

No Bad Parts: Individual and Collective Healing with Dick Schwartz

Today on Explorations in Psychotherapy we are speaking with Dr. Richard Schwartz. Dr. Schwartz is the developer of the Internal Family Systems model of psychotherapy, known as IFS. He has authored many books and over 50 articles on IFS and has trained thousands of therapists and practitioners in this transformative model over the last four decades. Today we will be speaking with him primarily about his latest book *No Bad Parts, Healing Trauma, and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model* published this summer by Sounds True.

Alexia Rothman: Dick, thank you so much for joining us today.

Richard Schwartz: It's great to see you both. I've always enjoyed the two of you.

Anibal Henriques: Welcome back Dick.

Dick: Thank you Anibal.

Anibal: Dick, your new book is a delight to read. You clarify and refresh the main concepts and fundamentals of the model. It's full of powerful meditations that we know can be fundamental unblending practices and amazing case illustrations. And as we read the book, we have the feeling that you are not totally introducing and offering a model of mind to the general public, a model that can help us navigate our troubled minds and lives, but that you are also offering a dream as Luther King or Nelson Mandela did. The dream that this model can connect us all collectively and globally and heal not only ourselves and our relationships, but also heal us globally. So, Dick, why this book?

Dick: Yeah, boy, that's very astute Anibal. I did have that intention and I'm glad at least one person got it. Yeah. The why of this book is both to bring more of IFS to the general public, but also to clarify the vision, the larger vision you just described, which I don't think I had really put into words in other places other than some talks. So yeah, the longer I stayed with it, the more clear it became that it has enormous potential as a way of understanding the mind and a way of bringing more of what we call Self and Self-energy to this planet. And that, just like an individual, when you get what we call a critical mass of Self-energy, things can change very quickly, heal and improve very quickly. And I believe that that's true also in countries and organizations and also globally. And so, I wanted to try to articulate that and other aspects of the spirituality of the model, because it's grown to be a kind of spiritual, sacred journey for me.

Lexi: We're actually hoping that over the course of our conversation today, we'll be able to flesh out kind of each of those areas as we go. So I'm glad that you sort of gave an overview that way of everything that the book involves and...So, starting maybe with something that is basic and fundamental to IFS, you talk in the book about the fact that the dominant view of the mind in westernized cultures has been more the monomind view. So, the idea that the mind is one unitary entity and that all of our thoughts and our emotions flow from this one unified mind, but IFS holds that the natural state of the mind is actually multiple, so that it's natural for us to have these

different parts or these sub-personalities. So, we're wondering if you could tell us a bit about the concept of multiplicity and how this way of understanding the mind may not only be more accurate, but actually beneficial for people

Dick: It's been a tough sell on this culture because there is a kind of stigma about multiplicity that's come from various sources. Probably the most powerful source has been from the multiple personality disorder diagnosis, or also from hearing voices in schizophrenia and psychosis. And so, the idea of there being these little entities inside of you that you can hear from and interact with has been pathologized in our culture and at best seen as the sort of fragmenting of the unitary mind, the monomind, by trauma. So, they're seen as shards of the broken vase, which is better than seeing them as just pieces of craziness. So, it's been an uphill battle to say that having parts and listening to them and having them interact with each other could be a good thing. But, you know, I consider myself to be a good scientist. I didn't come into the work with clients believing any of that. I was a big monomind person. In fact, I remember very early on, I think I might've told this story sometime before, but there was a woman in the Chicago area named Sandra Watanabe, who had put together something called *The Internal Cast of Characters*. And so, she was working with parts in a similar way. And I went to, after I got interested in the phenomenon because of my clients, I went to hear her present and she was talking about them as if they were real. And I thought "oh, how naïve." At the end of the thing, I went up to her, I said "you don't really, these are metaphors, right? You don't really believe in the reality of them." She said "no, they're quite real." So, I came into it, exploring it with that kind of attitude that it's creations of the mind and it's a way the mind can get to know itself, but these are not real inner characters. So, it was a tough sell for me so that I understand how tough it is for other people to accept. But it's very relieving. It's very, once you get that it's just a part of you that has these racist beliefs and says these things inside, or it's just a part of you that hates your mother and wants to kill her or whatever it is, it's much, much easier to accept yourself and to have compassion than if you believe that you're a racist or that you're a hateful person or...So, there's, I mean, minimally there's that value in the multiplicity perspective. But what also happens is as you really get that they are real inner beings who need a leader and they need love and compassion from you, then it becomes a kind of a life practice. You know, it becomes something that I do on a daily basis, which has a big impact on how I run my life. And, so that's the real value of it.

