

The Self-Led Project Workbook



# SELF-LED PROJECT

A Coaching Approach to Internal Family Systems

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A Coaching Approach to [Internal Family Systems](#)

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Special thanks to Alison Dyer, Emily Kerpelman, and Teresa Napierala, my fellow IFS travelers for all your love, support, and contributions to my own personal journey as well as to the curriculum in this workbook.

## Session #1 Preparation

-Read the first 8 pages of this workbook, study definitions, note any questions about or challenges to the content and bring them to the session to discuss.

-We will discuss how to do Exercise #1 in this session.

-Be prepared to access pages 1 – 20 during this session. To do this, either print out this Session #1 PDF or have it available on a device during our session. If this is not possible, I will be sharing my screen or can copy and paste the content into chat during our Zoom session.

-Please have a notebook or a three-ring binder with blank pages during our group session to take a lot of notes.

-Tuesday Zoom Meeting ID: 845 7147 2768 Passcode: 050620

Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84571472768?pwd=enUzK0VWek1ldVFPY3krc2d6cHpjdz09>

-Thursday Zoom Meeting ID: 819 4096 1523 Passcode: 050620

Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82940961523?pwd=QTBFMURXaDBxK0F4YldPRHNzR1ROZz09>

## Contents

The Self-Led Project Pilot Group Syllabus .....	i
A Coaching Approach to Internal Family Systems.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Change Your Perspective and Improve Your Results.....	3
How to Use this Workbook .....	4
Part 1, The False Shame Model.....	6
Formation and Function of the False Shame Cycle .....	7
False Shame Model Definitions .....	8
Exercise #1, Track Your Inner Experience .....	9

## The Self-Led Project Pilot Group Syllabus

No less than 6 days prior to each session, you will receive the content for that session. The content you receive will be the same content participants in the paid one-year program will receive.

The pilot group is limited in scope. The content that we will cover in our nine sessions together can stand alone in its value and teachings and represents the first 25% of the Self-Led Project workbook.

This content will also prepare you for the remaining 75% of the content that will complete the one-year program should you choose to continue with the paid portion of The Self-Led Project.

Future participants will not be offered a no-cost option for the first nine sessions.

The following is the projected syllabus for the pilot program and is subject to change as your feedback provides insights for improvements.

Thank you for your participation.

Session #1	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Read the first 8 pages of this workbook, study definitions, note any questions about or challenges to the content and bring them to the session to discuss.</li> <li>-We will discuss how to do Exercise #1 in this session.</li> <li>-Be prepared to access pages 1 – 20 during this session. To do this, either print out this Session #1 PDF or have it available on a device during our session. If this is not possible, I will be sharing my screen or can copy and paste the content into chat during our Zoom session.</li> <li>-Please have a notebook or a three-ring binder with blank pages during our group session to take a lot of notes.</li> <li>-Tuesday Zoom Meeting ID: 845 7147 2768 Passcode: 050620 <a href="#">Click here for the Zoom Link.</a></li> <li>-Thursday Zoom Meeting ID: 819 4096 1523 Passcode: 050620 <a href="#">Click here for the Zoom Link.</a></li> </ul>
Content	<p><b>Exercise #1, Track Your Inner Experience</b></p> <p><i>The goal of this exercise is to shift your conscious attention away from external circumstances that trigger your suffering, and toward what is being triggered. Using an experience that triggered suffering will enable you to find the true cause of the suffering. As you work through this exercise, set an intention to use a fresh set of eyes and bring as much curiosity about yourself and your reactions as you can find.</i></p>

Session #2	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complete Exercise #1 (pages 9 – 20)</li> <li>-Study the False Shame Circle on page 21 and read the content on page 22. Note any questions about or challenges to the content and bring them to the session to discuss.</li> <li>-We will discuss how to do Exercise #2 in this session.</li> <li>-Complete Session #1 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Exercise #2, The Lens of Awareness</p> <p><b><i>The goal of this exercise is to help you become aware of the lens through which you view circumstances; the Shame Identity lens, The False Identity Prevention lens, the False Identity Reaction lens, or the True Self lens.</i></b></p>
Session #3	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complete Exercise #2 (pages 23 – 25)</li> <li>-We will discuss how to do Exercise #3 in this session.</li> <li>-Complete Session #2 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Exercise #3, Your Shame Identity</p> <p><b><i>The goal of this exercise is to help you to recognize your Shame identity.</i></b></p>
Session #4	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complete Exercise #3 (page 26)</li> <li>-Use the False Shame Table beginning on page 29.</li> <li>-We will discuss how to do Exercise #4 in this session.</li> <li>-Complete Session #3 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Exercise #4, False Identity Prevention Strategies</p> <p><b><i>The goal of this exercise is to help you recognize what you do to prevent feeling discomfort.</i></b></p>
Session #5	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complete Exercise #4 (page 27)</li> <li>-Use the False Shame Table beginning on page 29.</li> <li>-We will discuss how to do Exercise #5 in this session.</li> <li>-Complete Session #4 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Exercise #5, False Identity Reaction Strategies</p> <p><b><i>The goal of this exercise is to help you recognize what you do when you get triggered.</i></b></p>

