

IFS Unblending Explained:

Understanding the Process

Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy offers a unique approach to understanding our minds by viewing them as composed of multiple parts, each with its own feelings and perspectives.

At its core, IFS believes that we have a Self that is compassionate, curious, and calm, and that this Self can help heal our wounded parts. The unblending process is crucial in IFS, enabling us to separate our true Self from these parts, providing clarity and emotional balance.

What is Unblending?

Unblending is the process of distinguishing our core Self from the various parts that make up our internal system. In IFS, parts are seen as sub-personalities formed from past experiences, each playing specific roles to protect us.

These parts include managers, exiles, and firefighters, all of which can sometimes overshadow our true Self.

Why is Unblending Important?

When parts become blended with the Self, they can dominate our thoughts and actions, often leading to reactions driven by pain, fear, or anger. Unblending helps us:

- **Gain Perspective:** Recognize that these parts are just one aspect of our experience, not the entirety of who we are.
- **Reduce Reactivity:** Respond from a place of calm and compassion rather than from the intense emotions of a particular part.
- **Facilitate Healing:** Allow the Self to interact with and heal the wounded parts, leading to overall emotional well-being.

Steps in the Unblending Process

1. **Mindful Awareness:** Begin by noticing the emotions and thoughts that are present. This can involve tuning into physical sensations, such as tightness in the chest or a knot in the stomach, which signal the presence of a part.
2. **Identify the Part:** Acknowledge the part that is currently active. This might involve giving it a name or describing its role (e.g., "the critic," "the anxious one").
3. **Separate the Self:** Consciously create space between the Self and the part. You can do this by saying internally, "I see you, and I am here to help." This affirmation helps to reinforce the distinction between the Self and the part.
4. **Offer Compassion:** Approach the part with curiosity and compassion. Ask it why it feels the way it does and what it needs. This dialogue can help to soothe and understand the part, allowing it to relax its grip.
5. **Witness and Unburden:** As the part begins to trust the Self, it may reveal past experiences or burdens it carries. Witness these memories with compassion and, when appropriate, help the part to release its burdens.

Benefits of Unblending

Unblending allows individuals to experience greater emotional regulation and resilience. It fosters a deeper understanding of oneself and promotes inner harmony. Clients often find that, as they practice unblending, they can handle life's challenges with more grace and equanimity.

Additional Resources

For a more in-depth exploration of the unblending process, consider the following resources:

- **Books:** "No Bad Parts" by Dr. Richard Schwartz provides a comprehensive overview of IFS and its core principles, including unblending.

View Book:

<https://www.amazon.com/No-Bad-Parts-Restoring-Wholeness/dp/1683646681>

- **Videos:** Dr. Tori Olds offers an excellent explanation of unblending from protectors in her video, "No Bad Parts: Unblending From Protectors in IFS Therapy." In this video, Dr. Olds discusses how IFS uses the technique of unblending to help break free from old patterns and strong emotional reactions. She explains the neuroscience of implicit memory, the role of protector parts, and how unblending can unlock our capacity for self-leadership and rescue wounded parts.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh4oiSIJhTE>

Unblending is a powerful tool in IFS therapy that empowers individuals to navigate their internal worlds with clarity and compassion. By separating the Self from the parts, we can foster inner peace and heal from past wounds, leading to a more balanced and fulfilling life.

Olivia's Story: An Example of Unblending in IFS

Olivia always felt overwhelmed by anxiety, especially when she had to speak in front of people. The tightness in her chest and the racing thoughts made it almost impossible for her to function normally during such situations. She decided to seek help through Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy, hoping to find some relief.

The Beginning

In her first session, Olivia's therapist explained the concept of IFS. They talked about how our minds are made up of different parts, each with its own feelings and perspectives, and how we also have a core Self that is calm, compassionate, and wise. The therapist introduced the idea of unblending, where Olivia would learn to separate her true Self from her anxious parts.

Identifying the Part

During one session, Olivia focused on the anxiety she felt about an upcoming presentation. She noticed the tightness in her chest and described it to her therapist. The therapist asked her to visualize this feeling and give it a name. Olivia decided to call this part "the Worrier."

Creating Space

The therapist then guided Olivia to create some space between her Self and the Worrier. Olivia closed her eyes and took a few deep breaths. She imagined herself standing next to the Worrier, acknowledging its presence without being overwhelmed by it. She said internally, "I see you, Worrier, and I understand you're scared about the presentation."

Offering Compassion

Olivia approached the Worrier with curiosity and compassion, asking it why it was so anxious. The Worrier part revealed that it was afraid of being judged and embarrassed, a fear that stemmed from a humiliating experience in her childhood. Olivia listened to the Worrier with empathy, understanding its concerns.

Witnessing and Unburdening

As Olivia continued to interact with the Worrier, she witnessed the memories and feelings associated with it. She saw a younger version of herself being laughed at during a school presentation. The therapist helped Olivia to offer comfort to this younger part of herself, reassuring it that she was now an adult who could handle difficult situations with confidence.

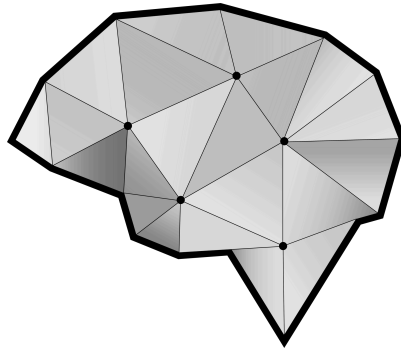
Integration and Healing

Over several sessions, Olivia practiced unblending from the Worrier. She learned to recognize when the Worrier was taking over and to gently remind herself that she was in charge. By separating her true Self from this anxious part, Olivia was able to approach her presentation with a sense of calm and confidence.

The Outcome

On the day of the presentation, Olivia felt the familiar tightness in her chest. But instead of being consumed by it, she acknowledged the Worrier and reminded herself that she was capable and prepared. The presentation went smoothly, and Olivia felt a sense of accomplishment and relief.

Olivia's journey through unblending in IFS therapy illustrates how we can learn to separate our core Self from our parts. By acknowledging and understanding these parts with compassion, we can heal from past wounds and approach life with greater emotional balance and clarity. Unblending empowered Olivia to handle her anxiety and embrace her true Self, leading to a more fulfilling and confident life.



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