

## **Parenting through IFS**

*From Tears to Transformation*

FRANK ANDERSON

For all its joys, parenting is often a roller coaster of challenges. Even when parents are at the top of their game, the most routine curveballs—quarreling siblings, a child’s public meltdown, or a phone call from a teacher—can trigger unresolved shame, guilt, or anger. But the Internal Family Systems (IFS) approach can help parents more fully understand and heal the wounds their children will inevitably evoke in them, allowing them to better set healthy limits, while also creating a more nurturing family environment. You’ll discover how to help parents:

- Talk to children about difficult subjects by using “part of me language,” which cultivates honesty, clarity, and calm
- Explore their own reactive moments with compassion and respond to triggers with more empathy, using dialogues with inner parts
- Co-parent in a way that’s supportive, collaborative, and leads to a fuller expression of mature selfhood
- Recover from the inevitable moments when they “lose it” and take the necessary steps to repair with fuller awareness

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### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Integrate “a part of me language” in family conversation to allow for safe ways to have difficult discussions with children.
2. Create ways to engage parents in an exploration of their reactive moments with compassion and empathy instead of guilt and shame.
3. Plan an agreement with parents that allows for healthy co-parenting and minimizes the negative impact they can have on their kids when they’re not at their best
4. Demonstrate how to help parents lead from a place of power and set limits for their children while still expressing love and support.

### **Outline:**

- I. Parent Coaching vs Parent Healing
  - a. Parent Coaching
  - b. Parenting
- II. Starting the Parenting Journey
  - a. Expectations Exercise
  - b. Video (I was the perfect mom...)
- III. The Spiritual Dimension
- IV. Family History: Legacy Gifts & Burdens
  - a. Gifts and Burdens Exercise
- V. Parenting Styles & Attachment Styles
  - a. IFS & Parenting
  - b. Parenting Styles
  - c. What IFS Brings to Parenting
  - d. Video (Do you suffer from Par-ent-ing?)
- VI. Our Reactive Moments
  - a. What causes you to lose it (exercise)
  - b. List the reasons you can get activated.
- VII. When Your Kids Become Your Perpetrator
  - a. Video (Mom losing it)
  - b. Examples
    - i. World series
    - ii. Sleepover & football game
    - iii. Trick-or-treating & dinner
- VIII. Responsibility & Repair
  - a. Owning our Parts
  - b. Apologizing
  - c. Connecting

- IX. Triggering Exercise
  - a. Overidentifying with their parts
  - b. Co-Parenting
  - c. Video (people with no kids)
- X. The Triggering Agreement
  - a. Personal example
  - b. Triggering Agreement Exercise
- XI. Direct Access Parenting
  - a. Parenting Books
  - b. Parenting and Society/Culture
- XII. Parenting and Attachment
- XIII. Parenting and the Brain
  - a. Video (I'm not your friend, kid!)
- XIV. From Reactive to Responsive
- XV. The Parent Self
- XVI. Parenting from Self
- XVII. Unique Circumstances
- XVIII. Summary & Ending Exercise

## **References:**

1. Hold On to your Kids: Why parents matter more than peers. G. Neufeld, PhD. G Mate' MD. 2014. Ballantine Books
2. The Whole Brain Child. D. Siegel MD T Payne Bryson PhD. 2011. Delacorte Press.
3. Internal Family Systems Skills Training Manual. F Anderson MD, M Sweezy PhD, R Schwartz PhD 2017. PESI Publishing and Media