Session #6	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complete Exercise #5 (page 28)</li> <li>-Use the False Shame Table beginning on page 29.</li> <li>-We will discuss how to do Exercise #6 in this session.</li> <li>-Complete Session #5 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Exercise #6, The Trigger Log</p> <p><b><i>The goal of this exercise is to help you recognize what triggers you and to notice what is activated when you get triggered.</i></b></p>
Session #7	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Complete Exercise #6 (pages 32 – 35)</li> <li>-Read and study pages 36 – 41, Parts of the False Shame Model, IFS definitions, False Shame Model Definitions with IFS definitions.</li> <li>-As you read, write down your observations and questions, bring them to session #8.</li> <li>-Complete Session #6 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Complete Part 1</p> <p><b><i>The False Shame Model and answer Discussion questions</i></b></p>
Session #8	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Read and study pages 41 – 44, IFS and the False Shame Circle, The False Shame Cycle, Working With our Parts to get Different Results.</li> <li>-As you read, write down your observations and questions, bring them to session #9.</li> <li>-Answer Discussion Questions for Part 1 on page 44.</li> <li>-We will discuss how to do Exercise #7 in this session.</li> <li>-Complete Session #7 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Exercise #7, Noticing Parts</p> <p><b><i>The goal of this exercise is to help you become more aware of the efforts of your individual parts to influence your thoughts, feelings, and actions.</i></b></p>

Session #9	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Read and study content on page 49.</li> <li>-Complete Coaching Session Check-in on page 50.</li> <li>-Complete Exercise #7</li> <li>-Complete Session #8 Survey</li> </ul>
Content	<p>Pilot Group Review.</p> <p><b><i>What did you get out of the Pilot Group?</i></b></p> <p><b><i>What can you expect from the One Year program?</i></b></p>

After Session #9, you will receive a final survey. Completing this survey will fulfill your commitments as a Pilot Group Volunteer.

You will have completed 25% of the Self-Led Project One-Year Program. If you wish to continue, your program fees for the one-year program will be discounted by 25%.

# The Self-Led Project

## A Coaching Approach to Internal Family Systems

### Introduction

The Self-Led Project is a coaching program which combines traditional coaching ideas with the power of the Internal Family Systems Therapy Model (IFS).

Before discovering IFS in 2016, I had been a life coach for 5 years and had completed one year of life coach training provided by an accredited International Coaching Federation training program. When I was introduced to IFS as a therapy client, I quickly saw the powerful and practical applications of IFS for coaches and their clients.

Life Coaching is most often present and future focused. The coach helps the client to identify the objectives of coaching and then helps them achieve those objectives. The coach asks thought provoking questions to help identify what is important about achieving the objectives and what has prevented the client from having achieved them already. The coaching conversation is guided by the objectives and agenda of the client. The coach facilitates conversations to help the client access insights, wisdom, and motivation that supports them in achieving their goals.

Therapy models like IFS are past and present focused and deal with healing or alleviating symptoms around emotional, mental, physical, and relationship concerns or symptoms.

Using the IFS model in coaching enables the coach to acknowledge and work with the unfinished aspects of the client's past. Using IFS helps the coaching client understand themselves more deeply and compassionately. Rather than thinking of themselves as a single-minded individual who occasionally gets lost, stuck, confused, overwhelmed, and conflicted, the Self-Led Project client learns to see themselves as an essential Self having subpersonalities that can help or hinder them in their attempts to live a successful life.

As clients get to know these parts of themselves, they have access to the resources needed to help them master the challenges and opportunities in life.

By recognizing the unconscious influences of your subpersonalities and the core leadership potential of your essential Self, efforts to control and change yourself transform into curiosity and compassion for your parts. This curiosity is the key ingredient that will enable you to harmonize and balance your inner world which will, in turn harmonize and balance your external experiences.



In the Self-Led Project, the Internal Family Systems model is used as a therapeutic tool to help clients get the results they want. The word “therapeutic” means that it benefits the body or mind and increases well-being. However, the use of the IFS model in coaching is not the same as, nor is it a substitute for therapy.

