



PROGRAM MATERIALS

Program #36212

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Mastering the Inner Dialogue: Applying Richard Schwartz's Internal Family Systems Model to the Practice of Trial Law

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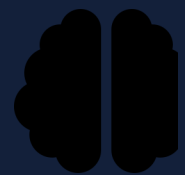
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A CLE PRESENTATION • 1.5 HOURS

Mastering the Inner Dialogue

Applying Richard Schwartz's Internal Family Systems Model to the Practice of Trial Law

Presented for the Continuing Legal Education Program
Emotional Intelligence & Advocacy Track



Today's Agenda

90 minutes · 1.5 general CLE credit hours (verify with your jurisdiction)

00:00



Why Lawyers Need This

The well-being crisis in the profession & the multiplicity of mind

00:20



The IFS Map

Self, Managers, Firefighters & Exiles

00:45



In the Courtroom

Case scenarios: cross-examination & client counseling

01:00



Tools You Can Use

The 6 F's, the internal check-in & unblending in real time

01:15



Practice Applications & Ethics

Negotiation, burnout prevention, and scope-of-practice limits

01:25



Discussion & Close

Action steps and open Q&A

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the End of This Session, You Will Be Able To:



Explain the IFS model

Describe the core architecture of Internal Family Systems Therapy — Self, Managers, Firefighters, and Exiles — as developed by Richard Schwartz.



Recognize activation in real time

Identify the physical and emotional signals that a 'part' has taken over during depositions, cross-examination, or client meetings.



Apply Self-leadership tools

Use practical, courtroom-ready techniques (the internal check-in and unblending) to stay clear, calm, and effective under pressure.



Understand ethical boundaries

Distinguish self-awareness practice from the unauthorized practice of psychotherapy, and know when to refer a client out.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO TRIAL LAWYERS

The Profession Is Struggling — And Your Inner Cast Is Working Overtime

28%

of attorneys report symptoms
of depression

19%

report symptoms of anxiety

21%

qualify as problem drinkers by
clinical screening

23%

report elevated levels of stress

Source: ABA / Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation national study of over 12,000 licensed attorneys (2016)



The trial lawyer's job — advocacy, conflict, high stakes, constant judgment — is a near-perfect trigger for the protective "parts" IFS describes. Understanding your own inner system is not self-indulgence; it is a competency and a courtroom skill.

Richard Schwartz & the Development of IFS

- Developed by family therapist Richard C. Schwartz beginning in the early 1980s.
- Originated from listening closely to clients with eating disorders describe distinct, sometimes conflicting inner "voices" or parts.
- Schwartz applied family-systems thinking — normally used on households — to the internal world of a single person.
- Published as Internal Family Systems Therapy, now a leading evidence-based model used in trauma treatment, couples work, and organizational settings.
- Core premise: the mind is naturally multiple. Having internal parts is not a disorder — it is the normal architecture of human personality.



“Internal Family Systems Therapy”

Richard C. Schwartz, PhD

The foundational text laying out the theory, the three-group model of parts, and the therapeutic process this presentation draws from.

A note on scope: this session presents IFS concepts for self-awareness and professional resilience — not as clinical training to treat clients.

