

WHEN “SELF” BECOMES AN EMOTIONAL BYPASS WITH PAM KRAUSE

Today on IFS Talks, we are interviewing and welcoming back Pam Krause. Pam Krause is a senior lead trainer for the IFS Institute and has been leading levels one, two and three IFS trainings since 2005. Pam adapted the IFS model for use with children and adolescents and has created both onsite and online trainings on the topic. Pam is in private practice in Mechanicsburg, PA, and today we are speaking with her on the topic of the weaponization of Self.

Tisha Shull: Pam, thank you so much for joining us once again and being here with us today.

Pam Krause: Well, thank you, Tisha. It's great to be with both of you.

Aníbal Henriques: So, welcome back, Pam. It's been almost two years now, since we recorded your first episode on IFS with children, adolescents and parents. So much going on since then, the world changed so much, right? How have you been those days?

Pam: Wow. I'm thinking back to that because an awful lot has happened in two years. I've been good, trying to survive the pandemic the same way everyone else is, you know, busy with IFS because, you know, the IFS Institute is really focusing on broadening the lens through which the model views the world. And I've been a part of that project. I'm not exactly sure how I've been in the last two years, honestly, to tell you the truth, so much has happened, so much has happened with the pandemic. In fact, Aníbal, I was with you right at the beginning of it while I was doing a level one with you...

Aníbal: Yeah. Right at the beginning.

Pam: In Portugal. And on my way back, I had to certify that I had not been to China in the two weeks prior to flying. So, that was really just the beginning of it. So, a lot has changed taking IFS trainings online, finding that it works pretty well. You know, it works pretty well to do them in person and online, and just been involved with a lot of other projects with the Institute because IFS is becoming such a...there's so much demand for learning the model that the Institute's working hard to get people up to speed, to be lead trainers. So, I've been working on a project to help speed up that process and also a project to help with diversity, equity and inclusion and expanding the IFS model beyond the traditional white lens that we've always viewed it through into a more multicultural multi-racial lens on the world.

Aníbal: So needed, yeah.

Pam: So, it's been an exciting time, actually.

Aníbal: Pam, the central and core medicine in IFS is for both therapist and client to find and stay in Self with a capital S. We all look for that magic energy capable of deep love, acceptance and transformation. That means to stay in a loving, open and accepting state of calmness, compassion, confidence, curiosity, connectedness, creativity, and clarity and courage as well. Also recommended that we therapists stay in a state of playfulness to keep perspective, patience, persistence, perseverance.

So, you say we sometimes weaponize Self, meaning you say how in IFS, especially in the trainings, but not solely there, we use the concept of being in Self to try to force any emotion away. What do you mean by that? What emotions are we forcing away and why do we force them?

Pam: Yeah. So, let me first start by saying that I want to acknowledge this term, the weaponization of Self. I got that from a young woman whose name is Natalie Gutierrez. Who's an IFS practitioner. And she used that term and it really, really got me thinking about something in a different way. And that is this concept of what does it mean to be in Self? And what does it mean to be Self-lead, right. So, what I mean by that is when we talk about all those things that you read Aníbal, it's like that's in Self, right? And there's a certain...well to my system it feels like there's a certain rigidity around that. Like I'm either in Self or I'm not in Self and I'm bad if I'm not in Self and I'm good if I'm in Self, right. And the truth is for most of us, I'll speak, especially for myself here, is I'm not ever really in Self if I'm engaging in the external world. And that, really what we're looking for in this model is to be Self-lead, meaning the Self is there in relationship with the parts. So, we're not trying to exile parts or force them away. The goal of the therapy is really to develop this natural flowing relationship between the parts and the Self, which is when we, which is when we really thrive, right. The Self without parts is not good because we're in a... I don't know, have either of you ever like experienced being what you would call in Self? I'd be really curious to know what that's like. Because that doesn't really happen for me.

Tisha: I find that really at the trainings and in certain, maybe spiritual context, there is like this energetic shift that makes...it's almost like a subtle vibration and it feels really good. I haven't found that really outside of the trainings.

Pam: Yeah. Yeah.

Tisha: That's maybe the closest that I could tap into.

Pam: Aníbal, do you...

Aníbal: For me, you know, I'm always striving with these therapist parts that want to help and fix my clients. And so, always balancing among being a full acceptant Self or being in parts that

want really to change something. That's my, that's the trouble sometimes. It's tricky, so...for me.

