

# Ushmita Nana

## COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST

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## INTERNAL FAMILY SYSTEMS MODEL – PARTS WORK



### BACKGROUND

- The Internal Family Systems (IFS) model was created by Richard Swartz
- IFS is based on the principle that we all have parts within ourselves, these are like subpersonalities (little people) who have their own motivations, goals, beliefs and memories
- Every part believes that it is doing the best for the system i.e., every part has a positive intention – even though it's actions may be dysfunctional or counterproductive
- IFS divides parts into 3 types: Exiles, Managers and Firefighters

### Exiles (Inner Child)

- Exiles are the parts of the individual which carry emotional burdens e.g. “I am a failure”, “I am not good enough”, “I will be rejected”, “I am unloved”, etc.
- These young parts carry beliefs as a result of trauma, neglect or other overwhelming experiences
- Exiles hold the memories and emotions of difficult events from the past and are stuck in the past
- Manager parts (otherwise known as protector parts) exile these young parts – similar to locking a crying child in a basement e.g., Manager part actions - “be perfect all the time, set high standards, overachieve” so that you never feel “not good enough” (exile feeling) again – Manager is leading with exile locked away

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- Exiles become desperate to be 'heard' by metaphorically banging on the basement door e.g., sadness floods the system in the form of depressive symptoms
- Once the story of the exile is witnessed and the emotional distress recognized, the emotional burdens can be released



### Managers

- Managers are **proactive** protective parts
- Manager parts proactively attempt to protect the individual from triggering the feelings of the exiles – shame, fear, sadness, rejection, etc.
- These parts arrange ones' behaviour in such a way that one never feels the emotions of the exile
- Manager parts do this in a number of ways:
  - Excessive care-taking/rescuing of others
  - Perfectionism
  - Being overly harsh or critical toward the self
  - Overachieving
  - Numbing or shutting down
  - People pleasing



### Firefighters

- Unlike Manager parts which are **proactive** protectors, firefighter parts are **reactive** protectors
- The firefighter is reactive in that it takes control only **after** the exile is triggered
- The goal of the firefighter is to immediately distract from the emotional pain of the Exile – at all costs

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- Firefighters are usually impulsive and destructive e.g., “binge eating”, “excessive gambling”, “excessive drinking”, “excessive shopping”
- Firefighters are only concerned with putting out the metaphoric fire in the basement where the exile has been triggered and has no regard for consequences of it’s behaviour e.g., Firefighter “Her boss humiliated her and made her feel worthless again, let’s go out on a drinking spree tonight – to hell with the boss and his comments” – drinking (firefighter behaviour) serves to distract from the emotional burden of shame



## Self

- The seat of consciousness is often occupied by one or more of the above parts; this drives an individual to seek therapy e.g., therapy to address depression, anxiety, substance use, etc.
- The goal of therapy is to occupy the seat of consciousness with a different and more healing and compassionate energy force
- Every individual possesses this energy force which is called either the **Self** (with a capital S), Core Self, Spirit, Soul or Essential Self
- The Self is the essential core of ones being, it is not touched by any trauma
- The Self has the healing and internal leading qualities such compassion, calmness, curiosity, courage and confidence required by the system
- The Self has the ability to witness and heal the Exiles
- Once exiles are healed, Managers and Firefighters do not need to protect the system with unwanted behaviours

For more information about this type of therapy please contact Ushmita Nana, details below:

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