Lexi: That's really helpful. And you actually started to get into what I wanted to ask you next, which is a lot of times when I'll introduce the IFS model to clinicians, they start to understand the idea of the multiplicity of the mind, and then they become interested in what is the nature of these parts? You know, you talked a little bit about how others viewed them, how you first viewed them. How would IFS describe the nature of parts?

Dick: You know, for me, and it's evolved over time, but for me now there, I think in the book I call them sacred inner beings. And that's really the way I see them, they're little inner sort of, not just personalities, but people in a sense, for lack of a better word, who are sacred and deserve to be honored and acknowledged and listened to and witnessed as much as external human beings too. And external children, because most of them are quite young. And yeah, so that's how I see them. And again, it's a tough sell.

Lexi: It is a tough sell. And one thing that I'll sometimes say to people is because, you know, you've said this before that you don't expect anyone to believe something just because you say it. You're so open to having people just do their own experimentation and then just learn what they learn. And then I'll, you know, say something like really, regardless of whatever you believe them to be or not be the truth is it turns out that if you do treat them as whole beings, you get the best results. So, whatever you believe about them just you're absolutely right. That they operate as whole people do. So, if you're approaching them with respect and appreciation and honoring them, you absolutely can more effectively engage with them.

Dick: That's right. That's all I ask. I mean, people can be as pragmatic as they want about it. And what you said is true. Whether or not you believe they're real inner beings, treating them that way is very effective.

Anibal: Dick, the title of your book is *No Bad Parts*. You speak right at the introduction of an inherent goodness. And you also quoted Jimmy Carter when he says, "what is needed now more than ever is leadership that steers us away from fear and fosters greater confidence in the inherent goodness and ingenuity of humanity". And then you go saying "our leaders can do that with the way we currently understand the mind because it highlights the darkness in humanity". So, do you believe there is no badness at all in our human systems?

Dick: I, you know, I can say there are no bad parts and I can say that Self is totally good. There are little bundles of negative energy that we'll run into too that don't seem to have any particular desire other than to cause damage. But those are not inherent to human being's state. They are what we call unattached burdens that enter our systems from in various, various ways. So, but inherent to human beings, there's nothing negative.

Lexi: And I really appreciate actually, how IFS has that understanding that, you know, regardless of the impact of whatever the parts are doing, you know, the impact of the methods that they're using really the underlying intention is so good. They're trying to help in whatever way they know how. And I think that the fact that IFS recognizes that there are no bad parts it actually lets us effectively as therapists work with parts that we couldn't work with otherwise. You were mentioning like racist parts, for example, or homophobic parts or parts that have abused other people. If all we know how to do is judge them and exile them and shame them, you know, punish them, then there's really no hope for positive change at all.

Dick: Yeah. And for me it's all parallels. So, if you can, if you believe that there are bad parts and you lock them up or go to war against them, then you're going to believe the same about people in the outside world. And you'll have the same impulse in terms of how you treat them, and you'll get the same results. So, when you exile or attack parts inside, at some point, they'll get revenge in a way. They'll screw up your life or they'll, I mean, mental symptoms or physical symptoms. So, yeah, and it took me a long time to come to that conclusion because, you know, I would start out working with inner critics for example. And they would, if we got curious and kept asking questions, would ultimately reveal their positive intention. And I thought "that's pretty cool, but what about these

parts?" you know. And it wasn't until I was a consultant, which I did for seven years to a residential treatment center for sex offenders that I thought, okay, let's really test this out and let's start working with these parts that had raped people, or, you know, molested little kids. And I also did some work in prison with people that have murdered other people. And, you know, if these parts turn out to be the same, then that's pretty interesting. That's a big discovery. And indeed, each time I would try it and the part would share its secret history of how it got into its role and how it picked up these extreme beliefs and emotions that drove it to do what it did and how much it hated itself for doing those things. And then, you know, at some point I started to see that, okay, maybe this is the thing, maybe there aren't any bad parts. Isn't that amazing? You know, that just changes everything sort of.