The Self-Led Project will introduce you to IFS and show you how to use its principles to deal with self-sabotage and inner conflict while giving you access to innate resources that may not currently be accessible. This coaching program will show you how to work with your internal family to create the life you want.

I believe that each of us has a reliable internal source of wisdom, comfort, and guidance. Our inability to access Self-leadership is due to emotional injuries we have never recovered from. In his book, *The Untethered Soul*, Michael Singer describes our emotional wounds as thorns that have become lodged under the skin. Until we remove the thorn, we must accommodate it or risk the pain of bumping against it.

The strategies we employ to avoid the pain of our unhealed emotional wounds have unintended consequences resulting in a complicated life that is endured rather than enjoyed. While we may have become proficient at avoiding pain and discomfort, we have done so at the cost of ease, self-confidence, joy, spontaneity, authenticity, and connection.

The Self-Led Project is designed to help you heal your emotional wounds and liberate you from their limiting constraints. What will emerge eventually is the spontaneous expression of your True Self.



## Change Your Perspective and Improve Your Results

If a person can change what they automatically do, they will get different results automatically.

Most of what we think, feel, choose, and do, happens without conscious awareness. Humans would not have survived without the ability to assign often repeated choices and behaviors to the unconscious mind. This frees up the limited conscious mind to focus on what is important in the moment. What has been assigned to the unconscious becomes automatic.

Most of the time, life's changing conditions help us adapt our unconscious automations. We eventually drive to the new house or job without giving it much conscious attention. We get used to the rearranged bedroom furniture and stop stubbing our toes on the dresser. By February, we are using the correct year when filling in a date.

But in some cases, our automatic thoughts, feelings, choices, and actions remain fixed in the past. No matter how many self-help books we read, meetings we attend, or self-improvement seminars we enroll in, some patterns persist.

After using The Work of Byron Katie ([www.TheWork.com](http://www.TheWork.com)) for fifteen years to help myself and my clients, I theorized that beliefs were responsible for thoughts, choices, feelings, and behaviors. I was convinced that if I could help my clients change their beliefs, their thoughts, choices, feelings, behaviors, and results would also change. When my clients got the results they wanted, my theory seemed to be validated.

The IFS model showed me that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors could also be influenced by an aspect of us that seems to operate agenda-free, detached from beliefs. I refer to this version of ourselves as the True Self.

When viewing circumstances through a clear lens, we see life as it is. When viewing life through the lens of a belief, our view is distorted by that belief. The clear lens of True Self aligns with reality. Beliefs distort our view and separate us from reality.

The IFS model refers to True Self as Self. Common qualities of the Self include clarity, wisdom, and compassion. By consciously changing our perspective to view circumstances through the clear lens of Self, we can live empowered lives of passion and purpose.

The Self-Led Project will help you understand how and why your view may have become distorted and will show you how to use the IFS model to sharpen your view and live a Self-Led life.



## How to Use this Workbook

This workbook has five parts.

- Part 1, The False Shame Model
- Part 2, Learning About Your Parts
- Part 3, Getting to Know the Parts of You
- Part 4, Practical Applications Using IFS in Coaching
- Part 5, Documenting and Mapping Your Parts

The workbook was designed to walk you, step by step, through a process that will help you view yourself and others with more understanding and compassion. The Internal Family Systems model is at the core of the Self-Led Project. But to understand how the Internal Family System works, I have designed exercises that will help you recognize how it is already operating in your life.

Take your time with each of the exercises in Part 1, The False Shame Model, and expand awareness of your automatic reactions to the circumstances of your life.

With this heightened awareness, the concepts in Part 2, Learning About Your Parts will make more sense and be more easily assimilated.

Many of the exercises in Part 2 duplicate those in Part 1. This is useful because it will deepen and broaden how you understand yourself and will enable you to gain access to your compassionate and wise Self.

Completion of Parts 1 and 2 will prepare you for Part 3, Getting to Know the Parts of You, where you will be introduced to your uniquely personal internal family of subpersonalities or parts.

Part 4, Practical Applications using IFS in Coaching, shows you how to leverage all you have learned about your Self and your parts. After getting familiar with your internal system of parts, you can begin working with them to help you solve the problems you encounter in your life and to create the life you want.

Finally, Part 5, Documenting and Mapping Your Parts, is designed to help you map your journey and document what you are learning about your internal world.

Once you get to Part 4, feel free to use the tools and exercises best suited to achieve the objectives that attracted you to The Self-Led Project.