THE CORE INSIGHT

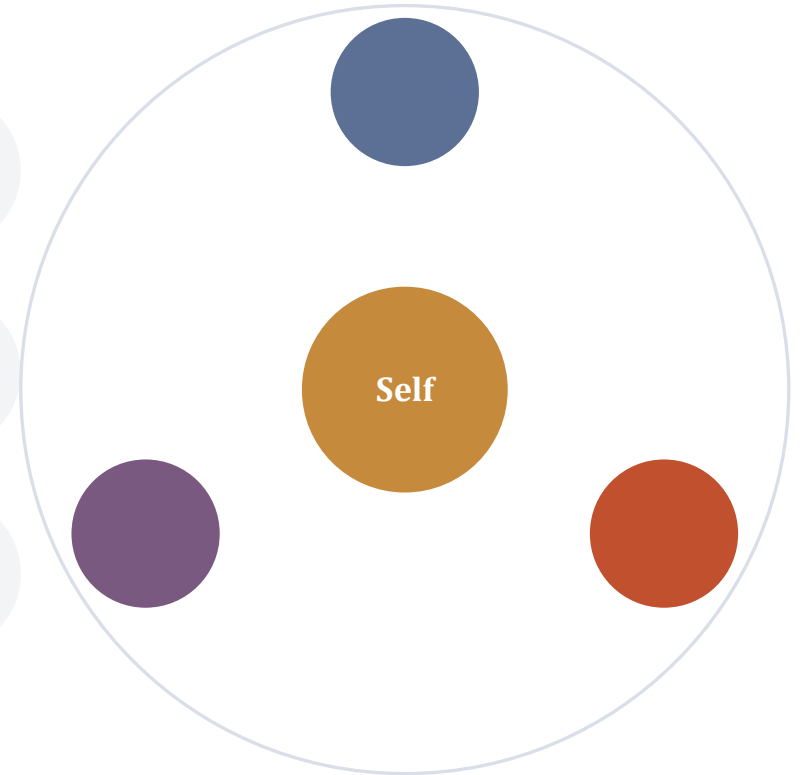
“You Are Not of One Mind”

Schwartz's starting premise: everyone's mind is naturally made up of multiple sub-personalities, or PARTS — each with its own perspective, feelings, and agenda.

"Part of me wants to accept the settlement — part of me wants to fight."

"A part of me is terrified of this cross; another part is furious at opposing counsel."

"One part says keep working; another says I can't do this anymore."



Common, everyday language already reflects this multiplicity — we just rarely take it literally.

Meet Your Inner Cast: Three Kinds of Parts

IFS groups protective parts into two categories, plus the vulnerable parts they protect. None of them are pathological — every part has a positive intent, even when its methods cause problems.



Managers

Proactive protectors

Work to control situations, people, and outcomes before pain can occur — planning, criticizing, perfecting, caretaking.



Firefighters

Reactive protectors

Jump in after pain is already triggered, to douse it fast — anger, distraction, numbing, escape, impulsive action.



Exiles

The wounded ones

Young, vulnerable parts carrying old pain, fear, or shame from past wounds — kept hidden and protected by the other two.

MEET THE PARTS



Managers

PROACTIVE PROTECTORS

In the IFS Model

Managers run the show day to day. Their job is to keep the system safe, in control, and looking good — preventing the pain carried by Exiles from ever surfacing in the first place.

What It Feels Like

Vigilant, driven, critical of self or others, perfectionistic, guarded, exhausted by the pressure of never letting up.



In the Practice of Law

- The relentless over-preparer who cannot delegate or stop revising a brief
- The inner critic that rehearses every cross-examination for flaws before it happens
- The caretaker-manager who over-functions for clients at the cost of personal limits
- The controller who needs every contingency mapped before trial

MEET THE PARTS



Firefighters

REACTIVE PROTECTORS

In the IFS Model

Firefighters activate the instant an Exile's pain breaks through. Their goal is damage control, at any cost — they douse the pain fast, without much concern for consequences.

What It Feels Like

Sudden, urgent, impulsive, hard to stop mid-reaction — followed often by shame or regret once the moment passes.



In the Practice of Law

- The snapped, sharp reply to a judge's pointed question or a client's doubt
- Doom-scrolling, overworking, or drinking after a bruising ruling or verdict
- Walking out of a deposition, or lashing out at opposing counsel in the hallway
- Impulsively firing off an email you later wish you'd slept on



Exiles

THE WOUNDED, VULNERABLE PARTS

In the IFS Model

Exiles carry the pain, fear, shame, or grief from earlier wounds — often frozen at the age the wound occurred. Managers and Firefighters work overtime to keep Exiles locked away.