Pam: Yeah. And so, you know, and Tisha, when you say that, I think like sometimes...I don't meditate a lot, but sometimes when I do, I can get in that state, but as soon as I need to interact with someone it's gone, right. Because it is...for me anyway, and this is what's really hard about this you all, is that it's so hard to talk about the Self because to apply linear language to something that's so multi-dimensional is really difficult. So, I'm saying all this from my own internal perspective and anybody, you know, I really invite anybody who's listening just to be curious about their experience of this. But to engage I need some of my parts around, right?

Aníbal: And also, in Portuguese, there is no direct translation for Self. It's another trouble.

Pam: Right, right. So, that's why this, for a long time, I've been thinking about this notion about when we tell people, you know, we want to be in Self when we're, I don't know, especially when we're doing therapy, right. But also, in regular life, you know, it's much better if I'm not totally blended with some part of me that would like to strangle my husband when he does something minor, you know. It's much better if that one's not totally blended with me when he does some little minor offense but...

Aníbal: You shouldn't.

Pam: Can you relate...Yeah. So, and just the amount of, well, think about it, if you think about being in Self versus being in parts, right. Either in Self or blended. I'm in Self or I'm blended, right. That's a polarization, right. That's a duality, that's not a concept that would resonate with the Self. That's only a concept that would resonate with parts, right. Only parts see things as either or, right. And so, for me, it's always been much more helpful to think about unblending as not an all or nothing thing, but the parts can be anywhere from a 100% percent blended to 0% blended, right? And mostly there's somewhere in between. We just want them unblended enough so that we have some access to our Self-energy. But so, our parts are there as a resource for us, right. Does that make sense?

Aníbal: Yeah. So, Pam, I'm hearing that for you, it looks like there is much value and good in being Self-led instead of just be in Self?

Pam: Yes.

Aníbal: And so, you are also saying that we should be aware that parts don't just unblend from 0 to 100%. What do you mean and how can that help us with the process?

Pam: Well, you know, Aníbal, I'm thinking about what you just said about your therapist parts that really want to help, you know, sometimes you have, right? So, there's a lot of value and a

lot of wisdom and a lot of knowledge in those parts, right. And so, if they're in the driver's seat, if they're totally blended, that's not so good, right. Because I mean, it may not be bad, but it's different, right? It's not IFS. If they're blended, who's ever blended is doing the therapy, but if they're at least somewhat unblended so that we can feel connected to them, then we can take advantage of their wisdom. You know, you have some parts that know an awful lot of stuff about therapy and about helping people. And I always feel like it's, if they're whispering in my ear and saying, have you thought about this, or what about that? Or I'm noticing this, or remember this intervention that we learn, blah, blah. You know, you, it's very different if they're whispering in our ears and we are leading the interaction, we're free to say, "no, I don't want to do that right now", or "that's a really good idea" and speak for that to our clients. That's a much richer therapeutic experience, both for us as the therapist and also for our clients.

Anibal: Ok. So, you are saying it's not black and white, either in parts or in Self. So, Pam, being in parts it's not always to avoid or always a bad thing.

Pam: No, I always, well, how do I want to say it? The more we know our parts, the more we can call on them when I, when we need them, right? Like if I'm walking down a dark alley and someone is trying to rob me, right. I want whatever part I have, that's going to fight back to totally take over and be in charge and make me safe. Right. So, there are times there's some young childlike parts that I love to have blend with me when I'm playing with little kids. Right. They're silly and goofy and fun. So, you know, this notion that being blended is a bad thing is not always true, right. It's the awareness, it's really, as we unburden our parts, we really have a choice about how much we want them to blend and how much we'd like them to unblend. Right. Is that, I don't know if that's making any sense, but...

Tisha: Yes, so there's some consciousness. It's about like being conscious and allowing with kind of some consent. Pam, I am wondering the term weaponization of Self. I haven't heard it before and it's got some weight to it. And so, I'm wondering about if there's like an explicit danger around the weaponization of Self that we need to kind of be aware of and cognizant of.

