

# IFS vs DNMS: Similarities and Differences

Areas of Comparison	Internal Family Systems	Developmental Needs Meeting Strategy														
<b>Type of Therapy</b>	A client-centered, collaborative, ego state therapy with an emphasis on increasing SELF energy and unburdening wounded parts of self.	A client-centered, collaborative, ego state therapy with an emphasis on reparenting wounded parts through loving connection, needs-meeting, and reparative information.														
<b>Organizing principles</b>	Based on principles of <i>systems family therapy</i>	Based on principles of good parenting by meeting needs														
<b>Wounded part classification</b>	<p><i>Exiles</i>: Vulnerable parts of self that holding <i>burdens</i>—painful emotions, beliefs, sensations, or urges—in reaction to wounding experiences.</p> <p><i>Managers</i>: Protective, controlling, critical parts that are focused on managing the internal and external world to prevent bad things from happening in the future, so Exiles don't get triggered. Their main job is to keep Exiles quiet.</p> <p><i>Firefighters</i>: Protective parts focused on bringing relief to the present by dousing the "fire of emotion" with drugs, alcohol, or dissociation when Exiles do get triggered.</p> <p><b>Note</b>: The concept of <i>introjection</i>, which is central to the DNMS, is explicitly rejected in IFS.</p>	<p><i>Powerless Reactive Parts</i>: Parts that hold raw emotions like anger, shame, or fear. May engage in "adaptive" behaviors (like pleasing or peacemaking) or manage painful emotions with "coping" behaviors (like emotional eating or drinking).</p> <p><i>Controlling Reactive Parts</i>: Controlling, mistrustful, and sometimes belligerent parts that may intimidate other reactive parts into engaging in "adaptive" behaviors.</p> <p><i>Mimicking Reactive Parts</i>: Parts that strategically convey someone's wounding message—often to intimidate other parts of self into engaging in "adaptive" behaviors. <i>For example</i>: A 6-year-old <i>mimicking reactive part</i> tries to get a 3-year-old part to keep quiet, by shaming her with Mom's message "You're bad."</p> <p><i>Maladaptive Introjects</i>: When someone is significantly hurtful, the brain <i>records</i> their wounding message. That <i>recording</i> sticks to a wounded part—a <i>maladaptive introject</i>—who does not like it, want it, need it, animate it, or control it. <i>For example</i>: Molly's mom frequently shamed her with a "You're bad" message. A recording of that message stuck to a 4-year-old part—a <i>maladaptive introject</i>. When the client gets stressed, the Mom recording plays back, upsetting a 2-year-old reactive part. The 4-year-old introject is upset by this and would like it to stop the recording but is unable to without a therapist's help.</p>														
<b>Origin of parts</b>	Parts exist as joyful and fun-loving before a wounding experience.	Wounded parts come into existence in reaction to a significantly wounding experiences. They do not exist beforehand.														
<b>Protocols and Interventions</b>	<p>Six Fs – Usually for protector parts</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Find an Issue</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Feel towards Part?</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Focus on Body</td> <td>Befriend Part</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flesh out Details about Part</td> <td>Find Fears</td> </tr> </table> <p>Eight Stages of Healing – For Exiles first, then Protectors</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Differentiation</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Unburdening Ritual</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Develop a Relationship</td> <td>Positive Qualities Ritual</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Witnessing</td> <td>Integration</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retrieval</td> <td>Appreciation</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Note</b>: Key elements of the Six Fs and Eight Stages roughly align with the four DNMS stabilization interventions that are flagged. 🚩</p>	Find an Issue	Feel towards Part?	Focus on Body	Befriend Part	Flesh out Details about Part	Find Fears	Differentiation	Unburdening Ritual	Develop a Relationship	Positive Qualities Ritual	Witnessing	Integration	Retrieval	Appreciation	<p>Preparation Interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two Resource Development Protocols</li> <li>Special Safe Place Protocol</li> <li>Set an Effective Therapy Goal Intervention</li> </ul> <p>Phase 1: Stabilizing Interventions (for Reactive Parts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect to Resources</li> <li>Attune, Validate, and Empathize with Part 🚩</li> <li>Provide Needed Information</li> <li>Enmeshment Reversal</li> <li>Orient to Present Time 🚩</li> <li>Explain About the Harmless Recording</li> <li>Assess change 🚩</li> <li>Invite Parts to Settle In to Special Safe Place 🚩</li> </ul> <p>Phase 2: Conference Room Protocol (for Maladaptive Introjects)</p> <p>Phase 3: Needs Meeting Protocol (for Maladaptive Introjects and Reactive Parts)</p>