What It Feels Like

Small, young, ashamed, afraid of abandonment or humiliation — rarely felt directly because protectors work so hard to bury them.



In the Practice of Law

- The old fear of not being 'smart enough' resurfacing after a lost motion
- Imposter feelings triggered by a senior partner's sharp feedback
- Old humiliation surfacing when a judge admonishes you in open court
- A client's exiled trauma emerging mid-interview, beyond the legal issue

The Self: Your Natural Core Leadership

Beneath every part is the Self — not another part, but the seat of calm, clear leadership everyone has, even when parts are crowding it out. Schwartz describes it through eight qualities, the “8 C’s.”

1

Calm

2

Clarity

3

Curiosity

4

Compassion

5

Confidence

6

Courage

7

Creativity

8

Connectedness

When you are acting from these qualities, you are “Self-led.” When a part has taken over, you are “blended.”

Self-Led vs. Part-Led: What It Looks Like at Work

Courtroom moment	Self-Led Response	Part-Led Response
A hostile witness dodges your question	Calm, curious follow-up; you adjust and press precisely	Firefighter anger — you raise your voice, lose the jury's trust
Judge criticizes your filing	Clear-eyed acknowledgment, quick correction, no spiral	Manager perfectionism or Exile shame hijacks your focus for the rest of the day
Client rejects your advice	Compassionate, confident re-explanation and boundary-setting	Caretaker-manager over-functions, or resentment leaks into tone
Opposing counsel provokes you	Grounded, strategic non-reaction; you keep the high ground	Firefighter takes the bait; the exchange becomes personal

CASE SCENARIO

Cross-Examination Under Fire

You've spent 40 minutes building toward the key impeachment point. The witness gives a smug, evasive non-answer — and you feel your face flush.



Firefighter Activates

An urge to raise your voice, cut the witness off, or land a sarcastic remark — pure reactivity aimed at relieving the sting fast.



Exile Underneath

Beneath the anger: an old fear of being outsmarted or humiliated in front of an audience — the real, vulnerable feeling being protected.



Self Steps In

A breath, a beat of silence, a curious internal question — “What does this part need me to know?” — restores calm, clear focus before you speak.



Self-Led Move

You slow your pace, repeat the question precisely, and let the jury see the evasion for what it is — without ever raising your voice.

The technique isn't suppressing the reaction — it's noticing it fast enough that Self, not the Firefighter, chooses your next question.

CASE SCENARIO

Client Counseling and Exiled Pain

Mid-interview, your client suddenly goes quiet, then tearful, describing the incident underlying the case — pain well beyond the legal elements you need.



Client's Exile Surfaces

The client's own exiled pain — grief, shame, or fear tied to the underlying events — breaks through the protective composure they walked in with.



Your Manager Activates

Your inner Manager may push you to redirect briskly back to the facts you need, uncomfortable with the emotional territory.



Self-Led Presence

Staying Self-led means making space — brief, compassionate acknowledgment — without becoming your client's therapist or losing the interview's purpose.



