

Introduction to The Self-Led Project

About the Self-Led Project

If you are unfamiliar with Internal Family Systems (IFS), you might assume that the Self-Led Project was designed to use at your own pace or to do practice on your own. The Self-Led Project can be used by individuals without support other than this workbook and it can be done at the pace of the individual. But the Self-Led Project is named as it is to reflect its purpose.

The purpose of the program is to help you develop Self-leadership. I have capitalized the word Self as IFS does to mean your true, authentic Self. The Self-Led Project is a personal development coaching program which focuses on self-discovery using IFS. Self-discovery helps develop Self-leadership. And Self-leadership yields personal power and choice.

In this coaching program, the IFS model is used as a therapeutic tool to help you get the results you want. The word “therapeutic” means that it benefits the body or mind and increases well-being. However, the use of the IFS model in the Self-Led Project is not a substitute for therapy.

The Self-Led Project is not a self-improvement program. If you secretly believe that there is something wrong with you, then you must also believe that you need to be improved.

But what if there was nothing to fix or improve?

In your efforts at improve your life, what if you could shift from self-management and control to self-discovery and development?

Imagine what might change if you could get past the idea that you need to be improved!

What if you could invest as much energy into self-discovery as you have into your efforts to manage yourself and the world around you?

The result would be a life directed by your authentic Self and fueled by the untapped resources and energy of possibility. This would mean the difference between living with the restraints and limitations of survival versus a life of freedom, personal power, and choice.

What you can expect

For the duration of this program, you are asked to let go of trying to fix, improve, manage, or control yourself. Shift your focus from self-improvement and self-control to self-discovery. Make a commitment to really get to know yourself. Throughout the Self-Led Project, you will learn who you are and who you are not. Once you know who you are, you can design the life you want.

In traditional life coaching, you might be asked to imagine a better life and then use coaching to achieve it. But with the Self-Led Project you are asked to take a deep and honest look at yourself. You will come to understand how you unconsciously set life up to unfold just as it has. And you will learn how to transform your view of the world.

As a result of full participation, you can expect to improve your satisfaction with:

- your relationships
- your confidence
- your personal empowerment
- your clarity of purpose
- trust in yourself

Each exercise in this workbook expands self-awareness and builds on the previous exercises. Give yourself plenty of time to work through the exercises at least once. Many of them are designed to be used on a regular basis to develop ongoing connection with your subpersonalities (also referred to as “parts” in the IFS model).

If you prioritize the Self-Led Project, devoting the time and work needed to complete the curriculum, your experience of life will transform. These changes won’t occur because this program has all the answers; in fact, you are the one with the answers. This program provides the questions that will remind you of who you are.

How could anyone else know more than you do about you? While participating in this program, you are expected to be the expert of your life. Please do not assign authority to anything you find in the curriculum. Instead, challenge what doesn’t resonate, and acknowledge your own discerning wisdom when what you read seems valid.

If you disagree with anything you read, honor your skepticism. But be willing to challenge your fixed ideas as well. By applying your experiences to the program, you will gradually begin to trust yourself more than you ever have.

What you read and do while participating in the Self-Led Project will help you shift your conscious attention and increase your self-awareness. As you focus your attention, you will notice that this has a direct impact on your state of being. That’s because your attention determines what you are and are not aware of.

Consciously focusing your attention on your automatic responses will make you far more self-aware and will help you shift from the automatic life you have to choosing the life you want.

We usually aren’t aware of our unconscious conditioning. By bringing attention to your unconscious, you have an opportunity to heal, harmonize, and update it so that its influence reflects current circumstances.

Using IFS for Personal Development

You may have decided to participate in The Self-Led Project to help you change or improve yourself. Signing up for this program is probably not the first strategy you have tried to bring about change.

Paradoxically, *trying* to change can get in the way of changing. But getting curious about why you do what you do makes change possible. This curiosity leads to understanding and creates an opening for self-compassion.

When the parts of you which operate in your unconscious feel your compassionate understanding, they become willing to change. That is precisely what the Self-Led Project will help you accomplish. The Self-Led Project was designed to help you assume leadership of your internal environment. This will give you access to power and choice that may be missing for you now.

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 (ICF) training program. Shortly after completing my life coaching training, I was introduced to IFS as a therapy client. I quickly realized the practical and powerful applications of IFS for life coaches and their clients. I saw that the IFS model could help resolve unfinished aspects of the past that got in the way of having the life I wanted.

I've taken some of what I learned during my own personal development journey including addiction recovery, years of therapy, having my own coach, and hundreds of hours of coaching and IFS training to create this program. My successful personal transformation has inspired and informed the program you are about to apply yourself to.

I believe that each of us has a reliable internal source of wisdom, comfort, and guidance. In the Internal Family Systems model, this source is referred to as Self. Our inability to access Self-leadership is due to emotional injuries we have never recovered from. Our parts lost their connection to Self at some point in the past when they volunteered to take on extreme roles to help us survive.

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 IFS model can help remove the thorn.

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

The Self-Led Project will help you heal your emotional wounds and liberate you from their limiting constraints. What will eventually emerge is a more balanced and harmonious internal environment under the wise leadership of Self.

Participation in this program will help you understand yourself deeply and compassionately. Rather than thinking of yourself as a single-minded individual who occasionally gets lost, stuck, confused, overwhelmed, and conflicted, you will learn to think of yourself as a multi-dimensional being with a rich cadre of subpersonalities that can help or hinder you in your attempts to live the life you want.

