

# TRAUMA: IFS & THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

## Internal Family System

## Polyvagal Theory

### FLOP PROTECTORS

**COLLAPSE** e.g. chronic fatigue, de-personalisation, fainting, narcolepsy, catatonia, migraine 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.

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

I CAN'T

I HURT

I MUST

I CAN

I AM

SURVIVAL

RESILIENCE

# THE SURVIVE/THRIVE SPIRAL