Parts Therapy
Using Transactional Analysis (TA) and Internal Family Systems (IFS) Theory to Help Your Clients

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What is parts therapy?

- We describe ourselves intuitively as having parts e.g. part of me wants to quit smoking but part of me loves to smoke.
- Parts therapy acknowledges that we have multiple voices, or subpersonalities, within us
- We are often not aware of these parts (they are “covert”) but can be brought to consciousness during hypnosis
- Parts therapy is usually utilized in hypnosis when one or more parts are being problematic
- It is also possible (and fun) to do parts work to discover more about yourself, not just because you have a problem
Origins of Parts Therapy

- Early 20th century psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung)
- Paul Federn (Viennese psychoanalyist) coined the term “ego states”
- Eduardo Weiss, Jack Watkins developed Federn’s ideas further: ego state therapy
- Fritz and Laura Perls: Gestalt Therapy (1940s and 50s)
- Charles Tebbetts: parts therapy in hypnosis (1960s and 70s)
- Eric Berne: transactional analysis (1960s)
- Hal & Sidra Stone: voice dialogue (1970s)
- Colin Wilson’s concept of the “ladder of selves” (1970s)
- Richard Schwartz: Internal Family Systems therapy (1980s)
TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

People are born princes and princesses until their parents turn them into frogs

~Eric Berne
What is Transactional Analysis (TA)?

• A theory of applied psychology developed by Eric Berne in the 1960s
  – *Games People Play*
  – *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?*

• Heard the phrase “I’m OK, you’re OK”?  
  – Popularized by Thomas Harris’s book in 1972
    *I’m OK, You’re OK* remained on the NY Times bestseller list for two years
I’m OK, You’re OK

• This is a statement of essence
• Everyone is capable of change
• People have worth and value
• People have a right to be in the world and to be accepted
• TA is written in simple language that can be understood by children as young as 8
The “parts” in TA: Ego States

The ego states are not just roles, they are fully experienced states.

**Parent:** a collection of “recordings” that come primarily from our own parents, or other significant adults we interacted with as children. Contains the “rules” for living.

**Adult:** problem solving, rational, analytic, unemotional, computes the facts and predicts outcomes, using data from the Parent and the Child and external sources.

**Child:** contains feelings, is self-centered, emotional, powerful, spontaneous and playful.
TA functional model

Controlling Parent
Criticizes, regulates

Nurturing Parent
Permits, encourages

Adult
Gathers facts, considers alternatives

Adapted Child
Restains emotions, socialized, polite, quiet, pleases others

Free Child
Spontaneous, playful, optimistic, self-absorbed
What the ego states do

• **Parent:**
  
  – *Nurturing Parent* supports (OK) or rescues/smothers (not OK)
  
  – *Critical Parent* scolds to protect or regulate (OK), berates, criticizes, uses sarcasm (not OK)

• **Adult:** May receive faulty information if contaminated by Parent (prejudice) or Child state (delusion).

• **Child:** contains feelings.
  
  – The *Free or Natural Child* expresses emotions freely and is impulsive, and spontaneous. Can be positive (playful, fun-loving, affectionate) or negative (rebellious, tantrums, sulking, sneaky)
  
  – The *Adapted Child* behaves according to direct or implied messages received from adults. Positive (polite, well-mannered, sociable, good, well-behaved) or negative (speaks only when spoken to, fearful, guilty, ashamed).
How to recognize ego states

• Words, tone, tempo of speech, pitch of voice, expressions, postures, gestures, breathing, and muscle tone provide clues for diagnosing ego states.

• People often sigh, or clear throat, and will change position/posture when switching between ego states.
How to recognize ego states

• **Parent mode:**
  – words contain value judgments, “shoulds and oughts”, leaning forward, wagging finger, harsh or critical, nurturing

• **Adult mode:**
  – words are clear and definable, posture upright, professional, reasonable, rational

• **Child mode:**
  – words are direct and spontaneous (free child) or quiet and polite (adapted child), loose muscle tone, relaxed body posture, hair twirling, fidgeting, high voice, emotional
It gets more complicated...

Introjected parents and parent-figures, each with his/her own Parent, Adult and Child ego-states. Identity and number will vary with the individual.