Lexi: It does. It really does. And this way that IFS has of really knowing that they're not what they seem on the surface. They're not their methods, their role doesn't define them. That they're more than that. Like we were saying before, it gives us this possibility. So, when you, when you do this healing work with them and with whomever they're protecting, they have this chance in the end to, to do something different. They don't have to stay locked in that role. But the way that that comes about is they get to choose what they might want to do differently. It's not that we've rejected them, told them they're bad or wrong because then you're absolutely right. All we'll see is what we would see in a person, then they'd rebel, then they'd resist, you know, but they get to choose. So, in terms of another fundamental concept in IFS, so at the heart of the IFS model is the concept of the Self. And it's what we understand to be this essence of calm and clarity, compassion, connectedness, that's in all of us. And when I was first exposed to the IFS model many years ago, was that your introductory workshop at the trauma conference. And one of the things that just struck me so powerfully was your absolutely confident assertion that number one, the Self is present in everyone, but also that it is undamaged, no matter how much trauma we've experienced, how much pain and wounding, how many parts of us may be in extreme roles in our system. And the reason that that claim had such a profound impact on me was that that is what I had seen to be the case in my clinical practice, working with survivors of extremely severe and extensive childhood trauma, you know, thousands and thousands of incidents from infancy through young adulthood. And yet, even in these systems, when the protective parts would relax back, even a fraction, this same presence would emerge, this same healing energy and wisdom and compassion as in the clients without trauma history. So, it really struck me as true. So, for listeners who may be a bit newer to the IFS model, if you could tell us a bit about the concept of the Self and this idea that it remains undamaged regardless of trauma history.

Dick: Yeah. And that that's a tough sell in the trauma field because a lot of other trauma models are based on the idea that people are severely damaged by trauma, and they need years of learning new skills and building up the muscle of compassion and so on. And I've had, maybe you were there for them, I've had debates, my friend Bessel van der Kolk on this very topic and probably will again at the conference, where he'll hold up slides of a severe trauma survivor, complex trauma survivor brain. And you can see that the prefrontal cortex is basically kind of blank. And he'll say, this is what we're dealing with people with horrible, horrible childhoods. And I would say, that's what we're dealing with when a part has taken over and it's blanked out that our prefrontal cortex like a dissociative part, but when that part steps back it'll light up because Self is right there and he's, you

know, he said, “well, prove it”. So, we’ve still been working on getting enough money to do some brain scan studies to prove it. But I’m certain that we can because of what you just said. And that’s how I came to that conclusion because I was working that same population for about 20 years. And it was amazing when enough parts would separate, it was the same Self that would show up in less traumatized people. And so, yeah, it’s a... that’s what led me to spirituality. Because again, I came into the study of this with basically an atheist or maybe an agnostic. But when you run into that phenomenon enough times, in spite of the fact that people have had such horrible experiences, at some point you have to look for other, other examples or other explanations for it, than the ones that are scientific. And one of the things I really like about the coming psychedelic revolution is that people like Bessel are seeing the Self. When people take plant medicine, it somehow it disarms protectors and immediately people are in this state of Self, even people with horrible trauma histories. So, it becomes harder for people like him to deny that it’s there. So anyway, yeah, I’m not sure I answered your question.

Lexi: Yes, you did. You just reminded me of a conversation we had had years ago where I asked you about why people weren't finding it and you said, “because they don't believe it's there”. So, they're not going to go, like, we have this quality of persistence as IFS therapists, this very gentle persistence. And we can have that persistence because we have that knowing it's there. You know, we keep working with the protectors, we keep helping them trust that it might be okay to experiment a little bit. And then there it is.

Dick: Yeah. And it's a tough sell to the protectors a lot of the time, because some of them are actually convinced that it's not there. Some of them are pretending that they think it's not there. They know it's there, but they think it's dangerous for the clients to bring it in.

Lexi: Because it has been at some point.

Dick: So, that's why the persistence is important.

