

A Model for IFS Supervision and Consultation with Liz Martins and Emma Redfern

Today on IFS Talks, we are delighted to be meeting with two guests, Liz Martins and Emma Redfern. Liz Martins is an experienced therapist, an IFS Co-lead trainer, a certified IFS therapist and approved IFS clinical supervisor and consultant. She currently has a private practice in the UK. Emma Redfern is a certified IFS therapist and approved IFS clinical supervisor and consultant, as well as an experienced IFS Program Assistant. She is also currently working in private practice in the UK. Today we'll be speaking to Liz and Emma about their work integrating IFS into supervision and consultation.

Tisha Shull: Thank you both for being here with us today on IFS Talks. We're looking forward to the conversation.

Liz Martins: It's good to be here.

Emma Redfern: Thank you.

Anibal: Welcome back, Liz Martins and welcome Emma Redfern. Together you have been collaborating on this topic of IFS, Supervision, and Consultation. You have developed your ideas and created some frameworks and maps that became helpful in your supervision practice. As a result of this collaboration, you started running workshops, developed the model and a book in this topic is coming in July, I guess. Many, many congratulations to both of you. You'll say this integration is a missing part of the IFS landscape that you are trying to address. I couldn't agree more. So much needed with so many people coming of trainings willing to apply the model and clearly needing supervision. So, Liz and Emma, maybe we could start off focusing on the workshops you have been running. Can you tell us more about those workshops? How do you structure them? Who is attending?

Liz: First, just to say, thanks. Thanks for inviting us. It's great to be here. Should I start, Emma?

Emma: Yes.

Liz: Okay. So, well, this all started when we got into conversation, I should think about three years ago. And then we developed this model. We developed our ideas and we started with a couple of mini workshops in the UK just to kind of test out the model really. And the feedback was positive. So, then we have gone on from there. So, we've done a couple of workshops now, one for Life Architect in Poland, and one just recently in Spain and another one coming up in Australia in April and they're about sort of really integrating IFS with supervision. I mean, I found when I started with clients that it was quite easy to integrate IFS into my client work, but it was sort of trickier in a way with supervision. I could talk about IFS, but it took me a while to really start to integrate IFS into the process of it, I guess. So, the workshops are about how we can do that, how we can bring IFS into the process as well as the content, how we can really integrate IFS. And the workshops have been... a mix of people who've been coming, people

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mostly who are familiar with IFS, people who are already supervising or offering consultation and people who wanted to move towards that. And our plan is to go on and develop a longer training later this year.

Anibal: Beautiful. Emma, would you like to add something?

Emma: I think part of my journey in this is that my system needs a lot of holding and that's what I was looking forward with supervision in IFS and maybe not finding. And so I was kind of trying to hold myself through reflection and having therapy, IFS therapy, start supervision at times, trying to find my way and me developing this model and also commissioning the book with the help of Ellen Ziskind has been about me holding myself as I do this work. And then collaborating with Liz has been about collaboratively developing this model further, and then we can hold other people as they learn to hold themselves as supervisors in the model. So, I guess there's an aspect of that that feels important to me too. So, it's not that we're saying that IFS supervision and consultation hasn't been happening for decades, it has. It's just that, listen, I've been paying particular attention to it in our practices and how it kind of might be here in the UK, which might be a little different to how it is in American culture or situations.

Anibal: And how is the format of the workshop? The workshop is it supervision in action?

Liz: It's a mixture, really, in the same way that IFS trainings. So, we do meditations, so for example a meditation about meeting our own supervisee parts because often these are kind of more hidden in a way. So, there's meditations, there's some presentation, there's working breakout rooms, there's a sort of working with like a sort of video role-play. What might you do next? What's coming up for you, kind of idea. So, it's a mixture of experiential and teaching and discussion in different ways.

Anibal: And who is attending? Is it always for supervisors or practitioners as well?

Liz: It's been a mix. It's been people interested in IFS and supervisions. So, some people, as I said, who are already supervising, some very experienced supervisors who may know less or more about IFS or people that are interested in becoming supervisors and moving towards that.

Emma: And we ask that everybody has a foundation of level one IFS training at least so that we've all got that kind of commonality.