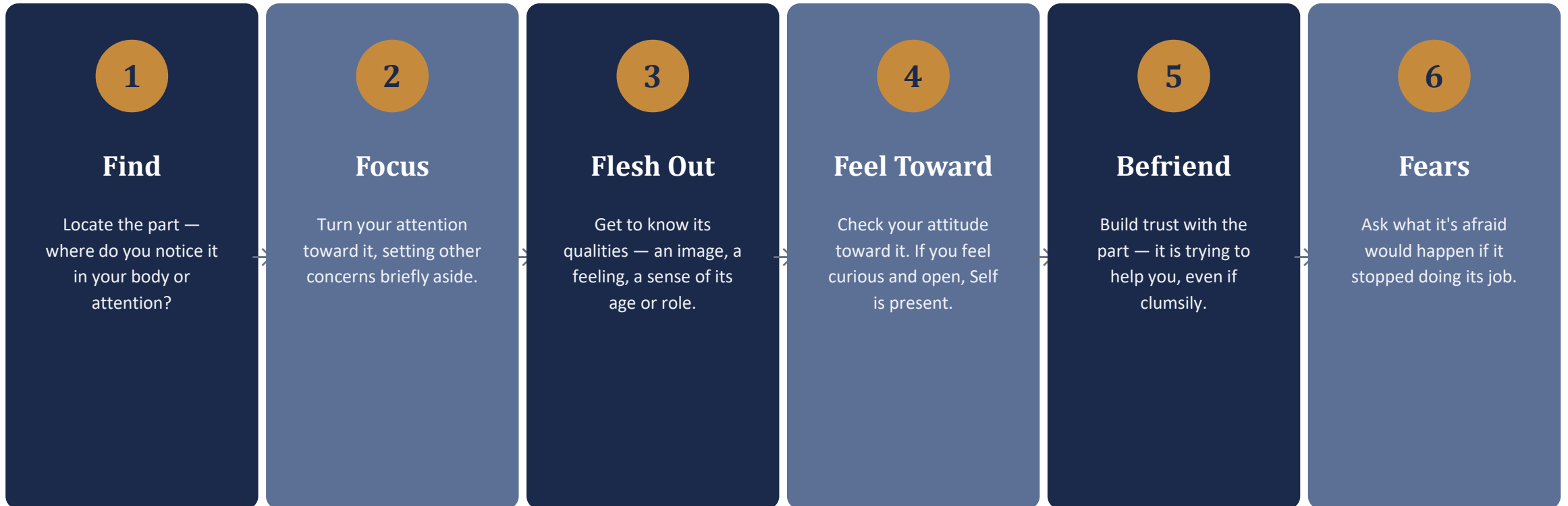
Professional Boundary

You hold both roles: attentive, human presence and clear-eyed counsel — then refer to appropriate support if deeper processing is needed.

Self-leadership lets you be fully present with a client's pain without absorbing it as your own or overstepping your professional role.

The 6 F's: How Self Gets to Know a Part

Schwartz's process for working with any activated part — useful as a private, five-minute self-check before a hearing, negotiation, or hard conversation.



The Internal Check-In

USE IT WHEN: before a hearing, deposition, negotiation, or any high-stakes conversation.

1

Pause for one breath. Notice what you're feeling in your body right now — tight chest, racing thoughts, clenched jaw.

2

Silently ask: “What part of me is activated right now?” Name it if you can — the perfectionist, the anger, the fear of losing.

3

Ask that part: “Can you give me a little space so I can handle this?” You are not silencing it — just asking it to step back.

4

Notice whether you feel calmer, clearer, and more curious. That shift signals Self is back in the lead.



This takes 30-60 seconds and can be done silently at counsel table, in a hallway, or on a call — no one else needs to know you're doing it.

Unblending in Real Time

USE IT WHEN: you notice you're already “in” a reaction — raised voice, racing pulse, tunnel vision.

- 1 Recognize the signal: language shifts from “I notice anger” to “I AM angry.” That fusion is the tell that a part has taken over — this is blending.
- 2 Create a half-second of distance: silently say, “A part of me feels this way” rather than “I feel this way.”
- 3 Physically anchor Self — feet on the floor, a slow exhale, a sip of water, a pause “to check my notes.”
- 4 Re-enter the moment from Self: curious and clear rather than reactive. You can always return to the part's concern later, in private.



Unblending is not suppression — it doesn't ask the emotion to disappear. It asks you to lead from a wider vantage point than the emotion alone.

Self-Led Negotiation & Mediation

Negotiation puts every protective part on alert — fear of losing, need to control, urge to dominate. Self-leadership changes the outcome, not just the feeling.



