

The Gifts of our Protectors and Direct Access with Paul Neustadt

Today on IFS Talks we're so happy to be welcoming back Paul Neustadt for a talk on protectors. Paul Neustadt is an IFS co-lead trainer, an AAMFT Approved Supervisor. He has a private practice in Arlington, Massachusetts, where he specializes in couples' therapy, parent coaching and IFS consultation. For 17 years he was the director of a community counseling and prevention program for children, adolescents and families. He's taught couples and family therapy at a Family Therapy Institute and in two graduate programs. As an IFS trainer, Paul creates a safe and accepting atmosphere attending thoughtfully to group process and making sure that all parts are welcome. He teaches the IFS model with a clear down to earth approach and open-hearted manner.

Tisha Shull: Paul, thank you so much for being with us and speaking on this really interesting topic today.

Paul Neustadt: Well, thank you for that welcome Tisha. I'm very happy to be back here with the two of you.

Anibal Henriques: Welcome back, Paul. We did two episodes together before. On the first one in 2019, we focused on Self-lead parenting. And then in May 2020, we focused on the gifts of our exiles. Two beautiful and very helpful episodes, I would say. Now you want to focus on our protectors, young as they usually are, that you say may need Explicit Direct Access for their gifts to be identified and celebrated. So, Paul, can we start off with some IFS basics? Could you share please your perspective on protectors, what are protectors, and do we really need them?

Paul: So, Anibal, before I jump into that, I need to share something. As I was preparing for this podcast, I got in touch with a part of me who was having a concern about what I was going to be talking about, how I would be talking. This part had a concern about, I don't know, how I would be coming across, what I would be saying. And initially it felt to me like a part with an old burden, this is a part that was afraid, ever afraid to ever take a stand in anything, ever commit myself to take any positions that could be challenged.

Anibal: Okay.

Paul: A very young part. And where it came from is, I had an older brother who was very, very smart and used to argue a lot with my father and could be very critical. And I was very intimidated by this older brother. So, I was afraid, you know, to take strong stands. Because I was afraid of my father and I was afraid of my older brother and I was afraid that I could be challenged and criticized, and I wouldn't be able to defend myself. So, initially I thought, okay, so here's this part who was coming up and afraid. Like, I'm going to say things that could be challenged, but then I said, wait a minute, let me listen to this. Maybe there's something more here. Maybe there's something valuable to me to listen to this part that has this concern. And as I listened to it more closely, I realized that actually this part is a protector. This part was

trying to protect me from something. I realized that this part itself had a gift for me. And the gift that I got from listening to this part was that it's really worried about the power of words, the power of people making statements and the impossible impact that those statements could have on people, particularly when they come from like an authority figure. And, you know, when they come from teachers and how people try to fit themselves into someone else's teachings and particularly when they don't feel like they really fit. So, what people really need maybe is guidance to find what fits for them rather than to have to fit themselves into somebody else's teachings.

Tisha: How did this apply for you for this protector?

Paul: I guess for me, that's been something I've needed to do in my live, right? I needed to find my own way and I guess that's what I want for other people. You know. So, what I want to communicate is that I'm going to be sharing today my way, what I found has worked for me, and I want people as they are listening, to say, okay, well, this is what worked for Paul, you know, and maybe it won't work for you. So, I guess what I want for people is when someone teaches a framework, to use that framework as guidance, but ultimately to find your own way within that guidance. So, I just want, this was just an example of listening to a protector and listening deeply, like, what's the gift here for me as I've listened deeply to this part.

Anibal: Well illustrated. So, coming to your perspective, what is your perspective on protectors?

Paul: Well, so Dick has said that all of our parts are sacred beings, and I take that very seriously. And in fact, I see myself as a spiritual being, living in a human body. And I feel like I have a soul who has incarnated into this life and to this human life. And my soul expresses itself through my parts, through how I live my life, through my parts, all my parts. So, all of my parts have a role in how I live my life, and I need all of them. And, because of the nature of life, parts have to take on certain roles and some of them are extreme roles, right? So, what we've learned in the IFS model, which makes sense to me is that protectors had to take on protective roles. They had to protect us from the dangers of life. And so, they either had to help us survive, to help us just survive the dangers of life or to manage our life. So, protectors include firefighters or managers, right? So, they either had to, like in a crisis, to jump in and manage, you know, handle a crisis situation or manage our life ongoing, on a daily basis. But, you know, they help us, they protect us from dangers, from bad things happening and they manage us so that we can survive and live our lives. So, absolutely we could not live without these parts of ourselves.