Pam: Yeah. Yeah. And, again, I want to thank Natalie for that term. And, I am just, I've really only been thinking about this for a couple of months. This is one thing I love about our model, right? It's a living breathing model that just changes. And I've been doing this for 23 years now. And all of a sudden, this whole new concept has popped into my mind about this. And I'm like super busy with it, but, you know, it's, I see this happening some in trainings, but I also see this happening with folks who are really familiar with IFS as they're interacting with each other, right. And this, and it is this belief that I'm...it comes from this, like when I'm in Self, that means I won't react to anything. I'm very like "Om", you know, I don't have any feelings, not, there's no intensity behind anything that I say. And, that's not true because we can be Self-led, right. If you think about this whole percentage of blending, like 0 to a 100% blended, right. I can be speaking for a part and it can be 50% blended, right. Like it's blended with me and I'm feeling some of its intensity, but I'm speaking for it. Right. That person who's hearing me might feel

some of that intensity. And that's when we fall into this sort of weaponization of the Self where people react and say, "get that part to unblend, get that part to step back", right. Because they don't like the intensity of the feeling. And so, we want to push feeling away so that we engage in these sort of...it feels to me sometimes sterile.

Anibal: Ok.

Pam: Yeah. And so, I've really just been thinking about that a lot. And especially like, if we're speaking for parts that hold some anger, you know, even if they're just a little bit blended, maybe 10% blended, and we're speaking for them, the other person may be feeling some of that anger. And then there can be shaming while "you're, you're just blended and you need to unblend before you, before we can have this conversation".

Anibal: So, you are saying in Self implies we should feel nothing, and nothing should bother us. So, Pam, I couldn't agree more with you that this Self that feels nothing can really be boring, but you suggest it can be bothering. Could you say more on this bothering?

Pam: So let me say, people often believe that we, when we say we're in Self, or when we unburden our parts, that people should be able, no matter how people react toward us, no matter what they say, no matter what they do, it shouldn't upset us. We should be able to take anything that they throw at us. Right. And, I would also say, that's not true, right. That, and this is where the courage of the Self comes in. So, that I'm trying to think of a personal example of what that means. And I think the best example that I can come up with is...actually I have a difficult relationship with one of my sisters. And there's often, when we're together, there are parts of her that just come after me. I mean, just really blame me for a lot of stuff that happened when we were kids. And so, I often feel really attacked by that. And for a long time, I tried to not feel anything when she did that. Right. I'm like, oh, I should be able to take anything. It should be okay. You know, she did have a much harder time than I did.

Anibal: Kind of getting Zen.

Pam: Exactly. Exactly. And then, as I got more into this, I started realizing, and here's, you know, just listening, listening to my parts and knowing that it's really, it was really not okay that she was treating me that way. And I knew that, in this instance, I tried to have some conversations with her about it, and they were just not going anywhere. Right. Because she was just not able, able to hear what I was saying and deepen our relationship beyond where it was. And so, I made a choice to limit my interactions with her. Right. Because, you know, so this is where I say, you know, we can set these Self-lead boundaries. Doesn't mean we have to take everything. We can make choices about how we interact with people and the ways in which we engage them. So, you know, if I keep my interactions with her short and limited, we never really get to the place where she gets on a roll and starts attacking me. And it seems to work out. I can be connected enough with her, but not to the point where I'm being dumped on.

Anibal: So, it's a way of building connection as well.

Pam: Right.

Tisha: Do you know the term spiritual bypass?

Pam: Yes.

Tisha: Anibal's getting Zen made me think about it. But it's always, it's been sort of a hard concept for me to understand, but I think you just made it really clear how you could just ignore your parts, maybe numb out a little bit, be in, being quote unquote, Self and get through it. But it actually, it reminds me of like being a good parent, you set boundaries that are hard in order to maintain safety.

Pam: Yeah. Yeah.

Tisha: It feels really better. Especially if someone's coming at you, a family member with some five-year old, two-year-old parts.

Pam: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Exactly. Well, I really love the way you just said that. Because that, that is, it is a spiritual, you know, it can be the spiritual bypass. And, there's something, look, there's something very loving about that too. Right. Like, you know, like I want to be able to stay connected and, how much do we think about this? Like, how much damage do we do to our own parts when we're trying to take care of someone else's parts like that, but that's a whole another talk, so.

Anibal: Yeah. It could be. So, you say to be in Self can be used to shame parts and feelings. And how can that statement of being in Self be used to shame parts and feelings?