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<p><b>Internal-Support (Resourcing)</b></p>	<p><i>SELF</i>: An unwounded, clear, strong, and calm essence that has no specific agenda but directs the system toward wholeness. It's the 'observer self' one experiences during mindfulness meditation. <i>SELF</i>-energy is courageous, compassionate, connected, creative, confident, curious, calm, and clear.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> IFS SELF = DNMS Spiritual Core Self</p>	<p><i>Healing Circle Resources</i>: Three fully vetted self Resources—a Nurturing Adult Self, Protective Adult Self, and Spiritual Core Self—working together as a Team.</p> <p><i>Provisional Resources</i>: Vetted Resources drawn from positive experiences, such as being a good caregiver (like Dog-Lover Self), being cared for by someone (like Aunt Sally), feeling cared for remotely by a public person (like Mother Theresa), or feeling virtually cared for by fictional character (like June Cleaver). The best Resources are based on real experiences of nurturing someone or being nurtured by someone. Two or three Resources are mobilized, then brought together to form a team.</p>
<p><b>Note About Resourcing</b></p>	<p>Schwartz has rejected the idea of "resourcing" because he believes it's invalidating to wounded parts having painful emotions, preventing them from trusting the process.</p>	<p>DNMS Resources (usually <i>parts of self</i>) help wounded parts heal by providing loving connection, needs-meeting, and reparative information. This kind of resourcing is comparable to the IFS concept of mobilizing SELF to unburden wounded parts.</p>
<p><b>How Internal-Support is Accessed or Mobilized</b></p>	<p>As processing unfolds, wounded parts are asked to step back. When enough of them step back, SELF emerges with curiosity and compassion. Also called <i>unblending</i>.</p>	<p>Resources are mobilized in advance of targeting issues. <i>Healing Circle Resources</i> are mobilized by helping clients access a spiritual core associated with peak spiritual experiences, and a nurturing and protective adult Resources who embody specific caregiver skills. They're mobilized in a guided meditation then strengthened with ABS*. Because <i>Healing Circle Resources</i> are thoroughly vetted, it sometimes takes a while to mobilize the whole team. <i>Provisional Resources</i> can be mobilized more quickly and easily, which is helpful when a client needs Resources right away. They're also vetted, but not as thoroughly. <i>Provisional Resources</i> fill in until the best time to mobilize fully vetted <i>Healing Circle Resources</i>.</p>
<p><b>Blending vs Executive Control</b></p>	<p>The IFS term <i>blending</i> applies when a wounded part and SELF are present together at the same time. Therapy helps them become <i>unblended</i>, so SELF can engage with the part with curiosity and compassion.</p>	<p>The term <i>executive control</i> refers to which part is front and center—a healthy part or wounded part(s). A wounded part and a healthy part can <i>share executive control</i>. A wounded part that's a little triggered shares some executive control, while a wounded part that's very triggered may have full executive control. And executive control can be shared with multiple parts at once.</p>
<p><b>Source of most unwanted behaviors, beliefs, emotions, and urges that bring clients to therapy</b></p>	<p>Wounded parts that get triggered—blended with SELF. When an Exile is blended, the client will feel painful emotions and hold negative beliefs about self or world. When a Manager is blended, the client will feel an urge to heighten control over the inner and outer world. When a Firefighter is blended, the client will feel and urge to numb the pain of an Exile.</p>	<p>Wounded parts that get triggered. <i>Background</i>: When a parent conveys a significantly wounding message to a child, two things happen: (1) A child part that's stuck in the experience forms, and (2) the brain records the parent conveying the message. Years later, a stressful event can press "play" on that recording, triggering that child part. The child part is flooded with painful emotions and may cope with a problematic behavior (e.g. bingeing, drinking, gambling). <i>For example</i>: When Nancy got a low score on a college exam, it pressed "play" on her father's message, "You'll never be good enough"—triggering overwhelming shame in a five-year-old part who coped by sleeping all day.</p>
<p><b>How unwanted behaviors, beliefs, emotions, and urges are stopped</b></p>	<p>Protective parts give permission for Exiles to heal. When Exiles and SELF become unblended, SELF can unburden the Exiles from their painful emotions. Then Managers and Firefighters are free to release their accumulated burdens and take on a more favored job in the system.</p>	<p>Resources meet the needs of wounded parts—attachment needs, safety needs, information needs, etc., which helps them get unstuck from the past. The more needs are met, the more they heal. As wounded parts heal, unwanted behaviors, beliefs, emotions, and urges abate.</p>

\* Alternating Bilateral Stimulation (ABS) was made popular by EMDR therapy for trauma processing. Seems to help facilitate neural integration when used strategically during DNMS.