Parent (P₂)

Adult (A₂)

Child (C₂)

Parent in the Child (‘Magical Parent’)

Adult in the Child (‘Little Professor’)

Child in the Child (‘Somatic Child’)

(Adult not subdivided)
Case Study: Smoking Cessation

- Woman in late 30’s
- Real estate professional, very well-dressed and well-groomed
- Immediately went into Child when entering office
- Threw pillow across room and pouted
- Switched into Adult
- Recognized she needed to feel like a “bad girl”
- Quit smoking after one session and bought some motorcycle boots instead
Internal Family Systems

- Developed by Richard C. Schwartz
- Based on Family Systems Theory/Therapy
- We each contain a multiplicity of voices (clients often describe 5-15 parts in therapy)
- Our parts function as individuals in a large family or tribe, and can be very diverse.
- Parts within us are sub-personalities, with their own fears, frustrations and beliefs, and we can engage in conversation and negotiation with them.
The Core Self - healthy

• There is also the core or central SELF
  – the “I” we experience when we think of ourselves

• In a healthy individual...
  – the SELF is a strong capable leader, compassionate, and self-regulating
  – The person will feel centered, connected, calm, and confident
  – Their parts function harmoniously
The Core Self – stressed or weak

• Parts exist to protect the Self. In traumatic circumstances, will remove the Self from leadership and take over if necessary.
• Parts become overworked, causing inner conflict and a feeling of being stuck, or overwhelmed
• Although parts always have a protective or constructive function, this may manifest as bad behavior. Under stress, parts become polarized. If a part is behaving badly, it has been driven to extremes by circumstances.
• The goal of IFS is to differentiate the parts from the Self, allowing the Self to once again be a strong leader.
Main Roles in IFS Theory: Managers

Parts are organized around the Self in three main groups: Exiles, Managers, and Firefighters

1. EXILES
   - When we hide or suppress feelings, or try to forget trauma, we create Exiles. Considered threatening to the internal family by the Managers, these parts have been banished. They are often young, feel alone, abandoned and isolated, and may contain “big” emotions like anger, rage, and sexual feelings.
   - They become desperate to break out and tell their stories. Give us nightmares, flashbacks, glimpses or pain or terror. In their need to be loved and cared for they often connect with abusers.
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Main Roles in IFS Theory: Managers

2. MANAGERS

– These parts plan, organize and think ahead. They help us fit in with society and be productive. Their main aim is to make sure Exiles remain exiled.

– Live in fear that Exiles will escape and take over

– Typical Manager parts are: Controller, Striver, Dependent One, Evaluator, Caretaker, Worrier, Denier, Entitled One, Pessimist.
Main Roles in IFS Theory: Firefighters

3. FIREFIGHTERS

– In difficult or threatening situations, when Exiles are activated and the Self is weak, these protective parts have strategies to help dissociate the person from these strong feelings e.g. drugs, alcohol or other addictive or repetitive behaviors to “numb out” or distract. They are impulsive and react very quickly.

– In a healthy individual these spontaneous parts can contribute a sense of fun and playfulness. In an unhealthy person these can lead to self-absorption and narcissism.
What the client looks like when...

• Dominated by Exiles:
  – prone to attacks of depression, feeling miserable, unlovable

• Dominated by Managers:
  – always striving to be perfect, be strong, please others, be in control

• Dominated by Firefighters:
  – impulsive, addictive behaviors, suicidal or rageful
Conflict (IFS perspective)

Go to the gym!
Stop whining!
Work harder!

I’m not having any fun!

Have another drink!

Manager

Exile

Firefighter
Conflict resolution

• Conflict between Manager and Firefighter parts over how best to keep Exile quiet
• Need to acknowledge and reintegrate the Exile (by processing and releasing emotions)
• Manager and Firefighter parts no longer have to work so hard and can return to a more moderate and helpful role
Meeting your own internal family

• In a relaxed, or light hypnotic state
• Focus on recent issue or problem
• Identify related emotions e.g. anger, sadness
• Start to visualize the angry or sad part
• It will unfold from there (find out the part’s name, what it wants etc.)
• Ask if any other parts want to talk (one at a time)
• I like to visit my internal family while walking
HOW I WORK WITH PARTS
Scenarios where parts work could be used

- Conflict resolution
- To process and release emotions associated with traumatic experiences
  - Informed child work, regression,
- Guidance and healing
  - e.g. wise mind, higher self, inner healer
- Internal representations of loved ones/relatives/pets who have passed on
Working with Parts

Not all parts work need be done with a formal hypnotic induction.

