**Internal Family Systems Therapy: Getting to know a protector part**

*Overview Explanation of Internal Family Systems Therapy:* From your self-essence (your deepest, wisest, calmest self), you develop a kind respectful, understanding relationship with all the different parts of you. In each of us there is a manager self that is working really hard trying to make life work out for us. There is a self-judging part that gets down on us when we are off track. There is either a reactive or shut down part or both that get triggered when things don’t go our way. Treat these different selves like people you respect that you want to get to know and really develop a relationship with them and disentangle them. Develop gratitude and compassion for them. They did their best to protect younger more vulnerable parts like our love, creativity, self-expression, lightness, and messiness that got shut down by others who were not fully attuned to us in our development. There are deep parts of us that got hurt and shut down, and we want to get to know all the protector parts well enough so they can stand back and we can heal the wounded vulnerable exiles. So we can see what the wounded self had to go through, and stand up to the shamer or abuser for our young self. And then take our young self out of that situation to safety.

*Connect with self-essence*

Follow the breath. Notice that there is a you here that is noticing the breath. At the depth of you is equanimity and ease. Let the attention drop from the head to the heart and feel this next breath from the heart space. Self-essence is the calm, curious, open stance towards inner experience that can form a positive relationship with protector parts and wounded exile parts. This is a state of calm, curiosity, confidence, courageousness, clarity, connectedness and compassion and creativity.

*Befriend a protector part*

Now asking yourself – what part of me most wants my attention right now? Or you can choose your main manager part that is trying so hard to make your life go well.

Hello part. Will you take a step back and give me (self-essence) a little bit of space so I can get to know you better?

What is your name?

Locate this part in the body.

What is your view in life? What is your perspective?

What do you feel?

What do you want to do or say?

What situations activate you?

What are you trying to do for me? What is your positive intent?

What are you afraid of?

What are you protecting me from?

How do you relate to people?

How old is it? How old does it think you are?

What do you understand or appreciate about this part?

What are you afraid would happen if you didn’t do your role?

What are you afraid we would feel or do if you didn’t do your role?

How long have you been doing your role?

What caused you to take on this role? When did it start?

How do you feel about your role?

What would you like from me (self-essence)?

Can you see me (self-essence) here next to you?

Let this part know you appreciate what it’s been trying to do. There is a good reason for it to do what it has been doing. Thank you for protecting.

What would you rather do if you didn’t do this all of the time?

If you were able to act from self-essence right now, how would you act in your life right now?

Do you have the life skills necessary to accomplish the positive behavior you are aiming for?

If not, what kind of support do you need?