Anibal: Beautiful. So, we really need them.

Paul: Yeah. And, we tend to become more aware of them when they're triggered. And if they're not triggered, then maybe we're not so aware of them when they are unburdened from their more extreme roles and, you know, protectors just like exiles have a more natural role to play.

The Gifts of our Protectors and Direct Access with Paul Neustadt

And just like we want to liberate exiles from their burdens, we really want to liberate protectors from their burdens, burden of those extreme roles that they're playing and whatever other burden they're carrying and help them return to their true nature. And whether they want to continue to play a role or not, and they can just be kind of integrated into the harmony of our being. And so, when that happens, we might not be that aware of them anymore because they're just kind of naturally playing their role.

Anibal: Paul, you say that Direct Access is an underappreciated and an underutilized way of working in IFS. You also say so many IFS therapists feel like they are failing when they can't get their clients to unblend and don't realize they have such a wonderful way to work with these clients available to them. So, what is this Direct Access, and in particular Explicit Direct Access on your perspective?

Paul: Well, I think most people come out of a level one without much understanding of Direct Access and how to really how to do it. And that makes sense because, you know, our main focus is really on Insight and learning how to guide clients to go inside. And that takes a lot of time to learn that way of working. But Direct Access, I think is an essential skill. We just come out of level when we don't really know how to do it. And, inevitably, then people come out and they think the way that we do IFS is going inside. So, I teach a seminar for people who graduate from level one. And I also lead consultation groups. So, you know, a lot of people who come out of level one, feel like they are not doing IFS and feel like they're not being a good IFS therapist if they're not getting people to go inside. And so, they don't realize that there are clients who really need to be using Direct Access for periods of time. And that that's a wonderful tool, and they're still doing IFS if they're doing Direct Access.

Anibal: Okay. So, this difficulty or underappreciation comes out of this overvaluing of Insight, as I'm hearing you.

Paul: Well, I don't think it's overvaluing of Insight. I think it's just not appreciating that there's this other way of working that is also valuable and important.

Anibal: Okay. Makes sense. And also, maybe we are not enough trained using this tool, the Direct Access.

Paul: Yes. So, I think if people take the Deepening and Expanding level 2, there's more about Direct Access. Even there, I still don't think they get enough. So, I've taught a two-day workshop, two full days on Direct Access. I also did a seminar in Direct Access, which was four monthly meetings...

Anibal: Beautiful.

Paul: ...three hours each on Direct Access. So, I mean, I think it needs a lot of time because I think it's very challenging. And so, I think it needs time for people to really practice it and develop the skill. Just like, you know, maybe we give lots of time for the Insight in the protocol. We need to also give a lot of time for Direct Access.

Anibal: Yeah. Yes.

Tisha: Paul, can you describe for our listeners what the difference is, what Direct Access is for people who might not know?

Paul: Sure. So, Direct Access is when the therapist is talking directly to the client's parts, rather than guiding the client from Self to talk to their own parts. And there are two kinds of Direct Access. So, Implicit Direct Access is when I, as the therapist, I'm talking to my client's parts, but I'm not naming that. I don't name that part. I just maintain that awareness to myself. Oh, my client seems to be in an angry part of them. And then I might notice, oh, they've shifted, that angry part seems to have calmed down. Now it seems they've shifted into a part who seems more guilty. I'm noticing some guilt coming up. It sounds like there's a guilty part that's just taking them over. So, I'm noticing shifts. And now I realize, okay, now I'm talking to a different part of them. With Explicit Direct Access I name to the client, "Oh, it sounds like you're blended with this particular part of you. How about if we just let that part be blended and ask it to just talk directly to me." So, it's an agreement that I make with the client to just let that happen and have a conversation directly with me. And, so, that makes it explicit that the client and I know and agree that this is what's happened.

Anibal: Beautiful. And Paul, Direct Access can be helpful with any parts in our system, right?

