

**Insight One: I Am Self** - The leader of my internal system whose presence is compassionate wisdom.

We are holistic beings made up of a body, mind, heart, and spirit that interact with each other to create who we are. One basic assumption of the IFS model is that the true nature of the mind is divided into a number of subpersonalities or ego states, called parts. These parts interact with an aspect of ourselves called Self. Self exists in everyone and is our true nature, our seat of consciousness, our spiritual foundation, our central core of compassionate wisdom. Self is the true leader of the system and is naturally compassionate and curious about our parts and the world.

Some people identify so strongly with their parts, that they may feel they do not even have a Self. The truth is, you *are* Self, even though you may not be able to access it due to the activity of your parts. A popular analogy is that Self is like the sun which can be clouded over by parts. But even when it is cloudy (parts are present and active), the sun is always shining. It is also important to remember that the sky is in a constant flow of changing weather patterns whose clouds come and go, like feelings and thoughts come and go.

It is a new paradigm to believe that Self is who you truly are. It's a difficult paradigm for many whose skies are mainly filled with black clouds and raging storms (activities of our parts). For many with trauma histories the world is often experienced as a dark place.

But there is hope. According to Schwartz (2020) Self is present at birth. It is whole and cannot be broken or damaged, no matter what our parts may think. Qualities of Self include curiosity, compassion, clarity, calmness, confidence, creativity, courage, connectedness, presence, patience, persistence, perspective, and playfulness.

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