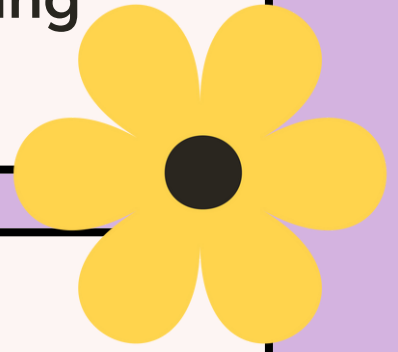


# Beginners guide to befriending protector parts



## WHAT IS A PROTECTOR PART?

Protector parts are the parts of ourselves that work very hard to keep us safe. Most often, these parts began protecting us in certain ways in response to difficult childhood experiences. These parts are therefore often stuck back in time and are not aware that the person they are protecting is now a skilled and resilient adult. Although these parts may engage in actions that harm us (Eg. Addiction, perfectionism, self-sacrifice, endless scrolling etc. ), at their core the purpose is always the same; to prevent or extinguish pain. The first step in getting to know the protector parts of your internal system is to notice and befriend.

## VISUALISATION FOR MEETING PROTECTOR PARTS

Find a comfortable position in a place you feel safe and secure. Gently close your eyes or soften your gaze. As you take some slow, deep breaths, let your internal system know that you want to get to know it better. If you feel resistance, suspicion or emptiness, ask if these parts are willing to step back for a moment so you can meet them. Let them know that you don't want to change anything, but want to spend some time getting to know their purpose and intentions. If you experience some variation of the thought, "I don't want to do this", get curious. Ask this part what it is afraid might happen if you were to get to know your internal system better. Listen to the answer and don't try to rush things. You may need to attempt the above for several days before your parts are willing to meet you. While you are venturing inward you may like to try some or all of the following:

- Give an update. Tell your parts your age and what you are up to in life
  - Ask one of your parts, what do you do for me? When did you learn to do this?
- Start to sketch out a map of your internal system as you meet each part
- Express gratitude for the hard work of your protector parts
  - Find out what role this part would like if it didn't have to do its current job

## REFERENCES

- Schwartz, R., & Sweezy, M. (2020). Internal family systems therapy, second edition. The Guilford Press, New York.
- Schwartz, R. (2021). No Bad Parts. Sounds True, Boulder.

