



# **The Survivor's Compass**

*Tools for "Self" Supported Trauma Healing*

## **What is Self?**

Dr. Richard Schwartz, the developer of a method called Internal Family Systems (IFS), defines the qualities of Self as calmness, compassion, curiosity, courage, creativity, connection, confidence and clarity.

The primary feelings that help you to recognize and experience Self are peace and calm, self-love, also known as self-compassion, courage, confidence and clarity. Meditative practices, Relaxation Response exercises, prayer and practicing gratitude, and creative expression can help you to access and experience Self.

Self is the source of infinite wisdom, clarity, consciousness, our deepest Being, ever growing and ever evolving. The goal of healing is to be able to keep Self in the "seat of consciousness" and become Self-led, instead of being influenced in feelings and behaviors by the "trauma voice."

## **Practicing Self**

Getting into Self requires that you be able to take a step back from the "parts" of you that have been "triggered". Triggering is the experience of being flooded by uncontrollable intense emotions or physical sensations from your past. To do this, imagine a room that we will call your "negotiation room". In this room there is a seat, the seat of consciousness, or the place from which your actions are being controlled. There is also a table around which your parts can negotiate.

When you feel triggered take a deep, calming breath and imagine that the feelings you are experiencing are attached to a separate part of you. See the part enter the negotiation room. When you have a clear picture of the part, ask Self to enter the room. Self should feel calm, compassionate and curious toward these parts of your psyche. Ask Self to take the seat of control and ask the triggered part(s) to take a seat around the table.

Feeling compassion and curiosity toward your parts may be enough to get Self on board. If it is not, try meditating with peaceful music, spend a few minutes in prayer or in gratitude, recounting everything you appreciate in your life. Sit quietly and focus intently on your heart center, breathing deeply and willing yourself to relax, opening your heart to a loving awareness of your parts and inviting them in.

These are all effective ways to experience Self. Practice them and then write about what you experienced. By writing it down, you are committing it to memory, so that when you most need it, in moments of intense emotion, you will be able to call it up again.