The Self-Led Project uses over 30 exercises to help you transform your self-view and enable you to recover the leadership of your internal life and external experiences. Each exercise expands self-awareness and builds on the previous exercises. Give yourself plenty of time to work through each exercise at least once. Many of the exercises are designed to be used on a regular basis to connect with your parts. The Self-Led Project takes one year to complete in a coaching group or when working individually with a coach. If you are using this workbook on your own without the support of a group or a coach, more time may be required to complete the entire curriculum.

If you will devote the time and do the work needed to complete the Self-Led Project curriculum, your perspective and experience of life will transform.

### Suggestion:

Get a notebook or a three-hole punch and a 2" three-ring binder with dividers to use as you work through the Self-Led Project. While space is provided in this workbook to do much of your work, a separate notebook will offer more flexibility.



## Part 1, The False Shame Model

When we suffer, we often blame external circumstances and react accordingly. But, in most cases, the true cause of our suffering can be found in our internal environment.

With few exceptions, external events only serve as *triggers* for the suffering that we experience. While attempts to control external circumstances may temporarily provide relief, these efforts do not deal with the source of our suffering and therefore cannot resolve it.

The False Shame Model explains the *actual* cause of cyclical, predictable, and chronic psychological discomfort. The persistent itch of unhealed emotional wounds demands our constant care and attention. To understand the itch, we form inaccurate assumptions and beliefs. To manage it, we set rules and conditions for our lives, and form a shame-based identity requiring complex coping strategies.

A life built around the maintenance of an unresolved past will be forever tethered to that past. The unresolved past lives mostly in our unconscious and the management of it happens automatically and shapes our reality.

Understanding this is the beginning of recovery. What is to be recovered is your Essential Self which is buried beneath layers of shame-based identity. The False Shame Model is the first step toward understanding how you lost the connection with your Self. Using the everyday circumstances of your life, the False Shame Model will help you begin the process of healing the emotional wounds that are at the core of your suffering. Those wounds are likely hidden and forgotten. Nevertheless, IFS helps to heal your emotional wounds and resolve your past.

As you go through the exercises of the Self-Led Project, you will experience an internal shift. Gradually, you may notice that what previously got in your way is no longer of consequence or concern. With Self in the leadership role, you may find that you don't have to work so hard to manage your life.



## Formation and Function of the False Shame Cycle

1. A painful, scary, or traumatic event occurs, usually at a young age.
2. Because an authentic emotional response doesn't feel safe, the natural expression or release of the associated emotion is interrupted, resisted, or blocked. This creates an emotional wound.
3. To prevent the energy of the emotional wound from being released, an amount of energy equal to, or greater than that of the emotional wound is dedicated to its suppression.
4. A defense system made up of automatic pain suppression, prevention, and management strategies is employed.
5. These strategies eventually fail due to life's unpredictability and the impossibility of controlling all that occurs externally.
6. When pain suppression and prevention strategies fail, some of the energy of the unhealed emotional wound is released. This can feel scary, painful, shaming, and out of control.
7. When energy from the unhealed emotional wound is released, reactive strategies are engaged to contain the leak and restore order.
8. If the initial reactive strategies fail, more extreme strategies, including distractions, addictions, and self-harming are used.
9. Once the internal energetic and emotional states are calmed, management strategies are adjusted and maintained to prevent future leaks.

This cycle repeats so long as the emotional wounds remain unhealed.

The False Shame Model explains dysfunctional and limiting life patterns. Resolving emotional wounds and restoring Self-Leadership to your inner world breaks up dysfunctional patterns, removes internal barriers, and facilitates natural order and flow.

Resolution begins with awareness. What follows are definitions of terms used in the False Shame Model and a series of exercises that will increase self-awareness and help you begin the process of undoing all that gets in the way of your joy.

## False Shame Model Definitions

### Trigger

Anything that activates an involuntary emotion, thought, or physical sensation.

### Suffering

Suffering is not pain. It is the resistance to it. The resistance creates internal conditions of stress, tension, reduced energy and chronically disempowering emotional states such as depression and anxiety.

### Shame Identity

The Shame Identity is generated when we blame ourselves for overwhelming emotional pain and turmoil. Self-blame is a pain management strategy that provides a sense of power and hope in an otherwise powerless and hopeless circumstance. If the sufferer believes they are the cause of their own suffering, changing themselves becomes a desperate strategy to reclaim power and hope where there otherwise is none. This false sense of power helps the sufferer survive and endure painful and overwhelming circumstances. The management of pain in this way prevents the pain from being released and resolved. The Shame Identity is kept intact by beliefs about one's deficiency and shortcomings.

