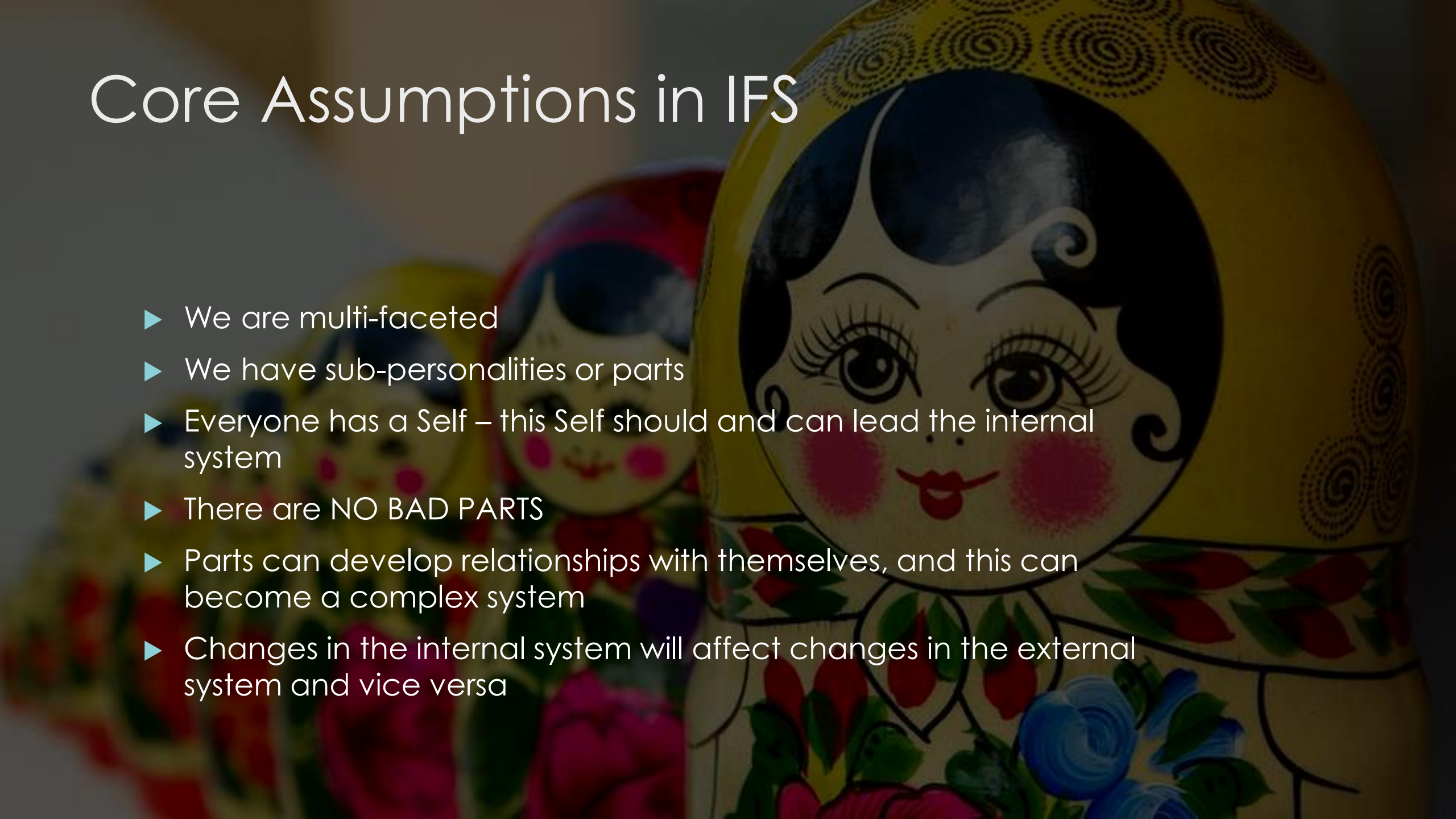


An introduction to Internal Family Systems (IFS)

AND WORKING WITH CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Core Assumptions in IFS

- ▶ We are multi-faceted
- ▶ We have sub-personalities or parts
- ▶ Everyone has a Self – this Self should and can lead the internal system
- ▶ There are NO BAD PARTS
- ▶ Parts can develop relationships with themselves, and this can become a complex system
- ▶ Changes in the internal system will affect changes in the external system and vice versa



Goal of IFS therapy

- ▶ To liberate parts from extreme roles
- ▶ To restore trust in Self leadership
- ▶ To achieve balance, harmony and wholeness
- ▶ To bring more Self energy to external systems

Multiplicity



- ▶ Consider for a moment the idea that your thoughts and emotions come from discrete personalities inside...this may feel unnerving?
- ▶ What would be good about having parts?
- ▶ Consider how it would feel if you knew, with some confidence, that all of your disdainful, critical or repulsive thoughts or feeling were coming from little parts of yourself rather than being an indication of who you are as person?
- ▶ Imagine for a moment switching 'I feel angry that...' to

A part of me feels...