Part-Led Negotiating

- Anchors rigidly out of fear of “losing,” missing real value on the table
- Manager over-prepares to the point of inflexibility under new information
- Firefighter walks away or escalates when the other side pushes back
- Reads as anxious or combative — undermines leverage and trust



Self-Led Negotiating

- Stays curious about the other side's real interests, not just position
- Holds firm limits calmly, without needing to “win” every exchange
- Can absorb a hard counter without reactivity derailing strategy
- Reads as confident and credible — often the strongest leverage in the room

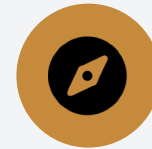
Provocation: Opposing Counsel & the Bench

Provocation is a strategy some opposing counsel use deliberately. Getting you “blended” is often the goal — Self-leadership is the counter-move.



The Trap

- Personal jabs, interruptions, or bad-faith tactics are designed to activate a Firefighter
- A reactive lawyer looks less credible to the judge or jury than the provocateur does
- Once blended, strategic judgment narrows — you fight the person, not the case
- Regret and reputational cost often outlast any momentary release



The Counter-Move

- Recognize provocation as information, not an emergency requiring reaction
- Use the internal check-in before responding — even a two-second pause
- Respond to the substance, on the record, from Self's clarity and confidence
- Let the contrast between reactive counsel and composed counsel do the work

Preventing Burnout & Vicarious Trauma

Trial practice exposes lawyers to relentless pressure and, often, others' trauma. IFS offers a sustainable framework for the long game of a legal career.



How Burnout Builds

- Managers push relentless overwork to stay “on top of everything,” with no off switch
- Firefighters numb the exhaustion — alcohol, overwork, withdrawal, distraction
- Exiled pain from vicarious trauma or old wounds never gets acknowledged
- The system runs on protection alone, with Self crowded out for years



A Sustainable Alternative

- Regular internal check-ins build the habit of noticing activation early
- Self-led limits: protectors can trust that needs are being heard, not ignored
- Naming an exiled feeling — even briefly — reduces its grip over time
- Self-leadership is a renewable resource; sheer willpower from a part is not

Scope of Practice: Self-Awareness, Not Psychotherapy



Appropriate Use by a Lawyer

- ✓ Private self-reflection on your own reactions and triggers
- ✓ Recognizing when YOU need a pause, consult, or referral
- ✓ Using the language of “parts” informally to stay self-aware
- ✓ Building personal resilience and courtroom composure



Outside a Lawyer's Role

- X Formally “doing IFS therapy” on a client, colleague, or opposing party
- X Diagnosing or labeling a client's mental health or trauma history
- X Treating a client's exiled pain instead of referring to a licensed clinician
- X Substituting this framework for competent, independent legal advice

Model Rule of Professional Conduct 1.1, Comment [8], recognizes that competent representation includes maintaining the attorney's own well-being. Check your jurisdiction's specific rules and any lawyer well-being CLE requirements.

Three Action Steps for Monday Morning

1



Name one recurring part.

Identify a protector you rely on often — the perfectionist Manager, the sharp-tongued Firefighter — and simply notice when it shows up this week.

2



Practice the 60-second check-in.

Before your next hearing, deposition, or hard client call, run the internal check-in once. Notice what changes when you do.

3



Know your referral resources.

Locate your state's Lawyer Assistance Program and a trusted mental-health referral before you need them — not in the middle of a crisis.

Resources & Further Reading



Internal Family Systems Therapy

Richard C. Schwartz, PhD — the foundational text on the model presented today.



No Bad Parts

Richard C. Schwartz, PhD — an accessible general-audience introduction to IFS.



The IFS Institute

ifs-institute.com — training, certification, and practitioner directories.



ABA Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs (CoLAP)

americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance — confidential state-by-state well-being resources.



Questions & Discussion

What part of you showed up while you were listening today?

Thank you for attending “Mastering the Inner Dialogue.”
Certificates of attendance will be provided per your jurisdiction's CLE requirements.