Anibal: Dick, you have this paragraph you called *What the Self is and What the Self isn't*. You quote ecologist Daniel Christian Wahl, author of *Designing Regenerative Cultures* who states that “humanity is coming of age and needs a new story that is powerful and meaningful enough to galvanize global collaboration and guide the collective response to the converging crisis we are facing. And I’m quoting you”. And you say, “when you experience Self, you naturally feel more connected to humanity in general and also to something larger and more encompassing, the earth, the universe, the big Self. And you will also discover other qualities rising up in you like joy, equanimity, forgiveness, perspective, and playfulness”. So, equanimity, it’s a quality of the Self that you are somehow redefining or pointing to.

Dick: Yeah. It's one quality for sure. Yeah. For me, and this this took a long time to conclude also, that Self isn't just in one individual person that it's kind of a field or yeah...Field is probably the best word that...I've always loved the discovery from quantum physics that photons are both particle and wave. So, for me there's a wave state of Self that isn't tied to individuals at all. And, with certain psychedelics or meditations, you can leave your body and you can sense being a part of this big, big

wave of Self, and there's a blissful aspect of that. And there's a lot of equanimity to that too. There's a deep-seated sense that everything's okay at that level. And, that's partly why, you know, certain psychedelics are used with the end of life, because it really gives people who are facing death the sense that there's so much more and that this is just a transition. And so, as you come back from the meditation or the psychedelic and you reenter your body, you watch, I might say, your particle eyes. You, it's the same Self, but it's in this different form, embodied form, and it has boundaries whereas you didn't have boundaries in the wave state or the field state, and you sense your separateness from other people like these bodies getting our way in a lot of ways, because we lose this knowledge that we're connected when we come back. And, you know, I also believe that we're here to learn lessons, and one of the lessons is that, that despite the fact we're all separated by these bodies, we're not really separate, we're really interconnected. We see where connectedness is at this other level. And so, what's good for me it's sort of like COVID is teaching us this, that, you know, we can't just take care of our country because we could get to whatever 70% vaccinated, but if other countries aren't doing the same, then these variants are going to keep coming. So, we have to take care of us as a global humanity. Well, it's the same as true with all kinds of things. So, that's part of the message that I wanted to bring in the book and try to live more in my life that way.

Lexi: Along this line of IFS is kind of having morphed, as you say in the book, kind of morphed over time from being exclusively about psychotherapy, to now also being kind of a spiritual practice, I've been really fascinated to observe kind of in my clinical practice and also through my own personal IFS work that when we have more access to Self in this spaciousness and openness that accompanies it, it doesn't just allow increased connectedness to our own parts or to all of humanity, but also to something beyond us. So, for some people, you know, maybe that's nature or some it's a higher power or even ancestors or guides or the force, whatever it is for an individual. And that's been also very helpful for clients who initially had parts that felt funny about the model, because maybe they came from very traditional religious backgrounds and they feared, you know, this emphasis on Self as this sort of going to disconnect us from God and, surprisingly for them, it has actually opened almost the channel to connect more easily and more fully with whatever they want to connect with. So, it's been really interesting. You mentioned in the book, how IFS can be thought of as attachment theory taken inside. And I was wondering if you could elaborate on that a little bit. A bit of a different topic.

Dick: Yeah. You know, I love attachment theory in the sense that it really has brought to the field and to the culture the impact of early childhood stuff, both traumas and parenting and how that stays with us through our lives and organizes our lives. And in my language, in the form of these burdens that these young parts of us carry thereafter. But there was one aspect of attachment theory that never felt right to me. And as I did this work with clients became more and more clear that it wasn't right. And that is that to have any of what we're calling Self, you had to have had a good, at least good enough parenting at a young age, because it had to come into you in a sense through that loving relationship. And I was working with clients who not only didn't have good enough parents but had horrible parents. And I would, you know, based on attachment theory, I would sift through their histories, looking for one person, maybe a friend or an uncle or somebody who they might've got this from unsuccessfully. And, at some point I had to conclude that yes, attachment theory had it wrong, that piece of it, that it's inherent in us. It isn't something we have to get from somebody.

