



# Welcoming Internal Family Systems

A Conversation with

Richard  
Schwartz

Part I - IFS coming to  
Portugal  
Part II - IFS  
Developments

**SPPC**

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Richard C. Schwartz, PhD, has been developing the IFS model for more than 30 years, with IFS now practiced by thousands of licensed therapists and other professionals throughout the United States and internationally. Mental health care professionals and others trained in the IFS model can easily integrate it into a wide variety of practices using the unique methods IFS offers to create safe environments for clients to become Self-transforming. Internal Family Systems therapy is a simple yet sophisticated integration of psychology, spirituality, and intra-psychic and family systems theory that works well with couples, families, groups, and children, can effectively treat trauma; is a client-led approach that respects each client's pace and goals; Establishes a productive, trusting, and collaborative partnership between therapist and client; Helps therapists remain centered and open-hearted.



# Internal Family Systems Therapy

## A conversation with Richard Schwartz

### Part I Meeting Dick Schwartz IFS coming to Portugal

**Aníbal Henriques:**Hi! Good to meet you.

**Schwartz:** You too.

**AH:** So good. Finally. Can you follow me?

**Schwartz:** Yes.

**AH:** Wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you so much for having this time for our conversation. This is really important.

**Schwartz:** Yeah. Good. I'm very happy to meet you. And I appreciate all you have done in Portugal.

**AH:** Yes. I am here meeting you to celebrate the IFS model, and how it impacted my practice, and the practice of my students, and colleagues, here in Portugal. And finally, the IFS training is coming to Portugal. And there's a lot of gratitude and excitement around this, finally.

**Schwartz:** That's great.

**AH:** It has been a wonderful journey to me, Dick, since I started studying and practicing the model. Maybe it's a short time. It's maybe 16 months ago.

**Schwartz:** Mmm mmm..

**AH:** Your model came to my clinical life too late. [laughs] I am already somehow a seasoned therapist.

**Schwartz:** Oh, you seem quite young though still, compared to me.

**AH:** Thank you so much. But I'm really practicing clinical therapy for maybe three decades now.

**Schwartz:** Oh, boy. Okay.

**AH:** Now, finally, I got in touch with your model. It's been a really, really wonderful experience, that turned out my clinical work very, very exciting. And the clinical work of my students, I'm also training psychologists in Portugal as you probably know. We are a large organization of maybe 300 of psychologists. In fact, IFS is influencing very much the clinical work of those psychologists here in Portugal. So we are very excited and grateful to this wonderful model that you somehow set up so wonderfully in those three decades maybe? Its three decades?

**Schwartz:** Going on four, yes.

**AH:** Going on four. Wonderful.

**Schwartz:** Thanks for your kind words. I'm so appreciative that you're bringing it to Portugal.

**AH:** Yes, it's been amazing. We started training in January with Barbara Cargill. And also, with a wonderful team of PAs. Some of them, maybe you remember of them, it's Liz Calvert, and Imma Lloret from Barcelona, and Enrique. And also, Tisha Shull, someone in Vermont, that is very, very fond of you. She goes to every training that you do.

**Schwartz:** Right. [laughs]

**AH:** And also Christine Meyer. We have a wonderful group of PAs that helped us in January to have a wonderful week with our 30 psychologists. It was a large group of trainees there in January in Portugal. We will get along now in April with Susan McConnel that will come in April.

**Schwartz:** Fantastic. You'll like her a lot.

**AH:** Yes. Then, finally, in November with Cece Sykes.

**Schwartz:** Mmm mmm..

**AH:** So I'm very, very excited about this opportunity to give the training to my colleagues, my psychologists, clinical psychologists, colleagues. So it's a very special year to me here, bringing the model to Portugal. And it's amazing to see my colleagues shining and excited with the model.

**Schwartz:** [laughs]

**AH:** I hope you will have the opportunity to witness this. [chuckles]

**Schwartz:** Yeah. I want to get there, sometime soon.

**AH:** Yes. I'm very, very hopeful that you will come somehow. Maybe next year, we have to set up that with Karon. Karon, she has been very, very helpful. I hope that maybe in 2019, you can spend some time in the area in Lisbon and get along with this wonderful group of trainees that now are very, very excited about your model. This is mainly about a word of gratitude and excitement to you and to your wonderful team that have been setting up and developing the model those years coming.

**Schwartz:** Thank you, Aníbal. I am very fortunate to have such good trainers and administrators.

**AH:** You do. It's a wonderful team. Also, it has been very interesting to me too, this teaching and community online that you set up.