- ▶ A part of me feels angry when you said that...
- ▶ A part of me is worried that you won't like it and you'll be critical
- ▶ A part of me is frustrated that I always get asked to do more than other people (and another part of me is thrilled that I get asked to take on more work!)
- ▶ A part of me is worried that I am not going to deliver this talk well enough to inspire you to want to learn more about IFS...and another part is pleased to have been asked to be here talking with you today...and another part is reminding me of all the other things I have to get done today after I've finished!
- ▶ ALL parts are welcome

Different types of parts:



Managers

- ▶ These are protector parts that act pre-emptively to keep the person feeling secure.
- ▶ They tend to behave in the following ways:
 - ▶ Controlling
 - ▶ Analyzing
 - ▶ Criticising
 - ▶ Judging
 - ▶ Planning
 - ▶ Caretaking
- ▶ They protect against anything that leads to vulnerability, pain or instability.
- ▶ Their motto is 'Never again!'



Firefighters

- ▶ Reactive
- ▶ Spring into action whenever pain from other parts (esp. more wounded exiles), gets activated or threatens to overwhelm.
- ▶ Act powerfully and automatically
- ▶ Behaviours of firefighters:
 - ▶ Over-spending
 - ▶ Bingeing/over-eating
 - ▶ Self harm
 - ▶ Dissociating
 - ▶ Distracting e.g. through drinking
- ▶ Their motto is 'when all else fails!'



Exiles

- ▶ These parts have been rejected or traumatized
- ▶ They hold deep wounds and memories filled with terror, pain, and shame.
- ▶ They are young and childlike, often frozen in time and hiding for protection.
- ▶ They leave the person feeling exposed and vulnerable, something the protectors fear will destabilise the system.
- ▶ Behaviours of exiles:
 - ▶ Anger
 - ▶ Sensitivity
 - ▶ Dependency
 - ▶ Innocence
 - ▶ Openness
 - ▶ Spontaneity
- ▶ 'Don't forget me' is their motto.



Self

- ▶ This is the deepest essence of every person.
- ▶ When differentiated, Self acts as a wise, compassionate leader able to heal and lead the system.
- ▶ Qualities of self energy:
 - ▶ Curiosity
 - ▶ Compassion
 - ▶ Calmness
 - ▶ Creativity
 - ▶ Confidence
 - ▶ Connectedness

Video - Parts

- ▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5Xc9U6HYC8
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LuXM6uWUHs>

IFS with Children & Adolescents

- ▶ Introduce the notion of multiplicity – Inside Out is a brilliant reference to use
- ▶ Use of drawings to illustrate that we have different parts that all feel and think different things
- ▶ Start to map this out with children and families