Paul: Exactly.

Anibal: So, be it an exile, a manager, or a firefighter. Would you recommend any adaptation of this technique as you work with different parts? Do different parts really require different Direct Access approaches?

Paul: Yeah. Great question, Anibal. So, if I want to do Direct Access, let's say with a firefighter, firefighters are often polarized with managers. And so, oftentimes in order to do Direct Access with a firefighter, I probably need to get permission from a protector. And there is a technique and unfortunately, I don't remember who I've learned this from. I wish I could give credit to the trainer who I learned this approach from, but I just don't remember. You use three chairs, you know, you have the client in three different chairs. So, there's this chair that they're sitting in, and then there's a chair on either side of them. And so, you have the polarized parts sitting, you know, so what you do is you take turns doing Direct Access with the two different polarized parts. So, you might have them switch to the chair on their right to be, let's say the manager,

and then switch to the chair on the left to be the firefighter. And you take turns doing Explicit Direct Access with the manager and the firefighter.

Anibal: Beautiful.

Paul: You're doing a polarization Direct Access.

Anibal: Amazing.

Paul: Yeah. That would be so valuable because you're, as the therapist, bringing your Self, your curiosity, your compassion to these parts that get really locked in place.

Paul: Yes. Yeah. And so, you might do that when the client doesn't have enough Self-energy to do that work themselves. And so, you start that process for them, by talking with those two parts that are so polarized. And then you bring the client's Self in as part of the process. So, I might start by, you know, let's say I start with a manager and I do some explicit Direct Access with a manager and then I bring in the client's Self and see if the client's Self is able to then respond to the manager and then I'll say, "okay, now can we talk with the firefighter part?" So, then we'll bring the firefighter part in, and I'll talk to the firefighter part, then I'll come back to the client's Self, ask "okay, now can you respond to the firefighter?" And then we'll see, can we bring both firefighter and manager back together? Can we have a three-way conversation?

Anibal: Beautiful. And if it's an exile, if you do Direct Accessed to an exile, it's such a different approach, right?

Paul: So, if an exile has gotten blended, I want to just start talking to the exile. And so, it depends. Sometimes I'm just going to start talking to the client, sometimes I'll say, "okay, so this is a very young part of you, I'm just going to start talking to this young part of you." And my goal in that case, because, at that point, my assumption is that that young part is back in the past. So, I'm talking to a young part who is in some situation in the past. They're not in the present moment. They've been suddenly transported back into the past. And so, my goal at that point is to help them overcome the sense that they're alone in the past, they're all by themselves in some horrible situation, they're all alone. And so, my goal then is to help them feel that I'm there with them and to help them feel my presence with them, to help them feel seen and understood. And, you know, "you're not alone there, I'm here, right here with you and I understand, feel me with you, let me know what you're experiencing, what's going on?" So, I want them to feel me, you know, right there connecting with them, understanding what they're experiencing. So, once I have that connection with them, once they feel felt by me, understood by me, you know, then I will say, "I'm feeling like you're calming down a little bit."

Anibal: Yes.

Paul: They're calming down because there's somebody there with them. Then I'll say, "would you like to have this connection with..." So, say I'm talking to you Aníbal... I'll say, "would you like to have this connection with Aníbal as well?"

Aníbal: Yeah. So, you bring the client's Self as well.

Paul: Yeah. "Because I can't always be with you, but Aníbal could, would you like to be able to have this same kind of connection with Aníbal? Can we make space for Aníbal to be here...? You know, we can have your grown-up Self here with you as well. So, can we do that? Can we bring Aníbal here? Can we make space for him to be here with you? Would you like that?" And then, so I'll try then to bring you back to be with this little exile of yours.

Aníbal: Coming back to the gifts of protectors, coming back to the protectors, you say you have been helping clients identify the gifts of the protectors on the road to identifying the gifts of their exiles and finding that this is a powerful way to connect with the protectors and help them transform into allies. So, what are those gifts of the protectors and how do you help clients identify those gifts?

Paul: Yeah. So, I want to give you a few examples first. So, I guess I want to give you an example, you know, I shared one example and I want to tell you another one.

Aníbal: Thank you.