**Schwartz:** I see your questions frequently.

**AH:** Yes. [chuckles] If I can, I do not miss them.

**Schwartz:** Really?

**AH:** Yes. They are really helpful to keep us updated and learning the model. It's a wonderful tool that you set up and help us to keep us in the road with the model. Your model in one way is - it's my opinion-, it's so beautiful. It's simple and clarifying. But in another way, you know, bringing it to everyday clinic and to different clinical groups.. It's really, really a wonderful challenge.

**Schwartz:** Yes. It can be quite challenging. When I was trying to figure it all out, I would get stuck all the time. And I just learned to ..

**AH:** That's my experience now. [laughter]

**Schwartz:** I just learned to stay in self and something good would happen or I might even ask the client. I would say, "I'm stuck now. Is there anybody in there who knows what to do next?" That's basically how I learned it.

**AH:** Yes. This is a gift to me in this time of my clinical career to have this opportunity of bringing a new model. And you know I come from a constructivist tradition. Somehow, I understood what you did. I was practicing, I believe they were wonderful models coming from this tradition, the emotional focused therapy, and the coherence therapy and narrative therapy. Now, this model brings an integration and a beauty to my clinical work and a deepness to my work that is really, really a gift that I feel very happy to come across with your model at this age, I would say. [chuckles].

**Schwartz:** Thank you. Well, as you know, mainly, what I did was take a lot of those ideas and apply them to this inner world, so ..

**AH:** Yes. It is beautifully integrated. I can find so much of other wonderful models in your model. It's so beautifully integrated. It is amazing to be able to practice it. But it's really a wonderful challenge. It has been very helpful my training in London. I have been in London last year. This year, I've been with Barb. Irene, as you know, organizing the training in London. I had my level one training with Barb and now my level two training with Michael Elkin and with Osnat from Israel. It has been also very helpful. Hopefully, in May, we will meet there. I hope in May, I will have my level three with you.

**Schwartz:** Ok good.

**AH:** Finally, we will be together.

**Schwartz:** I'm excited to hear that. That's great.

**AH:** That's great. In May, we will meet in London in that beautiful place that is High Leigh. It's a very quiet and inspirational place, in fact. So I'm doing my journey on IFS and influencing my students with my excitement. They know that this can last for some years, this excitement with your model. So this is where I am right now. I am also in the process of translating this wonderful book from Martha Sweezy and Ellen ... Ellen..

**Schwartz:** Ziskind.

**AH:** Yes. It is a wonderful book that we are going to publish in March. We are in this process of finding the right words for the model in Portuguese.

**Schwartz:** Right! Right.

**AH:** It's so important. English is not my mother language. So it's also amazing to

find the right words for all the concepts and process that IFS brings into the sessions.

**Schwartz:** Are you doing the translation yourself?

**AH:** No, I'm just supervising. The translation is done by three colleagues, very skilled with the English and with the translation. I hope that we will come up also into your introductory book. I have already called Karon on this way. I've put Karon in touch with our publisher in order to get also this work done. Your introductory book, maybe this year, we can go into that wonderful work of bringing IFS into Portuguese words. So it's amazing, all the inspiration that your model brings into this community. [chuckles]

**Schwartz:** I can't tell you how grateful I am. And, you know, it's really fun for me to have somebody from a similar background get excited about it.

**AH:** I am. I really am.

**Schwartz:** Family therapy, and constructivism, and so on.

**AH:** Yes, it is.

**Schwartz:** Because so many of the people I train don't really know about all that. So..

**AH:** I know. I know that you opened the model in a very generous way to everyone, not necessarily psychologists or clinical people. And it's also wonderful to see how people, love the model. People not used to this clinical work, they love the model, and that they can go into the ..

**Schwartz:** Sometimes they learn it quicker because they don't have to unlearn so much.

**AH:** Yes. Yes, it is. I have to unlearn some things. [laughter] You can believe me Dick. I had to unlearn a lot of things.

**Schwartz:** Right! Right!

**AH:** I came from a very old, we all psychologists somehow who came from this long tradition on empathy. Empathy is the large medicine for everything.

**Schwartz:** Right!

**AH:** And so to learn to stop my emphatic part. [chuckles] That's been a challenge, believe me.

**Schwartz:** Mmm mmm!

**AH:** A wonderful challenge.

**Schwartz:** That's great.

**AH:** Yes that's great. So I'm having a very, very good time on this dating with the IFS, on this relationship with IFS, indeed.

**Schwartz:** Mmm mmm.

**AH:** So let me know, tell me. I don't want to bother you. We have a very short time. I know you are very, very busy those times. IFS is coming to the world, and you are really, really busy. I don't want to take much of your time. But is it possible to go to three simple questions somehow?