And when I kind of got that, that I started thinking because, as I would help people access Self and then get out of the way, I would see how Self just knew how to be a good parent without any teaching or training or anything. Self just knows how to relate in a loving way and accepting, and yeah, all the things that we know about good parenting Self just does to these parts. And so, I started thinking, yeah, this is attachment theory taken inside in the sense that Self is becoming the good attachment figure to these insecurely or avoidantly attached parts, and that's a big deal. The fact that you don't necessarily need that to come from a therapist or some kind of healing experience with your parents or from your spouse, you can do that for yourself. And so many of us come out of our families thinking we can't do that for ourselves and we've got to find that good attachment figure. And unfortunately, we put that on our partners a lot of the time to be that for us. And that creates all kinds of havoc in relationships.

Lexi: Absolutely. What you're saying is just so true and the power of it, honestly, after thousands of IFS sessions, it never ceases to amaze me that you're absolutely right, regardless of what people have received or not received in their history is when enough space is open inside and the Self-energy is flowing, the way they can show up is exactly what the part needs. And it's also in, so attuned a way, what's interesting to me is how much that takes the burden off therapists, because we don't have to, in those moments when the client is with their most vulnerable and wounded exiles and witnessing the worst things that have ever happened to them, we don't have to sit there with a part of us worried about how we need to guide them through healing this part, because frankly, we might not even get it right. So, even if we were to try, so we might, from some part of us that knows what our exiles would need, we might suggest, "oh, go and hug the part", you know, and in that person's system, what might be right is not touching that part at all, sitting six feet away, not even looking at the part, but being a comforting presence. So, I love that we can just, as you say so many times in different places, trust the healing energy of the Self. Trust, the Self, just, you know, because our job is just to help the clients access Self, and then they can do what needs to be done.

Anibal: So, Dick, you say, "when you can love all your parts, you can love all people. When your parts feel loved they allow you to lead your life from Self and you feel connected to the earth and you want to save it from the exploitative parts of others. You will expand the field of Self on the planet and that will contribute to healing it, the planet. You will also feel connected to the bigger field of Self". So, what is this bigger field of Self?

Dick: You know, for me, it's what other systems call God, if they don't have to personify God. Maybe the closest is Hinduism that talks about *Atman*, which is what I call Self in a person. And then *Brahman*, which is much more of a field idea that *Atman* is the personification of *Brahman*. So, and many spiritual traditions have a similar conceptualization that there is a field that is transpersonal, that you can access. And that a lot of wisdom comes from...I've just been reading a book called *The Immortality Key*, which makes a very strong, strongly documented case that the ancients were very active in using psychedelics, sometimes inadvertently because what they called beer would have this *ergot* which has a psychedelic effect just from the lack of kind of brewing that we have now. And that a lot of, most of the world's religious traditions were based on this opening that happened when people would do this. And there was a place in Greece, I think, where people would come from all over called *The Eleusis*, I think, and they would be given this mysterious potion and would have all

these experiences that they kept quite secret. But anyway, the point being that, however you access it, whether it's through what the Buddha did, which was to meditate or taking some plant medicine, or that there is this much larger field of wisdom that can enter and instruct us about how to operate in this route. And that's been the source of a lot of the guidance that humans have gotten from prophets and religious leaders, which I find to be a very interesting thing. So, for me, that's what that field is.

Anibal: Dick, it might be helpful to quote some of your book highlights that speak for these new global or spiritual Self, with the capital letters that it seems you want to underline. So, quoting you, you say “we have lost our ability to feel the earth viscerally, and we need system thinking leaders who can remind everyone that we are all in this together. And when people sense how connected they are to humanity, they feel more curious about others and they have more courage to help them”. And finally, “it's not compassionate to passively watch suffering beings parade by.” Am I getting it right?

Dick: Yeah. Yeah, those are great. And that last one is part of my critique of some traditional spiritualities because, mindfulness in particular is for me, is a good first step, but you're asked to separate from and observe your thoughts and emotions, and to do that in an accepting way, but not to interact with them. And that's fine if you believe that these are just ephemeral thoughts and emotions that come and go, or that they're the ego, which many spiritual traditions tend to be irritated by, or even demonize that it makes sense to separate and just notice it without trying to do anything. But if you think of these, the way we've described earlier as inner entities, many of whom are suffering, then it isn't compassionate to just passively watch them. And one of the things, again, I hate to keep referring back to the psychedelic revolution, but you know, the people studying MDMA and PTSD are quite amazed at how often, spontaneously, without any guidance from the therapist, the subject starts to do IFS because the MDMA disarms these protectors, you immediately access a huge amount of Self. Your heart is wide open, and that's a big invitation to your exiles to come forward. And they do. And people do start just working with them spontaneously because as you were saying earlier, Lexi, it's amazing to watch Self just knows what to do. All of that was very, has been very validating to me that I just stumbled on to something that we all know how to do as human beings to heal ourselves. That that's in there.