Pam: Well, that's the piece, you know, when like, and I especially see this in, I've seen this in our trainings or as IFS practitioners interact. So, if someone has some intense, even a little intensity about their reaction, or, I'm trying to think of an example. Okay so, here's an example. So, I'm going to speak to it from my experience, because as a lead trainer in these trainings, lots of times people get blended and they sort of, they're blended with their parts and they talk directly to me from these blended parts. So, I, as these things land on me and I feel this intensity, the way I can shame people with this is I can shame them...It's like this sense that we're all supposed to be in Self, we're never supposed to be in parts and you're in parts right now. Right. And so, I can shame them by saying something as simple as, which is not simple at all, really, "could you take a minute and get that part to unblend?". So, imagine that you have like some intensity around something you're feeling activated or upset about something that's happening in the training and you're directing that to me it some amount of passion and I say,

“I’m not going to listen to that until you unblend”, right. That’s very shaming. So, that’s the way we can use this thing. Like, “I’m only going to listen if you’re in Self”, right. “I’m not going to listen to anything else”.

Anibal: Yes, makes sense.

Tisha: What’s the right of the, quote unquote, right way or what’s a more Self-led way to respond to that?

Pam: So, I want to answer that by saying it depends, because it does depend on the situation. Right? Of course, it depends on if you’re in a relationship with someone with equal power to you, right. There’s all this, you know, and as a therapist too, you know, I think about this often we have a power over our clients. There’s a great book by, I’m going to plug Cedar Barstow here, it’s called *The Right Use of Power*. Cedar Barstow’s a Hakomi trainer and a therapist, and she’s written these books. She has this whole thing about using power and the power that we have as therapists. So, it’s different if you’re in an up or down power position with someone, but if you’re, if you’re in an equal power position with someone and someone’s coming at you, right. Like, I’m thinking about, I’ll think about like my relationship with my husband. The other day he was like being really, here’s what my part said, being really snotty about something. And he was just not being very nice. And so, and he knows, but the way I reacted to that was to say, “you know, it doesn’t feel good to me when you talk to me like this. I want to hear what you have to say, but it doesn’t feel good to me. And I’m getting sorted to the brink of where I want to yell back, and I don’t want to do that. So, how can we have this conversation?” Sometimes he may not be able to. The other person may not be able to and want to still yell. Right. And then comes your choice. Do you stay engaged or not in that moment? If we’re in a position though, like as a therapist and our client is coming at us with a part like that, I think one of the better ways to deal with that, and this is what can be difficult is to use Implicit Direct Access, meaning that this client has a part that’s blended with them that is mad at us. And so, to stay engaged with that part. “Tell me what is bothering you. Tell me what I did that upset you so much, because it was not my intention to do that.” And, because if you can engage the part, it will all intimately unblend. But it’s a much more connecting experience then if you engage the part.

Anibal: Yeah. Instead of just asking to do his own job and do his own self-regulation, inner self-regulation.

Pam: Right, right. Yes, yes. Because when a part’s coming at you like that, it wants connection. It wants some kind of connection. And if we say, “oh, focus on that part and how do you feel toward it or see if it can unblend...” Oh, you know...

Tisha: It makes me think of all the trainings that I’ve been in, or in situations where I have a judgmental part that says, “oh, they’re not in Self.” And I know that judgmental part is just

creating distance, but it's almost, it's reflexive. So, I'm so grateful that you are sort of illuminating this topic

Aníbal: Pam, maybe for didactic proposes, let me come back to this same topic. You are saying that we can be Self-led and still speak with emotion. So, how can we be Self-lead and still be with emotion and how can that be of some use or benefit for us and our trainings?

Pam: Well, first of all, I'm thinking about what you said earlier, Aníbal, which is, it certainly feels much more alive, doesn't it? Rather than this sort of flat...

Aníbal: Sometimes boring thing.

Pam: Yeah. Wow. That's a such an interesting question. You know, I never really thought about it in terms of how it could benefit us in that precise way. But I guess what I would say is I feel like as we, as I said earlier, this is a living breathing model and it changes and changes and changes. And I feel like we're continuing to refine the ways we teach it to people. And, Tisha, when you were saying a minute ago about having parts that are, have judgment because somebody is not in Self. I think there are ways in which we imply that as we teach the model, right, there have been ways that that is definitely implied. And, so this is really a way of refining the teaching even more, that that is not what we want. Right. What we want, what feels so alive and real to me is this goal of our therapy to not, we don't want to be parts-led, right? We want to be Self-lead, which means welcoming, welcoming, welcoming all our parts, not just in that sort of perfunctory way that we say at all, we will need to welcome all our parts, but to really, it feels to me like it's a flow with them, right? Like it feels like this infinity loop that what goes out to our parts then comes back to our Self and we're connected through this energy flow with them. Right. And if I get stuck in believing that I should be in Self, it excludes and exiles all my humanities from who I am as a person. So, I guess the benefit, Aníbal, is really, I live a fuller life, I live a richer life. We can share with each other...