Paul: So, one of my exiles was a really young part who became really frozen in response to my father's unpredictable rages, really scary, frightening rages. And I had a really hard time accessing this part of me. He was so frozen, was really hard to access him, but, you know, with a lot of patience, I was finally getting some connection, but then something happened. One of the things that I was doing in trainings was we would do a demo in the training with my other co-lead trainer. We wanted to show people the whole unburdening process. So, one of us would be the client and, you know, one of us would be the therapist and my colleague and I were having an issue with that point. It was just not a good time for me to be the client at that point, because we were in the middle of an issue between us.

Aníbal: It happens, yes.

Paul: And I also, usually when we would do that, I would pick an exile who I had already unburdened. So, the exile had already been unburdened and so, I could ask the exile, you know, since you've already had been unburdened, would this be okay to go through it again? But this exile had not yet been fully unburdened. But it was kind of very up for me, this exile. So, I thought, some part of me thought... Because the exile is very alive in this moment, maybe this would be a good time to do it in this training. So, I went ahead and did this demo and it didn't go well.

Anibal: In what way?

Paul: Well, I felt like the person being my therapist wasn't doing a good job of being attuned to what was happening with this exile. And I think it was because we were not in a good place with each other.

Anibal: Yeah. It makes sense.

Paul: And so, it didn't work well because that person and I were not in a good place.

Anibal: There was not enough Self.

Paul: [inaudible]...fear with the attunement. So, it was really bad judgment on my part. Anyway. So, later when I went back to reconnect with this exile, I met up with a protector who was furious with me. The protector would not let me near this frozen part. The protector said to me, "you know, you betrayed this young frozen part, you should never have done this." Well, of course this protector was right. It was right. It was a totally stupid thing for me to do. It was poor judgment. And so, this protector was confronting me on my poor judgment. And it told me that I would have to repair this rupture, I would have to reconnect every day, I'd have to like every day sit with the protector and the exile consistently for a long period of time, I'd have to show up every day for a long period of time to prove that I was trustworthy in order to repair this. So, consistency had been a problem for me, like really showing up every day consistently for myself. So, this protector was doing two things. One, was forcing me to identify the part of me that had such bad judgment. The part of me that was willing to betray myself. So, I had to identify that part and work with it. And then secondly, it was pushing me to be consistent when that had been an issue for me.

Anibal: There's the wisdom.

Tisha: Yeah.

Paul: So, wow. Two amazing things that this protector got me to do that were so important in my system.

Anibal: So, protectors are not always wrong, right?

Paul: This was a very helpful protector.

Anibal: Yes.

Paul: I am so grateful for that protector because he confronted me in a very helpful way.

Anibal: Beautiful.

Paul: I ended up calling that protector my clear seeing truth-teller.

Anibal: Say it again, please.

Paul: Clear seeing... It saw things very clearly and it told me the truth.

Anibal: Beautiful.

Paul: Yeah. It was telling me the truth about myself.

Anibal: That's the gift

Paul: And saw things clearly and got me to do work that I needed to do. It got me to repair a rupture and I was able to reconnect with that young exile.

Anibal: So here we are when protectors are right.

Tisha: I love that too, because consistency in the relationship really is essential to build trust. And it was asking you for that.

Paul: Yeah.

Anibal: You also say, then you recruit them, the protectors, to form an inner healing circle. What is this healing circle and how do we get there?

Paul: So that's a great question. Can I give you two more examples of gifts of protectors and then I want to talk about the healing circle.

Anibal: Oh, wonderful.

Paul: So, I had a client who had a part that when he was working with a client would be very critical of him and tell him he was full of..." you're bullshitting, you're not..." You know, it was a part that was really critical of him. And it was critical of the client, critical of him, the client's bullshitting you, you're bullshitting the client. It was a really critical part. And he felt really bad. You know, his initial reaction was to feel bad about himself. Like, "I'm such a bad therapist." It was just taking to heart what this inner critic part was... Because it was, you know, just telling you're just bullshitting every... You know. So, I encouraged him to really listen to this part and take it seriously. "What does this part mean when it says you're bullshitting?" And when he listens more clearly, what he got was that this part was telling him, "you're abandoning yourself."

