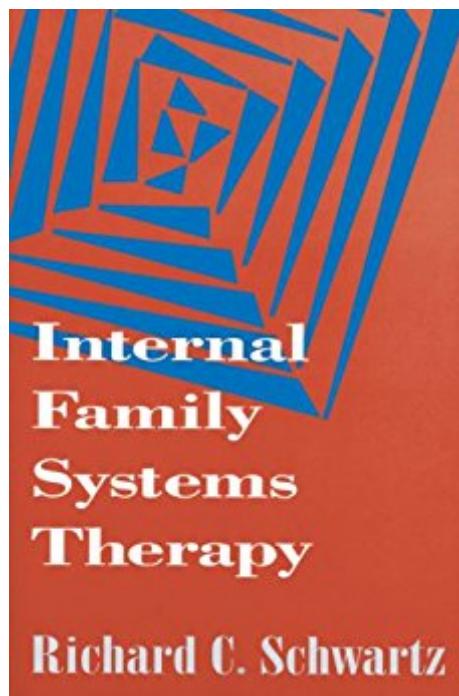


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Internal Family Systems Therapy (The Guilford Family Therapy Series)



Synopsis

Applying family systems concepts to the intrapsychic realm, the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model proposes that individuals' subpersonalities interact and change in many of the same ways as do families and other human groups. Seasoned practitioner Richard C. Schwartz illuminates how parts of a person can form paralyzing inner alliances resembling the destructive coalitions found in dysfunctional families, and provides straightforward guidelines for incorporating the IFS model into treatment. A valuable text and clinical resource, the book demonstrates in step-by-step detail how therapists can help individuals, couples, and families tap core resources, bring balance and harmony to their subpersonalities, and feel more integrated, confident, and alive.

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Customer Reviews

Internal Family Systems Therapy by Richard C. Schwartz represents the author's attempt at documenting a fascinating journey into the inner lives of clients. His model uniquely applies systems thinking to internal process, seeing our inner lives as yet another level of human systems. As I read this book, I was taken aback by how psychodynamics suddenly became coherent to me in a way

that made intuitive and intellectual sense. Schwartz takes the reader through the development of the IFS model, and demonstrates how the therapy emerged from his interactions with his clients. He is successful in describing the step-by-step process of IFS therapy that is tied directly to the theory. The IFS model assumes that we all are "multiple personalities", organized by a "self" that is compassionate, curious, and expansive. These sub-personalities, or "parts", are all good and are with us from birth. They are kept in balance and harmony through self-leadership. When the self is threatened by trauma or devaluation from the outside world, the parts protect the self from harm; in doing so, they also lose trust in the self's ability to provide leadership and safety. In "exiling" the self for its own protection, these parts become extreme and polarized; the parts that were hurt carry the burdens of pain and suffering ("exiles") that other parts (i.e., "managers" and "firefighters") try to keep out of conscious awareness through various roles and operations. This becomes a recursive system which feeds upon itself to create symptoms when a person is under stress. These parts, which have been forced into extreme roles, are often identified by mental health professionals as symptoms or "psychopathology".

I'm a therapy client whose therapist had been using IFS-based techniques with me for some time, though I hadn't known what the name for it was. While I could appreciate some of what she was doing, I was also pretty resistant to the whole premise that I should be compassionate and curious about "parts" of me that frankly I just wished would go away. In my previous experiences with therapy, I had been taught to distinguish between my rational, adult inner voice, and a vulnerable, emotional child voice, which seemed to make logical sense to me, but with this approach to therapy I was being asked to develop caring relationships with internal parts of myself that were angry or destructive or otherwise unlikeable on the surface, and frankly that seemed completely absurd. Despite my doubts, I stuck with it, and slowly things started to happen for me, and then when my therapist mentioned IFS by name, I found this book and all these pieces started to come together. Although the book is really a textbook for therapists, I found it quite readable as a client, and so many things began to make sense about what was happening to me in therapy, and what role I needed to play in the process for the technique to be really effective. Having a big picture sense of the IFS methodology was incredibly enlightening and helpful, and I've made all sorts of progress that I think would have been much slower had I not read the book. I think that the book would also be readable for someone who wasn't either a therapist or a client in an IFS setting, but there are limited examples and case studies in the book, so some things might be a bit vague and theoretical.

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