Tisha: What did you notice about supervision in general that you had maybe received or participated in before and then coming into the IFS model? What did you notice needed to happen different, be established differently?

Liz: I think for me and in my own work as a supervisor, I think I was quite parts led. I had this notion of being the expert, you know, the wise one that knew. So, you know, supervisees would

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come, and they'd tell me about the clients and then I would have probably a few parts around, maybe caretaking parts or expert parts. So, that kind of shift for me in terms of IFS, has been about, I guess, kind of trusting Self-energy and supervision being more about unblending, accessing Self-energy in the system. So, that approach has been kind of different. It was quite a shift for me. And I think it could be quite a shift for some supervisor parts, because it's a bit like in, as a therapist, less about being the one who knows more about supporting the wisdom and the knowing and the compassion to come through. So, it's similar, I think in therapy and that shift that many of us have had to make in our therapeutic work supervision. Emma, how would you see that?

Emma: Something for me about the freedom IFS brings, either as a therapy modality, or as a supervision kind of modality, there's just more freedom and there's more specificity. You can talk to the part direct or something about that for me. My supervision training was The Seven Eyed Model, which is why we've kind of... One of the aspects of the model is...

Anibal: To integrate it, yes.

Emma: ...which kind of takes that seven eyes into an IFS sense of systemic understanding. So, there's something about that opening up of systems at all different levels that kind of was freeing about IFS on top of the seven eyed model for me.

Liz: Yeah. And, also for me just to say that the sort of, as in IFS, that all parts are welcome. And so, the focus not just being about the client's parts and all those parts being welcome, but also the therapist parts and giving attention to those very much in supervision. And also, of course, to our own parts as supervisors and what they may be telling us as well. So that shift too.

Anibal: Yes, I can see much more fun on that.

So, let's focus in your IFS supervision model. You say it's inspired by the F's and the P's already present in the IFS model and developed out of a U-turn intended to be a map, a framework to guide the supervisory process. And you talk of six F's and six P's and eight facets. So, tell us about the model.

Liz: Okay, so shall I start with the F's and P's and maybe, Emma, you might want to talk about the eight facets?

Emma: Yeah.

Liz: So yes, as you say, Anibal, it came from a U-turn. So, in our conversations, we started looking and thinking about, well, what is it that it's like, what are we doing when we feel that we're really integrating IFS? And from that came inspired by, I guess, the F's that we know well in the IFS model. So, our F's of IFS supervision or consultation, and I can say a little bit more

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about those in the moment. And we paired those with the P's of Self-lead therapist, which people already know, so perspective, patience, presence, persistence, playfulness. And we added one that was partnership. We needed another one because we had six F's and only five P's. So, we added partnership.

Anibal: It makes sense.

Liz: Yeah. So, these are, I guess, the F's are more sort of doing kind of action, sort of framework. The P's are more about the qualities that are present when there's Self-energy in the system. So, they together, they provide a way for a supervisor to kind of check in with what's present, what might be needed and some sense of the direction that we might go. So, the F's, so the first of those is follow the model and of course following the model is central to integrating IFS. So, we see this as kind of about the process. So really aligning with the IFS goals and philosophy and process. So, sort of slowing down, spacious, welcoming parts, working very collaboratively and working actively with sort of power and difference and dynamics and biases, so on. And very much attending to Self-lead boundaries in the system, offering hope and following the model. So, the partnership, which is the pair with this, is about partnering with the therapist, the supervisee, or the person we're consulting, with the model of course, and with the Self-energy in the system.

Anibal: That's beautiful.

Liz: So that's the first one. So, the second F is framing systemically, and that brings us perspective. So that's about being aware of, I guess, all the systems that are there. So, each of the three participants therapist, client supervisor, and their internal and external systems kind of supervisory system, the relationships between the three and the larger systems all around them. And also, I guess, holding awareness over time with legacy and different realms with unattached burdens and guides and so on. And the eight facets, which Emma can talk about in a minute is sort of a way of navigating all these different lenses.

Anibal: So important. Yes. To see the large picture, the big picture. Yes.