Lexi: It's really interesting what you were saying a moment ago about, kind of your critique of some traditional forms of let's say mindfulness practice, that it's a really great start and really important, but that we might need to go a step further and engage. I was talking with a client last night who has been using just some mindfulness practice and meditation. And he said, “okay, when I'm doing it, I feel calm. I feel better,” he said. “But why does the distress return, you know, as soon as I stopped doing it?” And so, it's trying to draw the parallel for him because we know the internal world function so much like the external world, like external children do in our real world. And I said, “well, can you imagine if my son was really upset, he had things that were actually bothering him, legitimate reasons for being distressed, he needed help and care and I said to him, okay, you just go sit over there. I'm just going to breathe for a while and kind of calm myself down and all that. And then I walked away.” You know, what would be compassionate, what he needs is to say, “oh, you're suffering. Let me come be with you. And let me listen to you and see, you know, how can I connect

with you? What can we do to help and all of that.” So, I said, “you have parts that are actually really suffering in there. They need you, they need connection with you, they need help. And so, maybe a good start, you know, to get yourself in a place where you feel more able to be open to them and be present with them, get some of the protectors to give you a little space for that. But then we’ve got to continue”. You know, so anyway, pivoting a little bit here. IFS is a model that is extremely respectful and extremely honoring of the protective parts of our systems and we recognize that these protectors are in the roles that they’re in for good reason. And they usually will have a really hard time shifting out of those roles until what their...the vulnerable and wounded parts that they’re protecting are healed. But so, we’re of course, very conscious, as IFS therapists, of not violating the pace of these protectors. We seek their permission before we work with deep vulnerability. But a question I get a lot when talking to clinicians about this model is...Okay, sometimes though we find ourselves in a position where something that a protector is doing it’s just not safe for the client to continue doing, until we have time to heal the underlying vulnerability, so, they could be severely restricting food intake to the point where they’re medically compromised, for example. So, how does IFS balance honoring and respecting protectors with sometimes having no choice, but to make sure that they can’t use their methods of choice?

Dick: Yeah. So, the example you gave is probably, is very apt because when I developed IFS, I was working with the eating disorder population and there were clients who were starving themselves to the point where we had to do something, not only because they were, you know, facing death, but also because they really couldn’t think very well when they were so malnourished. So, doing, even trying to do IFS with them in that state, wasn’t getting us anywhere. And so, I would have to take a stand with these, these anorexic parts. And, but even then, when we had to rehydrate and hospitalize, I’d take the position with the part that we’re doing it so that we can heal everything. We’re not doing it because it’s a bad part that’s trying to kill her. We get that it’s trying to save her life at things, but we have to do something so that we can show it, that it doesn’t have to do this job anymore. And we honor the part and we value it. And we’re going to take this step that it’s going to hate, and it’s going to fight. So, if you can do it from Self that way with compassion for the part and honoring of it, it isn’t nearly the setback it is if you do it from a much more coercive place that most people do it from.

Lexi: Absolutely. I think one of the things that does make IFS so beautiful for working with things like eating disorders or addictions, is that we do honor these parts for what they’re trying to do and how they’re trying to help and how in fact, maybe sometimes their methods were necessary or even lifesaving. And we bring them on board as a collaborator in the healing process, instead of further polarizing, either our manager parts of us polarized with them or within the client further in the polarization. And it’s just, I appreciate what you just shared because it is that tricky step sometimes when we have to do something that actually sometimes the part feels as a betrayal, you know, like I thought that you accepted me for who I am. I thought you didn’t want to change me. And now you’re telling me you have to change. And it’s like, oh my goodness. But yeah. So, maintaining the relationship as best we can and repairing as we have to, but doing what needs to be done for the safety of the system. So, IFS is a therapeutic model that can bring about transformative change and very deep healing for clients, even for those who’ve suffered very severe and extensive trauma. So, I’m curious, how would you define healing through an IFS lens? What does that entail?

