry."

The above, of course, cannot help but be true, because protectors do not protect. All protective measures draw exactly the dangers they are trying to protect against. (E.g. Gun carriers have seven times the rate of premature, violent death as non-carriers.) In case you forget for a moment that irony is the driving force of the universe, this should suffice to remind you.

"Now could you please tell me what was inaccurate in my impression, even the slightest detail or nuance?" About 99% of the time, the part says "Nothing" and feels seen, understood, and acknowledged. When parts are exposed to Self Energy, they are almost always profoundly transformed.

"In that case, I have a proposal for you. That proposal would be that you step back in front of Michael's body so that he can relate to you as a separate being. I will then see if I can get whatever parts are blended with him to step back, so that Michael's Self can manifest, and then I can show his Self how to remove the burdens that keep you stuck in this pattern, so that you can be as effective as you deserve to be."

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