*When your Shame Identity is exposed or in danger of being exposed, you get triggered. When you get triggered, the pain of the Shame Identity is activated. Unless you can employ effective strategies to resist and subdue your painful emotions, you will react to them. Triggers threaten to expose your Shame Identity; what you have been trying to hide, manage, or overcome about yourself.*

### False Identity

#### Prevention Strategies of the False Identity

Strategies employed to prevent others from seeing what you are trying to hide, overcome, or disguise about yourself. Strategies to prevent the pain of the Shame Identity from being triggered.

#### Reaction Strategies of the False Identity

Strategies used after being triggered to restore a sense of control, safety, and calm. Strategies used to recover control from having the pain of the Shame Identity triggered, and to restore an identity which is more acceptable to others.

*The False Identity is designed for risk management, loss prevention, and control of the Shame Identity. The strategies of the False Identity are subconscious and automatic.*

### True Self

True Self is who you were born as and is who you really are. Behind the confusion and busy-ness of the Shame and False Identities, True Self abides. As True Self, you have access to higher resources which include Wisdom, Clarity, Compassion, and Curiosity.



## Exercise #1, Track Your Inner Experience

***The goal of this exercise is to shift your conscious attention away from external circumstances that trigger your suffering, and toward what is being triggered. To enable you to find the true cause of your suffering, use an experience that triggered your discomfort. As you work through this exercise, set an intention to use a fresh set of eyes and bring as much curiosity about yourself and your reactions as you can find.***

**Exercise 1, Step 1.** Think of an experience when you were hurt, scared, or angry. Describe what happened.

*For example:*

*My friend, Linda called and asked me to volunteer in a group and I declined the request. After my first no, Linda asked me two more times to volunteer. Both times I said no. Linda ended the phone call abruptly. Later that day, Linda called again, asking if I had changed my mind. I declined her request again. Linda then told me that she had never known me to be so selfish, stubborn, or terrible. I felt startled, resentful, sad, and defensive. I wondered what Linda would say behind my back.*

Using the rest of this page, describe what happened.

**Exercise 1, Step 2.** Break down the story in stages. List only the facts. Number each stage.

*For example:*

*Using the example story in Step 1,*

1. *Linda asked the first time.*
2. *I considered the request.*
3. *I declined.*
4. *Linda tried to persuade me a second time.*
5. *I declined a second time.*
6. *Linda tried to persuade me a third time.*
7. *I stuck to my decision and repeated my “no.”*
8. *Linda ended the phone call abruptly.*
9. *Linda called back and asked if I had changed my mind.*
10. *I said, “no” again.*
11. *Linda told me what she thought of me.*
12. *Linda hung up.*



Exercise 1, Step 2

Break down your story in stages.

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(continued next page)



Exercise 1, Step 2

Break down your story in stages.

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**Exercise 1, Step 3.** Describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story. Answer the following questions for each stage. Notice that you react to both external and internal stimuli.

- A. What did you experience in your body?
- B. What emotions did you feel?
- C. What were your thoughts?
- D. What did you say or do?

*For example:*

<p>Stage # <b>1</b></p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	<p><i>Linda asked the first time.</i></p> <p><i>My heart rate increased.</i></p> <p><i>My face tightened.</i></p> <p><i>I felt tension and pressure.</i></p> <p><i>I felt fear, worry, and anxiety</i></p> <p><i>Right away I knew I didn't want to do what she was asking.</i></p> <p><i>But I also felt some fear when I considered how to answer her.</i></p> <p><i>I thought about how to say no without disappointing her.</i></p> <p><i>I had the thought that I should say yes because I should be willing to serve the group.</i></p> <p><i>I imagined her reaction.</i></p> <p><i>I realized I was trying to take care of Linda's feelings and that her feelings aren't my responsibility.</i></p> <p><i>I listened to her request in case she had something to say that might help me figure out how to justify saying no.</i></p>
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Using the next several pages, describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story.



**Exercise 1, Step 3.** Describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story.

<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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**Exercise 1, Step 3 (continued)** Describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story.

<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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**Exercise 1, Step 3 (continued)** Describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story.

<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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**Exercise 1, Step 3 (continued)** Describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story.

<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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**Exercise 1, Step 3 (continued)** Describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story.

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**Exercise 1, Step 3 (continued)** Describe your internal reaction at each stage in the story.

<p>Stage # _____</p> <p>A. What did you experience in your body?</p> <p>B. What emotions did you feel?</p> <p>C. What were your thoughts?</p> <p>D. What did you say or do?</p>	
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Notice that these reactions are involuntary. They happen automatically. You don't choose to feel tense, or to feel sad, or to think the thoughts that show up. You may be pleased with your reactions, or you may be self-critical and self-shaming. Notice that how you feel about your reactions is also involuntary.