<p><b>Meeting the Needs of Wounded Parts</b></p>	<p>The therapist facilitates SELF to meet wounded parts’ needs for acknowledgement, validation, and empathy during <i>unblending</i>, <i>befriending</i>, and <i>unburdening</i>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The DNMS would argue that getting these needs met is necessary for healing, but may not be sufficient.</p>	<p>Meeting the needs of wounded parts is a high priority for the therapist and Resource Team. Emotional needs are met with attunement, validation, and empathy. Safety needs are met by helping parts discover the wounding experience is in the distant past. Empowerment needs are met when parts are guided to see they’re in an adult body now. Information needs are met when clarifying information dispels faulty assumptions and misunderstandings.</p>
<p><b>Primary Agent for Change</b></p>	<p>Healing relationship between SELF and wounded parts.</p>	<p>Healing relationship between Resources and wounded parts.</p>
<p><b>Finding an Effective Therapy Goal</b></p>	<p>The goal is always the same—to differentiate and release SELF, to bring balance and harmony within the internal system.</p>	<p>The DNMS strategically identifies, up front, any client therapy goals that wounded parts object to. When an objection is found, parts are invited to name new goals, ones they all like—usually based on meeting needs. <i>For example:</i> Anorexic parts object to the goal ‘to eat more food,’ so it’s changed to their preferred goal, ‘to help all wounded parts feel seen, heard, and valued.’ (Meeting this goal will help anorexic parts heal, and as a result, they will want to eat more food.)</p>
<p><b>Contact with Parts of Self</b></p>	<p>Usually the therapist contacts parts <i>indirectly</i>—facilitating a dialogue between SELF and wounded parts. <i>For example:</i> “Amy, what does this sad five-year-old need from you now?” But when a client’s SELF cannot be accessed, the therapist’s SELF contacts parts <i>directly</i>. <i>For example:</i> “Five-year-old, tell me why you’re sad.”</p>	<p>The therapist makes <i>direct</i> contact with wounded parts to facilitate a loving, supportive dialogue between wounded parts and the Resources. <i>For example:</i> “Hi five-year-old! Welcome. I’m glad you’re here. Can you see the Resources? Do they look good to you? Do they understand why you’re feeling afraid?”</p>
<p><b>Direction of Dialogue between Wounded Part &amp; Internal-Support</b></p>	<p>The therapist asks the client how she feels towards the wounded part. If the answer does not reflect SELF-energy, a wounded part is answering—not SELF. That part is asked to step back (unblending) so SELF can come forward with curiosity and compassion for the part.</p>	<p>First the client connects to the Resource Team. Then the therapist invites a wounded part to approach the Resources and asks the part if the Resources look good. If they do look good, the wounded part is invited to get up close for some bonding/nurturing. If the Resources do not look good, the therapist asks questions to determine why, then provides the necessary remedy, depending on whether the wounded part is misperceiving the loving safety of the Resources; another wounded part is standing in for a Resource; or the Resources are simply not robust.</p>
<p><b>Nature of Dialogue between Wounded Part &amp; Internal-Support</b></p>	<p>The therapist facilitates the client SELF to dialogue with and befriend wounded parts. The focus is on getting SELF to provide the needed acknowledgement, validation, and empathy, to get wounded parts to elaborate on their story.</p>	<p>The therapist engages in a direct dialogue with wounded parts, while facilitating a loving, supportive dialogue between parts and the Resource Team. The therapist serves as an external resource, while the Resource Team is internal. Parts are encouraged to tell their story. The therapist and Resources provide lots of attunement, validation, and empathy for the story in general, and for the details in particular. <i>A full contextual validation</i> sums up the story in way that helps the part feel very understood.</p>
<p><b>Misunderstandings and Missing Information</b></p>	<p>When wounded parts are confused, misguided, or holding faulty assumptions, helpful information is expected to naturally come from SELF, so the therapist is not required to provide it.</p>	<p>The therapist is encouraged to notice and address wounded parts’ misunderstandings, missing information, and faulty assumptions with (1) a direct explanation, (2) a direct explanation from the Resources, (3) explanatory metaphors, and/or (4) stories that lead parts to self-discover new information. This kind of reparative information is considered an important aspect of needs-meeting.</p>
