

TRAUMA: IFS & THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Internal Family Systems

Polyvagal Theory

SURVIVAL

FLOP PROTECTORS

COLLAPSE e.g. chronic fatigue, de-personalisation, fainting, narcolepsy, migraine, seeking oblivion or death.

SUBMIT e.g. depression, appeasing, resignation, withdrawal, obedience, zoning-out, numbing addictions.

EXILES

Overwhelm leads to fragmentation.

Without support to regulate & recover, parts holding unprocessed **fear, grief, rage, shame, panic & despair** are banished. Often young, sometimes stored as physical symptoms, they keep trying to be heard & helped, re-activated by similar events.

PROTECTORS - as either proactive **MANAGERS** or reactive **FIREFIGHTERS** - use whatever strategy they originally found to keep **EXILE** pain away.

FIX PROTECTORS

e.g. hyper-vigilance, controlling, quitting, rebelling, anxiety, rushing, perfectionism, bracing, hyperactivity, criticising, lying, impulsiveness, OCD, activity addictions.

SELF-LED

Parts feel safe to relax & work as a team. Needs, feelings & healthy boundaries are welcome. Individuation, play, trust, growth, spontaneity, intimacy, learning, creativity, rest & healing.

SELF

(soul / essence / core self)
A mindful, embodied reservoir of clarity, curiosity, compassion, calm & connection. Being not doing.

RESILIENCE

I CAN'T

I HURT

I MUST

I CAN

I AM

flop

COLLAPSE

Dorsal Vagal (PSNS)

SUBMIT

HYPO-aroused SNS

Seeking safety via
DISCONNECTION

FREEZE

hyper+hypo overwhelm

fix

**FIGHT
FLIGHT**

HYPER-aroused
Sympathetic NS

Seeking safety
via **ACTION**

flow

**SAFE &
CONNECTED**

Ventral Vagal (PSNS)
plus flexible mixing with
other ANS states

CO-REGULATION
with Self or others

THE SURVIVE/THRIVE SPIRAL

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