You're not being true to yourself.” And he said, “well, it's true, I am abandoning myself. I'm not being true to myself.”

Anibal: So much wisdom on our protectors, right?

Paul: So, another example, if you go deeper, if you listen more deeply sometimes to what a protector is saying, what's at the heart of this. Let me go deeper. What's at the root of what this protector is saying here. Sometimes there's some wisdom there, there's something important there. And so, there was a truth there in what this protector was saying that was really important for this client. Another client... These were both therapists who were coming to me for consultation. So, this is someone who had a part who was judging her pretty harshly. And then when she listened to this part really deeply again, what she found out was this part was letting her know what her learning edge was. What'd she had to be working on both with a client and in her own life. And she said she felt like the part was seeing her really accurately. So anyway, back to your question about the healing circle.

Anibal: The healing circle.

Paul: So, in my mind, a healing circle is a group in which the members share an intention to support the healing of the members. By directing loving, healing energies, towards that purpose, towards the healing of the members. And often they take turns having one member be the focus of that healing energy.

Anibal: Paul, when you say healing energy, you could say the Self in those parts?

Paul: Yes. So, from an IFS perspective, we could say Self-energy. So, over 20 years ago, 23 years ago, when my sister was dying of cancer, she was part of a Sufi healing circle. So, I accompanied her one day to this healing circle and I sat in the middle of the healing circle with her.

Tisha: Beautiful.

Paul: It was palpable. You could feel the energy being directed. They were directing it towards me as well.

Anibal: So amazing.

Paul: And it was palpable, you could feel it, you could feel the energy that people were directing towards us.

Anibal: So here you are using all the Self present in the system for healing purpose.

Paul: You know, in level one trainings, when people do a demo, we encourage people to send Self-energy to the client or the client and the therapist in the middle. You could say that's a healing circle.

Anibal: Oh yeah.

Paul: Because, our intention is to surround everyone who's doing that demo with Self-energy.

Tisha: It feels like that the demos are so profound in that way.

Paul: Yeah.

Anibal: So, protectors can be present as well.

Paul: Yes. So, I remember being in the middle of one of those demos and yeah, it's a very powerful feeling to be in the middle of that energy. I take seriously that protectors also have Self-energy and they can access Self-energy. And so my goal is to not just invite them to move to the side, not just to say, can you get out of our way, but to recruit them to become an inner healing circle so that they're using their energy, they're accessing Self-energy, their Self-energy, and adding to the Self-energy internally to support the exile and support healing the exile.

Anibal: Paul, do you think it's possible that spending time with protectors that they can start healing before you get into the exiles work?

Paul: Yeah. I believe that the protectors begin to transform. I think that's already healing. Yeah. I wonder if we could, you know, one of the best ways to learn this is to illustrate it. And so, I wonder if we could take a little time to do that.

Tisha: Yeah, let's do a little bit of a demo. I know we talked about that beforehand and I'm happy to volunteer.

Paul: Okay. So, Tisha, do you have a protective part of you in mind?

Tisha: Yeah, I do. It's a critic similar to the one you described with your therapist that you're doing consultation with. I have a critic that I've been curious about slash annoyed with lately. So, that's the one that I'm kind of bringing to this.

Paul: Okay, great. So, would you be okay with that part talking directly with me?

Tisha: Yeah. I think there's some parts that are concerned about that. This critic can be quite mean. And I think there's some parts, it feels like there's parts that are worried that people will think that I'm as mean as this critic is.

Paul: So, what do those parts need around doing this demo around that concern?

Tisha: Well, those parts sort of, they almost want a governor on the critic, but then another part's like that wouldn't be very authentic if I limited the critic's ability to say and do what it does, I guess it feels okay to speak for the parts that are worried. And yeah, we can see how it goes.

Paul: Okay. Well, I understand. I just want to say, I want to acknowledge the parts that have that concern. Yeah, it makes sense to me they would be worried about what will, you know, people hear a mean part of me, will people judge me for that meanness? Yeah. I can understand that concern.

Tisha: Yeah. The critic internally is, and this is another part talking, but it says things to me that I would never say. And that brings up sadness as I say that.

Paul: Yeah. I guess what I want to say to you, Tisha, is I'm imagining listeners who have mean critics who might be listening and be relieved to know that they're not the only ones with a mean critic.