Aníbal: Yeah. I fully agree with that.

Pam: ...Our joys, our sorrows. Yeah, exactly. So, I think that would be the benefit for me

Tisha: That is so beautifully said. Incredible.

Pam: Oh, thanks. It felt very inarticulate to me, but thank you.

Aníbal: I was also thinking that some parts are really difficult to welcome. Shaming parts, perpetrator parts, bigotry ones. They are never allowed in trainings, I would say. And that means something, right?

Pam: And you know, even anger.

Anibal: Yeah.

Pam: I've noticed, I've noticed a lot. I mean, that's even not allowed in our trainings much. Right. And, that's always been really sad for me. You know, I have tried to, when I first started teaching, I did most of the trainings in New York city. And I actually got the training started there, and oh man, back in those days, you know, we had...there was not a ton of interest in IFS. And we often got people who came in feeling really prickly about it. Like they got dragged in by someone else and they weren't sure they really wanted to be there. So, there were often like, this is the thing I love about New Yorkers is they just like, let it all out. Mostly, you know, there's nobody's trying to be nice. They're just letting it all out. So, very early in my teaching career, I got very good at welcoming angry parts into trainings and not exiling them. And it was a real gift to me and super scary because sometimes when these parts, you know, I mean, even think about sitting in your therapy practice when some client is just letting you have it, not an easy place to be. And if you can get connected with parts like that, it allows relationships to deepen. That's a thing, right. If we don't welcome all this stuff, how do we really deepen and grow? So that's another benefit I think of it, yeah.

Anibal: Beautifully said. Pam, you are now a coordinator for, I mean, you high responsibilities in the Institute policies regarding the future trainers. You want to share something about that and how does that can impact the way IFS it's been taught nowadays?

Pam: Yeah. Well, there's two training programs are happening inside the Institute right now. One's called the *Leadership Training Program*, which is folks who are currently Assistant Trainers. That's one Tony Herbine-Blank and I are doing together to try to get folks into co-lead trainer positions more quickly. There's also a program that Tony and I and Tamala Floyd are doing, that's called *The Accelerated Training Program*. And this was a group of 15 folks who show, who were identified as having leadership potential. And, two thirds of this group is made up of folks from the global majority. And so, the purpose of this training, which has changed completely since we started it was, you know, this was to also accelerate these folks into leadership positions in the organization. Because, again, it's a wonderful and exciting and expanding the model into a much broader lens it's really exciting. So, Tony and Tamela and I have been meeting with that group of folks since January. And that's really where, and Natalie is a part of that group. And this is really a concept that's been highlighted for me as coming out of that group and their experience of speaking in trainings and the kind of reactions that they're sometimes getting, you know, when they're speaking, especially in trainings that are white majority. And so, I am incredibly grateful to be a part of that group and how much I feel...I tell them this all the time, but I feel like there's ways in which I'm learning so much more from them than they may be learning from us. But that's really where I started thinking more about this, like the way we shape space, especially people who aren't from the same culture as us, right. Or there's a lot of cultural impact about shaming people for having emotions or, you know, being a little more intense.

Anibal: Pam, any other words and wishes for the IFS future, model and trainings?

Pam: I just, here's what I would say. I think we have an amazing model and I think it is a framework that can allow and support so much change in the world. I really, really believe that.

Anibal: Absolutely.

Pam: And I also believe that we're really at a time where...it's an exciting time and a time where the model is growing and expanding in ways it hasn't for a long time. And so, I have a lot of hope about that and a lot of excitement about that, and some fear about it, you know, change is always scary. There are some parts of me, either afraid and, mostly exhilarated and excited, excited to share what I know about the model and to learn from others as are coming in about ways we can change the model. So, yeah, that's pretty much it.

Anibal: Dear Pam, such a privilege to talk and listen to you. And it was a joy to be here with you and Tisha, and we hope we can keep meeting and sharing this model, our work and our lives. Thank you so much.

Pam: Always, just so wonderful to be with you all. And thanks. Thanks for inviting me again.

Tisha: Thank you so much, Pam, for taking the time with us today and expanding our knowledge on this topic and for all that you do.

Transcript Edition:

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