**Schwartz:** Yes, sure. Yeah. Absolutely!

## Part II

### Three Questions on IFS

Recent Developments

Forthcoming Developments

Development in the training

**AH:** Okay, good. So, one is about how did the model developed. Maybe a short one. I find surprising or amazing that the model was already so well structured and set up in your first book in 1995. Now, we see these wonderful writings on applying the model to specific clinical groups like this book of 2017, the *Innovations and Elaborations in IFS* from Martha Sweezy and Ellen Ziskind. And so my first question is about, how did the model really developed over this almost three decades that you have been practicing and training with the model?

**Schwartz:** How did it develop?

**AH:** Yes. In one way, I see in the books, in your book in 1995, everything is already there. [chuckles]

**Schwartz:** Pretty much. Yes. It held up really well. We are working on a second edition finally. But, a lot of it is really .. when I look back over it, I was amazed myself of how well it's held up.

**AH:** It's amazing because, everything is there. But I'm wondering somehow, the model developed these three decades.

**Schwartz:** Yeah, even since that. So, since that book, you know I've just learned a lot more about self, and self-leadership, than I knew back then. How much less I have to do as a therapist than I thought back then, too.

**AH:** Oh. Amazing.

**Schwartz:** Yeah, so, it has evolved more and more in the direction of, where, you know I think we're more efficient at answering the fears of the protectors, and helping them step back sooner. And so we can access self more quickly.

**AH:** Oh. Yes, about the effectiveness in the process?

**Schwartz:** Yes. Once we get what we call a critical mass of self, mainly, I get out of the way. And, that wasn't so much the case. My trust in that, has evolved over time. And both in inner relationships, but also in working with couples, you know I've just come to know that self heals, and the fact that you can just hold, you know fighting couples in that place, and have them dialogue from that place.

**AH:** Yes it's amazing. I saw your work. I could see your work with those couple sessions, the wonderful sessions that changed my perspective on couple therapies a huge, huge way.

**Schwartz:** Oh good, good, yeah. So that has become much more the focus for me, is bringing the critical mass of self to any kind of conflict. And, you know we're training mediators and conflict resolution people also. People who do international conflict resolution. And just that idea of holding and speaking for rather than from their parts, all of that has evolved overtime. And speaking for vulnerable parts in addition to protective parts. So, when we can achieve that, external

conflicts dissolve pretty quickly, too. So, I guess, if I were to pick one thing, it would be just this abiding increased trust and the power of self-leadership, both internally and externally, has evolved.

**AH:** Yes, that's why also you bring this new name to the model. The self-leadership, that's came up later.

**Schwartz:** That's right.

**AH:** It makes a lot of sense. Thank you for sharing that. Maybe the second question that I would like to ask you, besides being applied to a variety of clinical and social groups, how would you like to see, or how can you see the model develop in the future?

**Schwartz:** Yeah, I've been talking just this week, because I am in California, there's a lot of people I'm going to collaborate with out here on this next phase, which is challenging because I'm old now. [chuckles]

**AH:** I don't see that, but that's okay. You seem so energetic.

**Schwartz:** I still have some energy. But my guidance is to bring this much more to the culture, out of psychotherapy, so that it becomes a kind of *meme* where people know we've all been laboring under this false impression of who we are. It's a big case of mistaken identity, that we all identify with our parts and their burdens, but the self is really who we are.

**AH:**Yes.

**Schwartz:** And that it's just beneath the surface and could be accessed this easily. That, I think, could make a huge difference, you know just in the world, in general. If that was common knowledge, and how to access it, how to live from it. So, that's what the project I've been talking to a guy about publishing a book for the public. We've been trying to

create curriculum for like webinars for the public and that kind of thing.

**AH:** Wonderful. That would be wonderful.

**Schwartz:** And we also have initiatives to try and take it into education, in elementary education. And we have a group of teachers who's being trained in it. Elementary school teachers. We have it in the inner city in Minneapolis, where if the kids are acting out in school, in a class, instead of going to the principal, they go to a room where there's a guy who knows IFS and helps them with their parts. I'm very excited about bringing it to education as a kind of emotional-social aspect which is a big topic now in American education.

**AH:** Yes, yes. And we see meditation and mindfulness going to schools, but you don't see these other approaches.

**Schwartz:** That's right. That's another area. I want to bring it to spirituality more, into meditation. I've been collaborating with a guy named Loch Kelly, who's a leader here. You know Loch's work?

**AH:** Yes, I know some of his work.

**Schwartz:** So we've been co-leading five day retreats. Did one in Italy last year. Just did one at this place, Esalen, a few weeks ago. Because he has a way of helping people access self that doesn't involve parts so much. And I've always believed that you shouldn't do that because you don't want to upset the protectors. You want to do it at their pace, but he can get away with it, it seems. I've been intrigued by that. What we thought in Esalen, he doesn't always get away with it.