Tisha: Yeah, no, it's true. It does feel like a universal part. Really, I know, I've seen so many critics in clients, but there are parts that always feel like, you know, mine's the worst or the most...

Paul: Yeah. Well, anything else they need in order to be okay with doing this?

Tisha: I guess just to say that it might be vulnerable, and I have other parts that have some feelings, like if I were to cry or to be sad. I have some other parts that feel like that's feeling. Yeah. There're some parts up, but also a real willingness and curiosity to have you do some Direct Access with this critic.

Paul: It could be vulnerable. Yeah. Well, so if parts start to get concerned, I'm open to, you know, anything that they're needing to let us know at some point.

Tisha: Yeah. So, we can pace it and...

Paul: Yes. And they can interrupt you if they need to.

Tisha: Perfect.

Paul: Okay. So just check and see if they're okay to go ahead.

Tisha: Yeah. It feels all right. As I'm preparing to get in touch with the critic and let it speak, the part that's concerned is like, okay, I warned you.

Paul: Okay. So, the part that Tisha's calling the critic, are you there? Are you willing to speak with me?

Tisha: Yeah. I'm right here.

Paul: Yeah. And would you like to talk to me?

Tisha: Sure. Yeah. I'm open to that.

Paul: I would really like to get to know you and I'd like to know anything that you would like me to hear and maybe things that... I'm wondering, maybe things that would be good for Tisha to hear out loud about you and how you're trying to help her.

Tisha: Yeah. I want you to know that I kind of take over her body, really try to heighten its sensation and intensity. I give her a bit of a, you know, like a nervous edge so that she can pay attention.

Paul: Okay. So, you're trying to get her to really pay attention.

Tisha: Oh yeah. Yeah. Sure.

Paul: Can you say more about that? How come that's so important that you're trying to get her to pay attention.

Tisha: I'm trying to heighten the details within the movements of her body and kind of what she does, mostly physically, so that she won't screw up.

Paul: Yeah. Okay.

Tisha: But she screws up anyway, especially when I'm present. She doesn't do what I want her to do.

Paul: Ok. So, in spite of your efforts, she screws up. And it sounds like you are almost saying like, as hard as I try, it sounds like she screws up even more, the harder I try, the more she screws up almost?

Tisha: Yeah. You got it. It's true. Yeah. I'm here to help her be acute and to achieve perfection and she just fails and flops and... Yeah. She's kind of a flop.

Paul: Wow. And what made you decide you had to work with her body? You know, like get her to be so... Like this nervous energy and detailed...Like, what made you decide you had to do that, do it that way?

Tisha: That's really where I come on board when she's trying to do physical things, like dance or climb. And she's always pushing the envelope of these new physical tasks and she's trying really hard. So, I come in and assert that she does well and does better, but she's constantly not good at the thing she's trying.

Paul: Okay. So, what is it that you really want for her? What do you most want for her?

Tisha: I want her to... I was going to say be the best, but that doesn't feel right, but I want her to not suck.

Paul: Yeah. What are you concerned happens when she sucks?

Tisha: Well, she'll be judged and maybe it'll feel like she'll get in trouble. Excluded, she'll be kicked out.

Paul: How long have you had this job for her?

Tisha: Feels like late elementary school.

Paul: Yeah. So, was there a part of her, was she getting excluded and kicked out and judged in late elementary school?

Tisha: Yeah. I can remember a scene where that was... Yeah, where I kind of came in and took over her body to make her more... I tried to protect her. I tried to push her and motivate her.

Paul: Yeah. Wow. So, you've had this job ever since then, working really hard to try to push her and motivate her. Yeah.

Tisha: And yeah, I'm not, I don't really appreciate her actually

Paul: You don't appreciate her.

Tisha: No.

Paul: Say more.

Tisha: Yeah. She just works against me, works against herself.

Paul: Is there a particular part of her that you're concerned about that works against you and herself?

Tisha: Yeah. It's the part that gives up.

Paul: Yeah. There's a part of her who gives up.

Tisha: Yeah.

Paul: Tell me about that part of her who gives up.

