

# Trauma-Informed Stabilization Treatment (TIST): Treating Unsafe and Addictive Behavior in Clients with Histories of Trauma

MODULE TWO Live Session  
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Janina Fisher, Ph.D.

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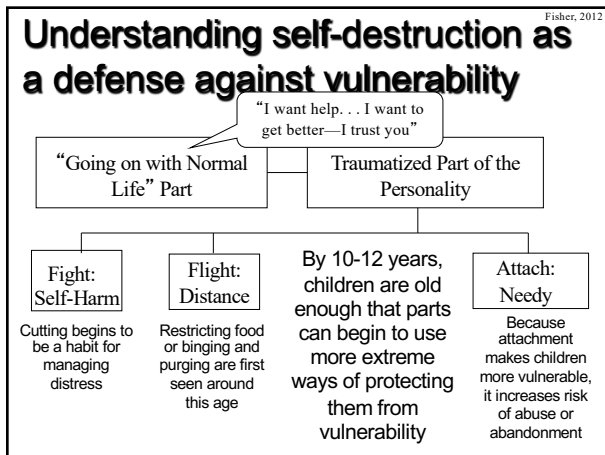
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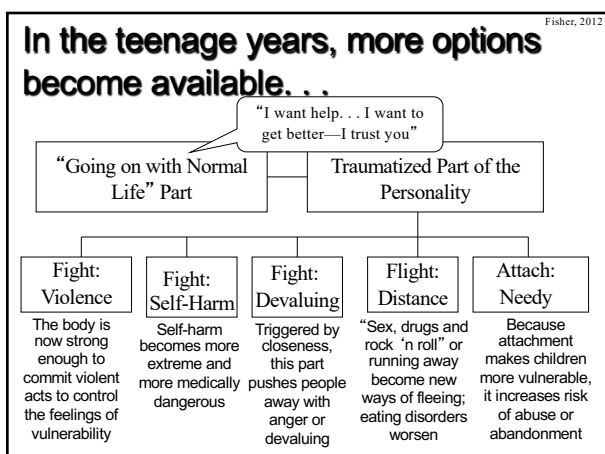
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### The key to stabilization is the “Language of Parts”

- The language of parts as the language of therapy increases client’s ability to separate themselves a little more from their impulses
- Naming each symptom as a part helps keep the frontal lobes ‘online’ by increasing curiosity and concentration. It also changes the relationship to the symptoms or impulses
- The language of parts facilitates mindful focus. The language of emotions can stimulate more emotion. In mindfulness, a thought is “just a thought,” a feeling is “just feeling” or it is “just a part” having a feeling

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### Learning parts language as a second language

- Although children and teens usually have an easier time with the **concept of parts than adults, they still have to learn to speak the language** of parts fluently.
- The therapist still has to become a ‘simultaneous translator’. Each time the client says, “I feel,” the therapist translates the statement into parts language: “*A part of you wants to cut,*” “*a part of you wants to die.*”
- As in a language class, the more intensive the use of the second language, the more quickly the student learns. The habit of prefacing each feeling with “I” is automatic for most people but dangerous for some clients

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### What to say: the language of the parts

- “Notice that sadness as the sadness of a part—is it OK for the sad part to be upset?”
- “Would it be OK to **hang out** with that part? Could we get to know that part a little?”
- “Notice what happens when you notice the suicidal feelings as your suicidal part. . . It’s just trying to protect you because it thinks you can’t handle your feelings. . . It has to save you from them.”
- “When the suicidal part threatens to kill all of you, what happens to the sad part?”

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### Translate each impulse into parts language, too

- Running away:** name the impulse or the past behavior as the “running away part.” Ask: “what was the running away part worried about if you stayed?”
- Self-injury** may be the result of several parts: the cutting part, the swallowing part, the part that burns, the head-banging part, etc.
- Ask: what triggered the running away part? What triggered the swallowing part?**
- And always ask the client to ask those parts: “What was the swallowing part worried about if you didn’t swallow?” “What was the head-banging part worried about?”

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### Which “I” ?

- When clients use “I” to speak “from” a part, **we can ask, “Which ‘I’ feels that way?”** Or “Who’s that speaking?”
- The more we differentiate the client from the part, the more likely the client won’t act on the part’s impulse.**
- Even if the client insists, “No, that’s **me** banging my head,” don’t be afraid to say, “I’m sure it feels like all of you, but I think it was the headbanging part trying to help”
- Even children can be asked **to assume that any bad feeling, thought, or physical reaction represents a communication from a part.** Be prepared to say: “If you don’t listen to the parts, they will do things that keep you here longer.”

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### How the Parts Dominate: “Blending”

[Schwartz, 2001]

- When the client of any age “blends” with a part, **the feelings and impulses of that part feel like “me.”**
- Because clients have no awareness that they are feeling a part, not all of themselves, **we have to help them recognize blending. That is usually easy to do IF we make sure to convey empathy, not judgment.** Traumatized children are sensitive to tone of voice and body language because that’s how kids sense danger
- It’s usually easier to help young people recognize blending if we start with feelings like anxiety or depression: “Wow... you’re really blended with that depressed part, huh? Which leaves him all alone without anyone. . .”

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### How the Parts Dominate: “Blending,” cont.

- **“Unblending”** is a skill that is necessary for clients to inhibit self-destructive behavior
- We may feel pressure to get clients to unblend quickly to prevent unsafe behavior, but **recognition that they are blended must precede our efforts to help them unblend**
- **We can start with noticing the relationship between vulnerable feelings and protector parts acting on impulse:**  
*“When you blend with the hurt part, the cutting part usually gets triggered... I wonder how that makes the hurt part feel”*
- *“Let’s assume that the cutting part was triggered by an upset part. . . Do you have any idea what part that was?”*

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### An Unblending Protocol for Kids

1. Assume that any bad feeling belongs to a part
2. Name the feelings as “her” feelings or “his” feelings or “their” feelings.
3. Create a little more separation from the bad feeling by using an object to represent the part that’s feeling bad (it could be a toy or a tissue box or a cup)
4. Use your wisest mind to reassure the part that you are here for it. Acknowledge the fear or hurt. Imagine these fears belonged to a friend—what would you say?
5. Ask the parts if they feel like you’re “getting” it?

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### Working with Unsafe Behavior as a Parts Issue

- **Consistently re-frame the unsafe impulse as the impulse of the Fight or Flight part:** “Notice the suicidal part is trying to offer help. . .” “Notice that the cutting part is trying to help by telling you to cut. . .”
- **Differentiate the “Normal Life” kid from the part:** “You don’t want to be here, and I doubt the suicidal part wants to be here either. . .”
- **Be absolutely confident** that this is a suicidal PART, not the whole client. “The suicidal part is trying to offer you an exit strategy—I’m not sure it knows that you can tolerate the bad feelings. . .”

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### Insist on Unblending

•The most effective way to ensure clients' safety is to insist on their unblending from unsafe parts

•Strategies for motivating the client to unblend:

- "Every time you blend with these parts, you abandon them—it's like you're agreeing with them that it is hopeless and they should die"
- "So, it's really OK with you to let the cutting part hurt the little kid parts? Doesn't that scare them?" "It's OK with you for the suicidal part to kill the child parts?"
- "These parts are crying out for help---if they don't get heard, they just get louder."
- "You can't kick these parts to the curb—they deserve better than that... They already went through so much"

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