Dick: Well, there are several aspects to it. You know, certainly the unburdening, the release of these extreme beliefs and emotions that these parts have carried for so long, it's like a curse has been lifted and leads to immediate transformation, but to get there, you have to get them out of where they're stuck in the past, usually. So that's an element. And to get there, you have to start by forming a trusting relationship with the part. So, all of those elements are involved in healing a part, which then liberates it from the role that's been forced into. But there are, there are four goals of IFS. All of which I think are related to healing. One is that, the liberation of these parts, so they can be who they're designed to be, but then also the restoration of trust in them for the Self as a leader. And so, healing also involves having healthy leadership and luckily Self is right there and do that. And then third aspect of healing is called, similar to what other systems call, integration, where the parts start to depolarize and get to know each other and begin to relate harmoniously with each other. And as a result, you feel integrated, you feel far less like there are all these parts hanging out and doing extreme things. Instead, they're working as a unit and you don't even notice them a lot of the time because they're so harmonious. And then the fourth is that you begin to lead your life from Self, which creates what much more healing and harmony in your external world.

Lexi: I appreciate what you're saying about integration. It brought to mind something that was in your book. I think Dan Siegel was talking about health and integration, and he talked about IFS being a great way to achieve this and as integration being more like a fruit salad than a smoothie, though. I think with some other models that may be like, oh, we blend all back together and become that one unified mind again. And we're saying, no, no, the parts can maintain their autonomy, their special resources, their special qualities, their contributions, their uniqueness, and just be included in this whole but, because like you said, they're functioning more harmoniously together you may not notice them as much. Things are peaceful and seamless inside. And, speaking of the idea of healing, Alanis Morissette wrote a really nice foreword for the book. And she said, "when I started to work with IFS, I was buoyed by the idea of returning to our birthright of wholeness, through offering attention and care to each part of myself." And I love just those words, that idea of returning to the birthright of wholeness, because it does seem to be that that happens as we, as we heal.

Anibal: So, Dick, I like what you say at your closing thoughts in your book. You say, "if you don't take your part seriously, you won't become an effective inner leader or parent. Various forms or psychotherapy can help you connect with the deep-seated emotions of your exiles. And that can be healing to some degree, but if you think of that process through the lens of expressing a repressed emotion you won't follow up and following up is crucial." So, what is this follow up you talk about and how is it practiced individually or collectively?

Dick: Yeah, well, that's related to the four goals I just mentioned. So, if you take them seriously as an inner family, internal family, then you're not going to just do the, one-off big cathartic healing session. You're going to use that as a starting point to form a new relationship with each of these parts. And you're going to check in with them every day and you're going to notice when they come up and need your attention and you'll respond to them from Self. And so that's what I mean by follow up, like I said earlier, it becomes a life practice. So, you start to take them as seriously as you take external kids, except that they don't need nearly as much as external kids. Most of the time, they

just need a little second of your attention to get a message through. And, so often we try to kill the messenger rather than listen to the message, that for me, western medicine is all about that. Many, many physical symptoms are the products of parts you can't get through to you otherwise, trying to, desperately trying to get your attention. So, yeah, so follow up is crucial. And as I said in the book, unless you really believe these are real inner beings, it doesn't make a lot of sense to follow up with your thoughts, or emotions otherwise.

Anibal: You also say, "if you understand that you have exiles who really need to trust you, you will be more likely to visit them for as long as it takes. Working with them like that is often what's needed to reach permanent unburdening. And that's what it takes to learn your lessons, lessons, like everything deserves love." So, what is this permanent unburdening you mention here, and again, how is it practiced?

Dick: Well, we can have a session where we do an unburdening and it seems very dramatic and the person feels much better, but I've found that the burdens can come back. And I got very discouraged when I first noticed that and thought, all this doesn't really work, it's a sham. But, as I got curious and started asking why did they come back, I learned there are four or five common reasons why they come back. One of which is what we just talked about, that the client didn't follow up and the part felt abandoned and went back to what was familiar. So, for there to be permanent unburdening, not always, I mean, there are parts that will unburden one time and it just stays, but many parts need that kind of follow up to trust that it's safe to not take this stuff back into their body.