Tisha: One the F's that I'm really intrigued by, and grateful that you've included is the, probably the next one you're going to mention, is the favor stuckness. How did you identify that as being relevant? And could you say a little bit more about how you guide your therapists to favor stuckness when so often we want to avoid it or push through it?

Liz: Yeah. Yeah. It's kind of in the supervision process, it's getting really curious about noticing, prioritizing where the flow of the model might be...

Anibal: Blocked.

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Liz: Might be blocked somehow, and getting curious with the person we're supervising around that, including who's saying that is stuck, you know, what part is there and that, you know, Dick Schwartz would say, if there's stuckness, then somebody's parts are in the way, but we don't always know who's so we'd be really focusing on, if it's not flowing. And of course, often it's the work that isn't flowing that is brought to supervision, that there is something that the therapist is feeling isn't going as well as it might. So, we would be wanting to get interested with them about maybe the protectors that were around or whether there's maybe exile beliefs or energy kind of showing up and getting curious with them about that and what might be a way forward, which might be unblending from parts, or it might be a technical thing around IFS that needs a little bit of support with, or it might be that we can bring in something creative as a different way of approaching.

Tisha: Can I ask a question that might be a little bit of an example? I'm curious, a lot of clients will often have a kind of stuckness as a general theme, like either being stuck in a relationship or being stuck in a pattern of behavior where there's addiction and managers and a polarity. Is that the type of stuckness that you favor, or is it favoring places in the therapist's own system where the therapist feels that their parts are frustrated or stuck?

Emma: I guess, this is partly why we've got these models so that we can have choices and we can ask the supervisee what it would be best for them to focus on. Do they feel the stuckness is in their parts? Or are they missing a bit of theory because they feel the stuckness is in not understanding something? So, collaboratively we can maybe work out where we might start to explore that stuckness. And if that works great, if not, we can move to a slightly different place to explore the stuckness. And again, I guess it depends on the relationship. How long have we been working together? What are they comfortable bringing? Some people get stuck in a particular area or with a particular client. So, I guess it's quite a hard question to answer maybe.

Liz: Yeah. And sometimes the stuckness is what's kind of in the field and sometimes it's kind of exile stuckness that might be kind of showing up somehow and everybody's getting stuck, you know, the therapist is feeling it and their parts are kind of getting caught up in it as well. So, yeah.

Emma: And also, the stuckness is kind of where it's at often. I work with a lot of people learning IFS, or they're quite new to using it and stuckness is going to be there.

Anibal: Over and over.

Emma: So, let's play with it. So, let's welcome it. Let's not be ashamed that it's there kind of thing, I guess.

Tisha: Yeah. I really appreciate the emphasis on it because I think it's one of the things that really contributes to burnout. Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

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Anibal: Absolutely.

Liz: Yeah, definitely.

Emma: And also, one of the other F's is about finding our creativity. If we give something lots of space and our time, it can be remarkable how releasing that can be, and unblending that can be in all of these different ways. So, it can be very resourcing from that sense supervision, I find.

Liz: And our P that goes with the favor stuckness, that F, is actually patience. So, sometimes it's just kind of slowing down, tuning in, leaning into it and trusting, you know, it's going to take as long as it takes and let's just be with it and kind of normalize it, validate it, kind of be with it and see what comes out of that.

Anibal: Also, patients need playfulness, right?

Liz: Not just patience, lots of it needs playfulness. Yeah. Yeah.

Anibal: So, the fifth foster fluency, what is this about and persistence?

Liz: So that's the kind of the teaching one, I guess. So, we're fostering fluency and in the IFS protocol, in the model. So, we're trying to support the people that we supervise to be fluent in this. I kind of use a sort of skiing metaphor for this, you know, we want people to be flowing down the slope kind of in their bodies and instinctive and sort of feeling the freedom of it. So, feeling the fluency of the model. So that's one of the F's where we... and we may be doing that in different ways through, I guess, walking the talk, you know, modeling it, giving experience of it in sessions, bringing awareness, maybe teaching a little bit of theory, maybe practicing scales, you know, so, different ways that we might support the fostering of fluency in the supervision or consultation sessions.

Anibal: Yeah. Interesting. And then you have these eight facets of IFS supervision. You have this diagram of the whole model that shows the largest system integrating eight different layers or facets.