Tisha: Yes. Sometimes when she's trying to, I don't know, climb a rock wall or, you know, she just reaches a point where... Or she's dancing in front of someone, this part comes in and is like, "just forget it, it's not worth it, don't try."

Paul: And then what do you do when that part comes in?

Tisha: I usually try to take over her body, try to give her some heightened intensity. I try to kind of shame her and to keep on going.

Paul: How does that work?

Tisha: Not great. Usually the giving up wins and yeah, she's sort of known for not completing things. Not following through. But if it were up to me, she would push and push through. Yeah.

Paul: So, I'm wondering how would it be if we could help Tisha work with that part of her, the part who gives up, would you like it if Tisha could work with that part of her?

Tisha: Oh yeah, definitely. Especially if it would just stop giving up.

Paul: Well, I don't know if we could, you know, I don't know what would happen, but it sounds like a different part of her that we might be able to... So, one of the things I'm appreciating is you've maybe helped her already identify a different part that. That might be helpful for her to be aware of that other part. So, I'm just appreciating you for that. And it sounds like, do you feel like Tisha appreciates you at all?

Tisha: It feels like in this moment, Paul, of talking to you, there's a little bit of appreciation, understanding and space that I'm getting, but in general, no.

Paul: Yeah. So, I'm guessing you have some gifts for her, and I'm wondering what would you feel are your gifts for Tisha?

Tisha: I really bring her into her body and it's a little bit of a mental mind body where, you know, there's my voice is critiquing the body, but I do drop her in and make her aware of her feet and her fingers. And, another gift that I have is that I really don't want her to get in trouble or fail. And yeah, I really try to keep her aware of all the things that could make her feel [inaudible].

Paul: So, it sounds like you also have a sensitivity to the pain of failing, you know, like you jumped in when she was going through such a hard time, that's when you took on your job. So, I'm feeling like you have this sensitivity to those feelings.

Tisha: That feels true. Yeah.

Paul: What it might be like if you were able to help her be strong enough to bear those feelings, because that's part of life, it's part of life to have feelings like that. And you have a lot of energy and strength. I'm just aware of how strong you are. You push. All that pushing and energy you have. What if you could use all that energy and strength to help her bear some of those feelings to be strong enough to bear them now that she's grown up. So, she wouldn't have to give up. Right? Because you have the strength, you have all this strength. What if that's one of your gifts?

Tisha: Yeah. It feels hopeful. That feels hopeful.

Paul: And the part of you that you're reacting to, you know, this part of her that suffered in elementary school, how would it be if we could go back and rescue that part that did feel so terrible? How would you like that?

Tisha: Yeah, it feels like she needs it. It also feels a little scary.

Paul: Would you like to help with that?

Tisha: Yeah, if I can.

Paul: You could. Yeah, absolutely. You could help by being part of an inner healing circle, you could bring your energy to help be part of an inner healing circle and we could bring Tisha and me and you, and we could go back and rescue that young Tisha from that time and bring her into the present. Would you like to help us with that?

Tisha: Yeah. As you were saying all of that, like this scene of younger me is expanding in my mind.

Paul: Right. So how would it be if we could bring grown-up Tisha back and see if maybe she could appreciate you more for what you've been doing, would you like to have a better relationship with her?

Tisha: Of course. Yeah. It's really tiring for me to rip on her all the time and I have to come up with all these new ways and it's a lot of energy to take over her body.

Paul: Is there something you would rather be doing if you didn't have to rip on her?

Tisha: Yeah, I would rather, like you said, give her strength to just be more of herself, whether she's climbing or dancing or napping, just to allow her to just be where she is it all of it.

Paul: Okay. So, let's bring her back, stay close and I'll just invite her to come back. Okay. Tisha are you there?

Tisha: Yeah, I'm here.

Paul: So, I'm wondering, how do you feel towards having listened to this part of you?

Tisha: I have a really deep appreciation for how young it was and has been. Like, I feel like I have still a little bit of trepidation with it because we have a long history together, but it does feel that there's a little more openness in my heart towards it, and tenderness. There was a point in time where I realized that you were talking to it, like you would talk to a child. You know, you just kind of got on the parts level and the awareness of that really gave me enough space to think like, well, this critic is working really hard and it's got the tools of like a 12 year old who was really criticized herself. Yeah. So that was, that was really cool, Paul, thank you.