Lexi: Dick, you include a very powerful quote at the beginning of the book, by Gus Speth, where he says, "I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought that 30 years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy. And to deal with those, we need a cultural and spiritual transformation and we scientists don't know how to do that". So, I feel like you've been giving us pieces of this all day, but from your perspective, you know, how can IFS contribute to that type of cultural and spiritual transformation that we need?

Dick: Yeah, well, that I hope is one of the main messages of the book, that simply bringing more Self to this planet will have that impact. I really believe that. And so, every time an IFS therapist, does an unburdening and they're in their office, that allows for more Self to come in. And as you know, I've been experimenting, I did recently a workshop for Israeli Jews and Palestinians to work with their legacy burdens. And we found that we could do that collectively. We could help people unburden as a group and I, you know, I would love to try to scale that so that we could have large groups of people collectively releasing these legacy burdens that are really what's at the heart of so many conflicts around the world that are being fought about traumas that happened centuries earlier. So, it's that, it's that kind of bringing more and more Self is just really the key.

Lexi: That would be incredible. I really hope we can be doing those larger scale unburdenings. And I just love this section going along with all of this, just love the section in the book where you talk about the work that you're doing with training social activists to lead from Self, and you just give a transcript of a wonderful session that you did with someone that really kind of resulted in a vastly

improved ability for him to advocate for what he believed and from a place of curiosity and connectedness rather than from protective hearts. Another piece.

Dick: Yeah. That is the other thing. The more Self we bring in the more we see that people, even people that do terrible things, they have their own, their own histories as to why they're in those roles. And our goal is to stay...We might have to stop them like we were talking about with the anorexic part, but we can do it from an open heart and stay curious and try to help them heal to.

Anibal: Dick, I also loved the way you finish your book. If I may quote you again, you say “in the process I've found, and worked with several parts of myself, the one who uses my father's voice to hector me about how unscientific all this is, the one who worries that I'm being too grandiose with all of these major pronouncements about the world and how it could be, and the one who still doubts the reality of the inner world, despite decades of evidence.” Are these your empiricist or scientist parts talking, and do you feel towards them, Dick?

Dick: I love those parts. I think part of the reason that, I don't know, I was chosen to bring this, is because of those parts, because they give me more credibility and they actually made me test everything. You know, not believe it just because it happened one time. But so, even though they still can get in the way at times, I still value them and wouldn't want to change them too much.

Lexi: I love how you say, I guess maybe this is from your father, but to follow the data, even when it takes you outside your paradigm. And you've really done that.

Anibal: That's it, yes.

Dick: Yeah. I think that's what I'm proudest of because there were lots of parts that didn't want to go here at all.

Anibal: Dick, The IFS Annual Conferences is back coming this October fully online. So, the first ever virtual IFS annual conference, the conference is called *Restoring Wholeness Through Collective Transformation*. So, this title draws from the vision and purpose of IFS as described in your new book *No Bad Parts*. You say “healing in IFS means wholeness and reconnection. As we transform individually, we help to bring collective healing”. So, is this purpose of the collective healing being accomplished in the conference program this year?

Dick: You know, I would like to think we're taking a step in that direction. What I'm proudest of is how many people from all over the world and from very different ethnic groups will be not only participating, but also presenting. And it's just very heartwarming to me to see that starting to take place more and more. And yeah, it's become much more of a global phenomenon that we have in many, many countries and many countries that exists in oppressive systems as well, and, you know, Self, sort of automatically fights oppression. And again, we just want to bring the critical mass. So, anyway, I think the conference will be very exciting and I appreciate you bringing it up.

Anibal: Thank you, Dick, so much for another great conversation. It was a joy to be here with you and Lexi, and we hope we can keep meeting and sharing this model, wonderful model, our work and our lives.

Lexi: Dick, thank you.

Dick: Well, thanks again. I agree. It's been a wonderful conversation and I am so grateful for you guys to bring this to the community. So, I want to support you as much as I can.