<p><b>Orienting Parts to the Present</b></p>	<p>In the <i>Befriending</i> or <i>Witnessing</i> step the therapist might invite SELF to update the part on current age and life circumstances. In the <i>Retrieval</i> step, the therapist asks, “Would the little one like to go to a happier time and place?” If so, the part may choose a place in the past or the present.</p>	<p>The therapist asks wounded parts questions that guide them to self-discover that the wounding experience ended a long time ago. (Like, “How many years has it been since you lived with your Mom?” and “I see you’re wearing a wedding ring. How did you get that?”) An Adult Body Intervention helps parts understand they have power now, in their adult body.</p>

<p><b>Safe Place</b></p>	<p>In the <i>Retrieval</i> step, parts are invited to go to a different time or place of their choosing—which may function as a safe place.</p>	<p>A Special Safe Place is established before targeting issues. It's a very fun place, just for wounded child parts—perfectly tailored to meet their needs for rest, play, and exploration. <i>For example:</i> A beach resort might have a beach, a pool, nature trails, horseback riding, a petting zoo, a movie theatre, a library, an art studio, sleeping rooms, etc., etc. Resources would be everywhere wounded parts would want to play to provide any needed support or supervision. It's a place where all a client's wounded parts can rest and play until their turn to heal.</p>
<p><b>Quieting a Wounding Message from a Hurtful Past</b></p>	<p>Focuses only on wounded parts' reactions to wounding messages, not the messages themselves.</p>	<p>When a stressor presses play on an (internal) recording of someone's wounding message (like "You're bad"), a reactive part gets triggered. We can quiet this message in 3 ways. First, the therapist helps the reactive part understand it's just a <i>harmless recording</i>—not real life, not a real threat. Next, the therapist can help the maladaptive introject stuck to it understand she's nothing like the recording, it's harmless, and she's empowered in an adult body now. And finally, it can be turned off completely by taking these parts through the DNMS Needs Meeting Protocol, which ensures every single emotional need, safety need, and informational need gets met by the Resources. After that, the recording is archived—no longer able to trigger the original emotions and sensations.</p>
<p><b>Resolving Enmeshment</b></p>	<p>No interventions specifically for enmeshment.</p>	<p>DNMS <i>enmeshment</i> definition: A preoccupation with a caregiver's state of mind to the degree it inhibits anxiety-free play and exploration. The therapist is always looking out for signs a wounded part is enmeshed with childhood caregiver. Sophisticated interventions, unique to the DNMS, can stop a child part's sense of enmeshment with childhood caregiver.</p>
<p><b>Unburdening Ritual</b></p>	<p>When the time is right, the part's burden (painful emotions, disturbing sensations, negative beliefs) are given to a natural element (wind, fire, earth). <i>For example:</i> A part might imagine a wind taking away remaining painful emotions.</p>	<p>The DNMS doesn't have or need rituals.</p>
<p><b>Inviting-in-Positives Ritual</b></p>	<p>After the <i>Unburdening Ritual</i>, the part is invited to imagine positive qualities filling the space left open after releasing the burden to the element. The positive qualities are often the opposite of the burden.</p>	<p>The DNMS doesn't have or need rituals.</p>
<p><b>Integration or Checking in with Wounded Parts</b></p>	<p>Other parts are invited to see and comment on the change in unburdened parts, and clients are invited to think of ways to maintain a connection to unburdened parts.</p>	<p>At the end of a span of processing, wounded parts are asked to report on internal changes. They're asked to recall whatever had originally triggered them (e.g. exam score), so see if it's still upsetting. They may be asked to rate how stuck they feel, 0-10, or how true a negative belief feels now, 0-10. Then they're invited to settle in to their Special Safe Place, until the next time they're needed.</p>
<p><b>Appreciation</b></p>	<p>Therapist offers appreciation to the system for allowing the work.</p>	<p>At the end of each session, the adult self is invited to comment on the work done with wounded parts.</p>