On Practicing

Ideas for dyad, triad, or quad practice

Your ability to deepen into a felt, working understanding of IFS — and eventually use it well with clients — really depends on your willingness to practice the flow of the model. Consistently. Over time. Where the stakes are low. It also depends on your capacity to gently and honestly debrief the work. Here are a few things that helped me most. I hope they help you practice with greater ease and confidence.

Creating the Group

Find friends and colleagues who are committed to learning the model and to practicing together once a month. Groups work best, therapists learn most, and extraordinary healing happens naturally in this kind of consistent, committed group.

Roles

a. Agree on who is Guide and who is client. Consider whether and how the Guide will receive support during the session. Some guides ask for a pause, midway; others want deliberate, gentle intervention as needed; and still others prefer to move through the session fully without external comment. Working together over weeks and months will help you find the rhythm and approach that best supports your learning and your system's needs.

b. If others are present, agree how they will participate. Perhaps they take notes to share after the session. Maybe they simply hold the space with gentle Self energy.

Time

Be clear about time. 90 minutes may suffice, but two full hours once a month is ideal.

- **15 minutes** to connect and prepare for practicing. Invite Parts who have concerns about the work to surface and receive support. Give space for the client to settle, too. The willingness to show up fully and vulnerably — but only so far as feels safe — is imperative. Go slow. Trust the process, and honor Parts' need to protect from overwhelm.
- **45 to 50 minutes** for the practice session itself.
- With **10 minutes** left in the session, invite the Guide to pause and prepare for closing well.
- **20+ minutes** to debrief.

Why the 10-minute cue? Practicing closure is intentional — and it's the piece most often skipped. The task here is to help the client assimilate the work, reconnect with all Parts, and end well.

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Guide's Practice Goals

Identify and name your intention for the practice session. You don't have to aim for a full unburdening and reintegration every time. Chunk it out. Practice what would help the most.

For example:

- Practice finding a target Part when a whole set of Protectors vies for attention. Sometimes a Parts Map can help identify the Part with which to begin.
- Help the client move through the Six Fs to uncover an exiled Part, and build a reciprocal relationship between the client's Self and the exiled Part. See what repair can be done, or agree to come back soon.
- Practice rescue and unburdening. Bring a wounded Part already connected to the client into the present and help the client release the baggage it carries.
- Practice the entire flow of the model, from finding a target Part through unburdening, restoring, and inviting Protectors to shift into healthier roles, so healing can move through the whole system.

> **A Note About Working with Exiled Parts**
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> *If an exiled Part shows up and the Guide isn't ready to facilitate the healing work, name this at the outset, and discuss together what to do. Here are some options:*
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> - *Pause the work when an exiled Part surfaces. Take time as a group to acknowledge it and let it know it matters. Help the client form the beginnings of a relationship with the Part, then tuck it away with care and safety, either for another time or for an experienced facilitator to work with.*
> - *Agree that the Guide will do the best they can with this work — maybe stumbling through it — knowing that this practice is crucial for growth. The client must be able to drop into enough Self energy to help hold the stumbling process and provide internal safety.*
> - *Agree that another participant will stand by to step in and provide their own gentle Self-Leadership.*

After the Practice

Consider and discuss these questions, and add more of your own. Private free writing first can often help.

1. How are the Guide's Parts feeling? How is the client feeling?
2. What did the client most appreciate about the Guide's style, timing, pace, and demeanor?
3. What questions and pathways felt fruitful?
4. What felt clunky or confusing?
5. What stumbling blocks did the Guide feel or notice? (e.g., "I'm still not sure about..." or "I want to get better at...")
6. What does the client hope to do next to further their internal system's healing?
7. What's next for the Guide?

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