As you get to know your parts, you will gain access to resources needed to meet the challenges and take advantage of opportunities in life with clarity and wisdom.

The Power of Beliefs

The difference between success and failure in personal development is related to how empowered you feel. Until you believe you can achieve what you want to, no amount of guidance will help you. Alternately, when you believe you can achieve your objectives, your chances of success are dramatically improved. What stops success are disempowering beliefs such as:

- This is too hard
- I am not capable of achieving this
- I'm a fraud
- It's not safe to be successful
- If I try and fail, it will hurt too much
- I'm not worthy of success
- I can't have what I want

There are an endless number of disempowering beliefs that could make successful personal development nearly impossible. If you struggle to accomplish what you want in life, you may not be aware of the beliefs that are stopping you. Using the IFS model, the Self-Led Project will help you discover and update those beliefs.

When the disempowering beliefs that limit the fullness of your life are examined and updated, success is possible. IFS helps get to the source of disempowering beliefs. When you become consciously aware of the parts of yourself that hold, respond to, and enforce those beliefs, things will begin to shift.

In most cases, disempowering beliefs start out as ideas that offer the most logical explanations conceivable during challenging times. But a belief is more like a theory than the truth. A belief is a thought accepted as the truth (whether it is true or not).

Disempowering beliefs are like inaccurate formulas that create more problems than they solve. A disempowering belief is an outdated idea.

When the beliefs that are responsible for your dissatisfaction are challenged and updated, successful achievement of objectives is possible.

I have never found anything more effective than IFS for updating beliefs.

This program will help you, as your authentic Self, reclaim the central leadership role in your life. Each exercise was designed to help you understand yourself more deeply. To prepare for this, gather as much curiosity and courage as you can. Set an intention to be fully engaged as this personal development program helps you answer four important questions.

1. Who am I and who am I not?
2. What makes me think, feel, and act as I do?
3. How can I change the thoughts, feelings, and actions that aren't working for me?
4. How can I start living the life I want?

Answering these questions will engender the confidence and self-trust needed to transform your life.

Making the Unconscious Conscious

Most of us are unaware that we live unconsciously. We think, feel, and behave automatically. It makes sense that we don't know we are living unconscious and automatic lives because we are not aware of what is unconscious.

We experience this involuntary life with a degree of dissatisfaction and pain. To manage the discomfort, we try to control ourselves and the circumstances of our lives. The dream of control brings hope. We fail to control anything and experience disappointment. The familiar sense of malcontent returns. We give up or try harder, continuing to experience life in this repeating pattern.

Pain inspires change. Fear stops progress.

Pain inspires change. When the discomfort becomes too great, some seek help from a personal development coach. This works for many people (including me). Reflection, clarity, intention, and accountability can add up to a shift that changes how we view ourselves and the circumstances of our lives.

Fear can stop progress on the journey to a transformed life. A degree of courage is needed to meet the fear that change can activate. With perseverance and some degree of success, our perception of what is possible can permanently expand. A shift in what we believe we are capable of can boost confidence and reduce fear. Disempowering self-doubt is replaced with empowering confidence.

Some of us are willing to adopt the strategies and formulas of others to have a better life. We certainly can benefit from what others can teach us. But following someone else's path and ignoring our own limits what is possible for each of us. By getting to know your authentic Self, you can learn to follow your own internal wisdom and guidance.

The Four Modules of the Self-Led Project

This program, when used in a group, will be paced to complete one of the three modules in 12 sessions. When used individually, or with a coach, you can do the work at your own pace.

Take your time with each of the 11 exercises in **Module 1, The Influence of Parts**, and expand awareness of your automatic reactions to the circumstances of your life.

Whether you are already familiar and practiced with the IFS model, or new to the idea of an internal world of parts, Module 1 will help you understand the influence your parts have on your life and how you perceive it. With a focus on increasing awareness of your inner world, parts begin to feel seen, known, and understood. The result is more clarity and more room for Self.

With this heightened self-awareness, the 13 exercises in **Module 2, Internal Relationships** will show you how to use the Internal Family Systems model to transform your life from the inside out.

In Module 2, we go deeper into the world of parts and discover the healing and unifying power of Self. The exercises in this module enable you to strengthen the connection with your parts and build trust between them and Self. As this happens, participants feel less out of control and more confident in their responses to what is happening in their external worlds.

The first two modules will help you learn about your parts and about the IFS model. The 17 exercises in **Module 3, Getting Personal** will help you begin to connect and build collaborative relationships with your parts.

Completion of the first three Modules will prepare you for the final 10 exercises in **Module 4, Practical Applications**. In this module, you will leverage all you have learned about yourself to create more capacity in your life.

The content and exercises in Module 4 will show you how to leverage all you have learned about your Self and your parts. You will begin working with your parts to help solve the problems you encounter in your life and to create the life you want. The exercises in Module 4 will help you begin to change the thoughts, feelings, and actions that aren't working for you.

After establishing a working relationship with parts and developing trust between Self and parts, Module 4 provides tools that can be applied to difficult decisions, internal conflict, ongoing suffering, harmful habits, and unworkable life patterns. Using these tools helps your inner world unify under the leadership of Self and master new life skills. This establishes an inner environment that is safe enough to imagine a previously impossible life.

The Appendix, Documenting and Mapping Your Parts, will help you map and track your journey and document what you are learning about your internal world.

To get the best results from this program, do the exercises. Each exercise has a clearly defined purpose.

The exercises ask you to apply this program to your own life experiences. Ironically, you will find that your suffering, and confusion can be transformed into insights by doing the work described and contained within the exercises in this workbook.