**AH:** Interesting. How does he manage it? Interesting.

**Schwartz:** So, you know, these are just some of the areas that we've been trying to bring it to. I'm fortunate to have

people who are quite expert in some of these other areas to collaborate with, like Loch. You know you seem to be a leader also in Europe, so I'm very excited to try and bring more of this to thought leaders.

**AH:** Good. So welcome. So needed those day. Yes. I'm glad that you say that. The impact that the model somehow had in myself was - and I'm a guy that already was teaching about multiplicity of mind, but until I ...

**Schwartz:** Do it yourself.

**AH:** Yes. Until I could experience the model in myself, only then, I have this identity crisis of moving from my unipolarity into this multiple experience. And that was amazing. It was really a changing life experience to me.

**Schwartz:** I'm honored to hear that.

**AH:** It's really, really important. Also, on the training. The training is so important nowadays and to me as a trainer. Your training, the IFS training, is so well set up. It's so interesting. It's so much experiential already. This is so much important tool to help our therapists grow as a person. That's why I'm also grateful also for bringing IFS to the training of my students. But how would you like to see - If you have any ideas about that -, **how would you like to see the training in IFS to develop for the coming days**, or if you think this is it?

**Schwartz:** You know for therapists, that seems to work pretty well. We have our three levels. And I'm really happy to do the level threes because the level ones, we kind of go overboard on helping people be very cautious and respectful of the protectors and so on. Sometimes, people would get to level three and I'll hear that all they've doing is working with protectors, with their clients.

**AH:** I see. Mmm mm. Somehow they fear to go deeper.



**Schwartz:** Yes. They fear to go. We've injected too much fear into them in the level ones. And so, I like it when people go through all the levels because I can help them with that kind of thing. Like a lot of people, not a lot, but some, had never done an unburdening with somebody, for example. So I'm pretty happy with the structure. We're creating a new manual for level ones that I think is going to help a lot. The old manual's are very outdated. In terms of where I'm putting energy, is in these trainings for the public, both in retreats and also in online curricula.

**AH:** The online curricula is amazing, amazing, amazing. I'm following very, very attentively every week. It's very inspiring. You have a wonderful team. You have very, very good collaborators. I can witness it. I just had a meeting today with Cece Sykes. She has such analogy and such a clarity. Wow!

**Schwartz:** Yes, when I look back, I just was so fortunate to draw people of that quality who've been with me now 25, 30 years, and have evolved with me and helped me evolved all this. So you know I feel really good about our community, also. I feel like I've evolved personally toward becoming a much better leader than I was initially. Partly because people like Cece would get in my face and let me know my parts are getting in the way.

**AH:** Wonderful, yes. Yes. This is another one interesting thing about the model is the community around the world, how people love each other and do they care about each other, and how they do connect with each other in so open-hearted ways, something that I never saw before. Believe me, I already knew a lot of models and people training the models and I never met such a healthy and huge and energetic community as in IFS. I appreciate that very much.

**Schwartz:** Thank you. I feel very good about that. And it's really taken a lot of work on me because it trickles down from me, a lot of it.

**AH:** I believe so. Yes.

**Schwartz:** If I'm proud of anything, I took the feedback seriously in my work. I'm still doing it. My wife is still teaching me lots of the parts I need to live with.

**AH:** [chuckles] You're always so humble. This is amazing. Well, Dick, I'm really, really looking forward to meet you in May, in London.

**Schwartz:** Me as well. Like I said, I'm so grateful that you're bringing it. I can tell what a leader you are.

**AH:** Thank you. I'm trying my best.

**Schwartz:** We'll have a great time in May.

**AH:** We will. Again, Dick, thank you so much for this time you gave us and the Portuguese group. I hope really that you can find the time and the agenda to visit us in Lisbon. Maybe next year, who knows? I will keep hopeful. And really, I'm very very much looking forward to meet you in High Leigh.

**Schwartz:** Having met you really increases my motivation to do it.

**AH:** Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

**Schwartz:** I'm very proud of Portugal for being the one same country in the world basically in their drugs policies, so.

**AH:** Yes. It is. Oh You are informed.

**Schwartz:** That's a direct parallel to... you don't fight with.

**AH:** We don't fight with. Yes. We go with.

**Schwartz:** These addicts who are just trying to take care of the pain.

**AH:** Yes. We did it well. We did something well.

**Schwartz:** Absolutely.

**AH:** Thank you. Thank you so much, Dick, for this time that you gave us. It was an immense pleasure. And I really appreciate all you gave to this community and to the world because this model, it will end up being a very, very important tool to education, to our personal lives. This is really, really, really important and I'm very grateful.

**Schwartz:** Thanks for those kind words again, Aníbal.

**AH:** So see you in May?

**Schwartz:** See you in May. Great.

**AH:** See you. Bye-bye. Thank you so much. Bye-bye.

**Schwartz:** Bye-bye.