• Talking to body parts
• Calling out parts
• Conference table imagery
• Waiting/observation room imagery
• Gestalt “empty chair” work
**Gestalt Chair Work**

- Client sits opposite an empty chair (or chairs)
- Mentally places part(s) they want to talk to in empty chair
- Talks to the part (present tense)
- Swaps chairs and responds as that part, then swaps back and forth as necessary
- Good for expressing strong emotions like sadness, anger
- Good for talking to ailing body parts e.g. stomach, hernia, sore neck
- Hypnotist can ask questions of the client or the part they are representing, or make comments
Different ways of talking to parts

• Hypnotist is quiet and all conversation goes on in client’s head

• Hypnotist talks indirectly to part – asks the client to ask the part questions, and part responds internally to client, who then reports back to hypnotist

• Hypnotist talks directly to part. In this scenario, part and hypnotist refer to the client in third person.
Parts can manifest as any type of person

- Yourself as you are now
- Older or younger version of yourself
- Different gender
- Character from TV, movie or book
- Relatives or loved ones (living or dead)
Parts are not always people

• Animals
• Cartoon characters
• Mythical creatures or monsters
• Objects
• Sense/feeling/mist/light/color
Scary Parts

- Scary parts (monsters, devils etc.) are last-ditch attempts by Managers to prevent you from contacting an Exile. If a client describes a scary part, I move into an IFS framework.
- If you put the part in a waiting room client can observe it without being overwhelmed by fear or other strong emotions.
- Often they melt, shrink, fade away or transform in some other way.
- Client can then interact with whatever part reveals itself – usually an Exile or child part. Client can choose to enter the room and interact directly with the part (comfort, hug, play with etc.)
Experiential exercise for healing

- Elevator or staircase induction
- Garden/temple of healing/inner healer
- Clearing with stone bench and cushion
- Healer identifies exit points
- Visualize pain, negative emotion, illness etc. as a color
- Color drains out of body as healer shifts body position to facilitate draining
- Now absorb healing, soothing liquid (purple or orange) that bathes every cell
Experiential Exercise: Parts Balancing

We all have these four parts:

- Physical self
- Intellectual (thinking) self
- Emotional (feeling) self
- Spiritual self

This exercise allows you to meet these parts, listen to their messages and advice, and integrate and balance them.
Case Study (TA and IFS perspectives)

• Client complained of craving and eating sweets in the evenings even though not hungry
  – Works 50-60 hours per week in health care
  – Late 50s, lives alone and has grown children
  – Goes through phases of going to gym 4-5 times per week, then stops and does nothing for months
  – Eats healthy during the day, keeps only fruit and vegetables in fridge at home
  – Craves sugary, high-carb snacks late at night and keeps them in a second fridge in her garage (cakes, desserts)
  – Not obviously overweight but gaining slowly, doesn’t socialize much
  – Says to herself “What is wrong with you!” “You ought to be able to stop this stupid behavior.”
Polarized parts

• Part wants to be healthy – eats salads, fruit and veggies, and goes to the gym
  – adult ego state, manager
• Part works very hard without complaining, likes to feel needed
  – parent ego state, manager
• Part delights in going out to the garage and eating sweets. Enjoys the whole scenario, feels sneaky, like she is getting away with something very clever.
  – child ego state (rebellious), firefighter
• Harsh self-talk
  – critical parent ego state, manager
Summary of her situation

• She is not having any fun except her nighttime eating escapades
• Overly strict/rigid about foods kept in kitchen fridge
• Working too hard, not sleeping well
• Not taking time to look after herself – going to the gym is just more hard work and polarizes the child part even more
• Feels guilty (conflict between parts)
• Not addressing the Exile beneath the conflict
Details from interviewing client

• Mom was often a critical, harsh parent
  – Nagging client about being a fat child
  – Ate sweets herself (and hid them from family)
  – Restricts foods and always dieting but not particularly overweight
  – Liked to play the martyr

• Client carrying mom’s burden/behaviors (in TA terms, client is “living mom’s script”)
Options for Parts Work

• Gestalt chair work
• Informed child regression
• Conference room with the 4 parts identified and IFS observation room if necessary
Suggestions from parts work

• Keep a wider range of healthy foods in kitchen, including carbohydrates. Get rid of garage fridge
• Be mindful of negative self-talk and replace it with positive affirmations (critical part agreed to encourage her, and help her remember affirmations instead)
• Have a lollipop during the day (she likes these and it will help her connect with her free child part)
• Schedule 2-3 “fun” activities during the week
• Give permission to let go of the guilt
• Go to gym a couple of days per week
• Put down the burden her mother gave her (through hypnosis)
• Don’t skip meals, address poor sleep habits
• All parts agreed to move to more moderate positions and work as a team
Parts Therapy Resources

• *Internal Family Systems Therapy* by Richard C. Schwartz

• *TA Today* by Ian Stewart and Vann Joines

• *Hypnosis for Inner Conflict Resolution* by Roy Hunter

• *The Alchemy of Healing* by David Quigley

• *Mary Anne Johnston’s blog*: 
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