Liz: Can I just say, just because of the other F, a really important F, just before we move, is that freeing up Self-energy? Which of course is at the heart because that's all about parts and focusing on working with parts, therapist parts, often, sometimes supervisor parts to access more Self-energy in the system. And the P word that goes with that one is presence.

Anibal: So important.

Liz: So that we have more presence in the supervisory system.

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Anibal: So important. So, coming back to this diagram of the eight facets, can you help us with this diagram, Emma? There is a dotted line, I noticed, linking supervisor and the client. What does it mean?

Emma: Yes. I think that's facet for the supervisory system. An aspect of that is that the therapist is presenting a client and I am somehow relating to that client, but obviously they're not in the room in an actual sense, but energetically, emotionally, psychologically, I am still making some connection to them, or I'm creating a vision of them in my head that may or may not be accurate. So that's why the dotted line, because relationally, there's a connection between me and the client or clients, but actually it's not the same as me related to the person in front of me, say the therapist.

Anibal: Yeah. So interesting. In my experience, as a supervisor, I can see how very often my compassionate view to the client, meaning my relationship with the client's story and journey usually impacts therapists'-client relationship. And that's maybe these dotted lines that you are calling attention to and I find it so so interesting.

Liz: One of the questions we might be asking is how do I feel towards that client? We ask ourselves that.

Anibal: Amazing. So, coming back to the eight facets...

Emma: Shall I just whiz through them a little?

Anibal: Please.

Emma: So, saying fostering Self-energy, freeing up Self-energy. So, facet number one is Self. So, this whole diagram is contained in a circle of Self.

Anibal: A larger one.

Emma: The larger Self in circles, life, the world, however people kind of imagine that transcendent larger Self, and then within the three participants of supervision, which are depicted by triangles. I'll ask Cece Sykes, her triangle of IFS. They have a smaller yellow circle inside to pick the Self, free up in ourselves by unblending, having parts unblend. So, Self is number one. And then the client system facet two, therapist system facet three, supervisors system facet four, with this connection to the client, then facet five is the model IFS, the Self, which is in the center of the diagram. Facet six is then the relational, the relationship between the client and the therapist. Facet seven is the relationship between the therapist and supervisor. And then eight is the broader context, like the global triangle of managers, firefighters, and exiles. So that's a very quick overview.

Anibal: Beautiful. So interesting.

Liz: And these are kind of lenses to look through.

Emma: Yes. A way to reflect. I'm I always working in one of these facets with a particular supervisee, or do we move around a lot of them? Are there areas we never go to, like, we can't work with the therapist parts or it's a way to reflect on practice. It might be used as a decision tree by some people. So, I guess it can be used in different ways, hopefully. Yeah.

Anibal: So inspiring. Beautiful. Well done.

Emma: Thank you. Thank us both.

Liz: I'm realizing it's probably quite for people that are listening, is probably quite a lot to take in, so...

Emma: They're not seeing the visuals.

Liz: Yeah. Hopefully it's just a sense of, I kind of a map that can just be a guide kind of where are we, where might we go with this, what's happening here. So...

Tisha: I'm imagining that as you started collaborating and developing the map and these models and the visuals, there became many things that were inspiring about supervision for both of you. Have you discovered anything that feels important to share?

Emma: I think Anibal mentioned something earlier, the playfulness. Supervision for me sometimes has a fair bit of playfulness, which I really enjoy. And also, my system likes variety and kind of these models and being a supervisor enables that sometimes as well. Yeah. And it's great coming alongside people, alongside the IFS model, as they struggle with it, celebrate successes, move ahead. All of these things, it's great and challenging.

Anibal: Challenging as well. For me it's been always so much learning out of supervision and fun, challenging, lots of fun and learnings.

Liz: For me, it's something around Self-energy and that slowing down, letting go, opening your heart. And the kind of interconnection of, you know, Dick talks about Self-energy as being contagious, the vibrational sort of energy of that and somebody on a recent workshop that we did talked in the feedback around really learning around the... they use the phrase of downstream. So, something around how in the supervision session and Self-energy there hopefully and slowing down and all of that and how that then kind of goes downstream to the therapist and clients work together. And then I guess the clients out into their life and so on.