Paul: So, you know, if this was a real-life thing, I would keep working with you with this part. But does that feel like an okay place to...

Tisha: Yeah, absolutely. And I can see the exile as clear as day.

Paul: You want to just take a moment with this critic and just see if there's anything else that you need to say to it and it needs to say to you?

Tisha: I just want to let it know that I'm here with it and it just responded to me "I don't want to hurt you."

Paul: So, Tisha, it did say that you have this part that gives up. Does that make sense to you?

Tisha: Oh yeah. It's like the critic brings me into the red and then the other parts, just like, Ugh.

Paul: Yeah. So, it's almost like there's maybe a polarization or there's some relationship between the two. Yeah.

Tisha: Yeah.

Paul: Okay. So, anything else you want to say about that demo?

Tisha: Yeah. I appreciate the time and space. You never know what's going to come up and it's always so helpful. Yeah. I think I have parts that are worried if it was a good enough example of Direct Access or I don't know, you know, there's other critics.

Paul: Yeah. I thought it was great. Aníbal, how about you? What was it like for you to witness?

Aníbal: It was so moving to see Tisha's courage to address those strong and talented parts and such a beautiful illustration. I think it was, so I'm mostly grateful to both of you and moved with Tisha. So beautiful.

Tisha: It was really nice to be the recipient of your Direct Access work, Paul, thank you.

Paul: Yeah, you're welcome. Well, I enjoyed doing it and it just felt like, you know, maybe the best way for it to get across to people.

Tisha: You have a really, really good way of being with these parts.

Paul: Thank you. I'm aware of a part of me who really wants me to convey a couple things to people. One is that Explicit Direct Access can actually be sometimes the most skillful way to facilitate the unblending of a protective part of us. And I believe the reason for that is that it really communicates tremendous respect and appreciation for the protector. It helps a protective part of us really feel seen and heard and appreciated. To the point that this protective part is willing to unblend because it had its say and it really feels appreciated. And the other thing is that it accomplishes some other things, it enables the client to be in a witnessing position and the client is witnessing the therapist's Self seeing the protector through the therapist's eyes of Self. So, it changes the client's perspective on the protector and enables the client to access Self in relation to the protector.

Aníbal: Amazing. Yeah. Makes sense.

Paul: And so, it enables the client to then begin to have more of a relationship with that protector. So, I think it enables there to be a deeper relationship between the client's Self and the protector. And if you go further and then you identify the gift of the protector, then it enables a transformation of that protector. The protector actually begins to shift its own

perception of itself and access its own Self-energy and it opens up for the protector the possibility of shifting its perception of the exile.

Anibal: Okay.

Paul: Once it changes its perception of itself, my experience is it begins to soften its attitude towards the exile.

Anibal: So interesting.

Paul: So, the second thing that I wanted to say is that there are some parts of us that really prefer to be able to speak for themselves, out loud. Yes. Have their own voice. And so, what I guess I wanted to say is that in my own therapy, a lot of times I prefer to work with my part through Explicit Direct Access. And I just wanted to say that, you know, that if there are people out there who find that sometimes they would rather work with their parts by having their parts talk directly to their therapist, there's nothing wrong with that. That's a legitimate way for us to work with our parts sometimes.

Anibal: And allow them to express.

Paul: Yes. Express themselves out loud directly because some of our parts really want that and need that, to talk out loud.

Anibal: Beautiful. Thank you for sharing that. So, Paul, thank you so much for having us. It was a joy to be here with you and Tisha, and hopefully we will meet again soon, and we'll share more of our work and our lives. Maybe next time, Paul, we'll talk on the relationship of soul and Self and being very human, you say. Maybe...

Paul: Yeah, that would be great. I do want to just let people know I will be doing a workshop on the gifts of our exiles. And in that workshop, I do also talk about this, in the work we did today. As part of that, I do that. I'm going to be doing that with Derek Scott in Canada. That's not until February, but just to give a heads up for that.

Tisha: Is that in person?

Paul: That'll be on zoom.

Tisha: Oh good. So, people could sign up for it anywhere in the world. Thank you so much.

Paul: Thank you.