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And so, something about supervision just really being so connected and, you know, the kind of the larger goals of IFS, I guess, really seeing supervision, having a place in that of more Self-energy into the world.

Anibal: So rewarding, yes.

Liz: Yeah. Yeah.

Tisha: I love that, everyone uplifting, like you raise the water, you raise the boats. Everyone's more...

Emma: And I guess a slightly different way of saying that, for me is something about having somewhere to take the fear, because IFS is about protective fear, which blocks Self-energy. And it's like, it's a space you can take those fears and help them feel less fearful. And so, I guess that's a slightly different way of saying.

Anibal: Yeah. Makes sense.

Liz: Yeah. Yeah. Well, Robin Shohet, who's a big reference with supervision in the UK, talks about helping to uncover the fear in the system. And I guess that is what it's about, but also as an IFS we know that it's about love as well. Isn't it? And Self-energy, and so bringing that into the system to be there with the fear.

Anibal: Well said. So, what would you like to share about the coming trainings in this supervision model?

Liz: Yeah, well, we're just, as I said, at the very early stages of planning a longer training with practice and deepening into it even more, you know, from a kind of humble place, I think, you know, not expert here, but just let's, you know, share our ideas and really welcoming other people's ideas of a supervisor and learn together about this. So, a longer kind of training. Yeah. That's our hope, that's our plan. We've just sort of just at the very beginning of that, hopefully this year, maybe into next year and the workshops continuing for as long as people are interested in coming to them, I guess. And then Emma has her book coming out. So, yeah, I think it's really exciting, and I think it's really needed this work around supervision and consultation because there are so many people... I don't know about where you are, but certainly in the UK, there are people coming off trainings who are really wanting support and guidance in developing their practice. So, we really need more supervisors who are, you know, bringing IFS to that and integrating IFS to that.

Anibal: Yeah. Absolutely.

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Tisha: I'm curious about whether your workshop applies to individual supervision or group supervision or both. Is there a framework for working with groups? Because I know here a lot of supervisors will meet with a group of therapists or postgraduate school therapists.

Liz: It does, the model works the same. I believe quite strongly that even if we're supervising or offering consultation to people whose model is not IFS, that we can still work with IFS, we can still integrate and work from that place ourselves, the supervisor's modality can still be IFS. So, it is for groups and it's for people supervising, non-IFS informed practitioners as well.

Anibal: Emma, you have been editing and publishing a brand-new book, right? Could you let us know about its contents? Its purpose, invited authors and topics, the publisher or anything else you'd like to share?

Emma: Sure. This is with Routledge, hopefully coming out in the summer. And, for a few years now I've been working with over a dozen top IFS consultants and supervisors, including Liz. And they have contributed chapters on their specialist field, say, to include in this book for the IFS community. And it's very exciting and I'm getting a bit impatient, but it's not yet here. It's on its way. Dick's got an interview. I interviewed Dick for chapter one, Dan Reed and Ray Wooten talk about their model of IFS informed consultation. Pamela Krause does one specifically for working with therapists who work with children and families and adolescents. Ann does one for IFIO therapy. Tamala Floyd and Black Therapists Rock, her story of how she is instrumental in supporting and consulting to that community. Jeanne Catanzaro who's done one about eating disorder clients. Nancy Wonder... It's just rich and full and...

Anibal: A table full of food, of good food for thought.

Emma: Yes.

Anibal: Beautiful.

Tisha: Thank you for your hard work in compiling and editing and conceiving of this great idea.

Emma: Well, thank you.

Anibal: So, thank you so much, Liz and Emma, for willing to have this conversation on IFS Supervision and Consultation. We really, really enjoyed it. Such a lovely time together, and we hope we can keep meeting and sharing this model, our work and our lives. Thank you.

Liz: Thank you so much for having us.

Tisha: Is there an easy way for our listeners to find access to your workshops? If anyone is interested and intrigued.

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Liz: They can email either one of us. Is probably a good way if they're happening in different places...

Emma: If somebody could include my website, then people can email of the website.

Anibal: Yes, we can put both.

Liz: Thank you.