Working with children & families

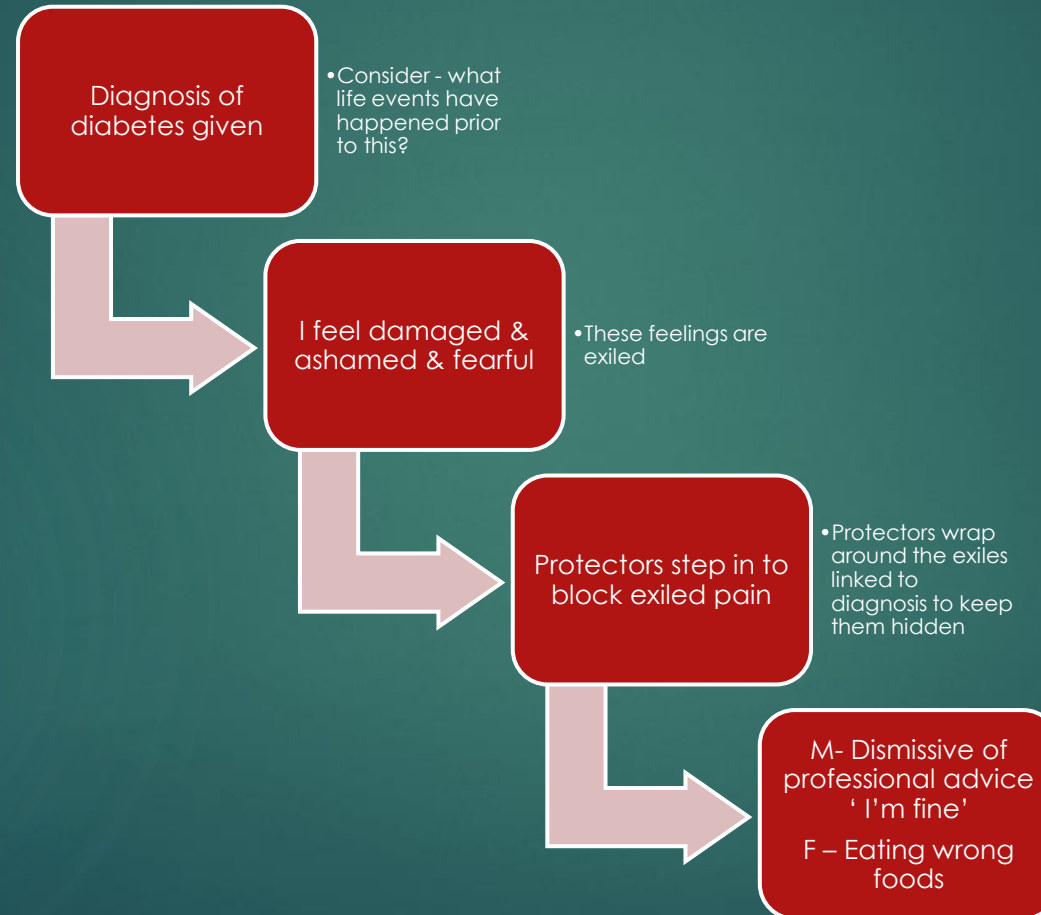
- ▶ Be creative in your approach – use of figures, props, drawings etc is important.
- ▶ Use of images/toys to represent parts can enable children and young people to speak to the emotions and experiences of those parts



Key parts of the process

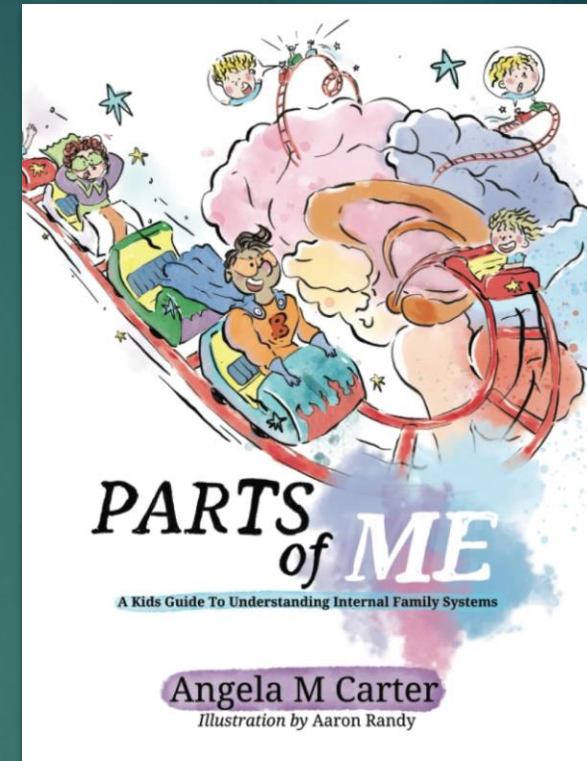
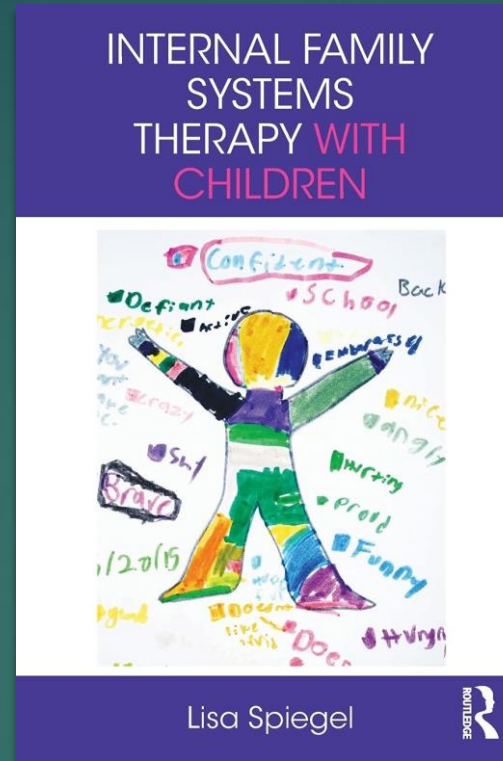
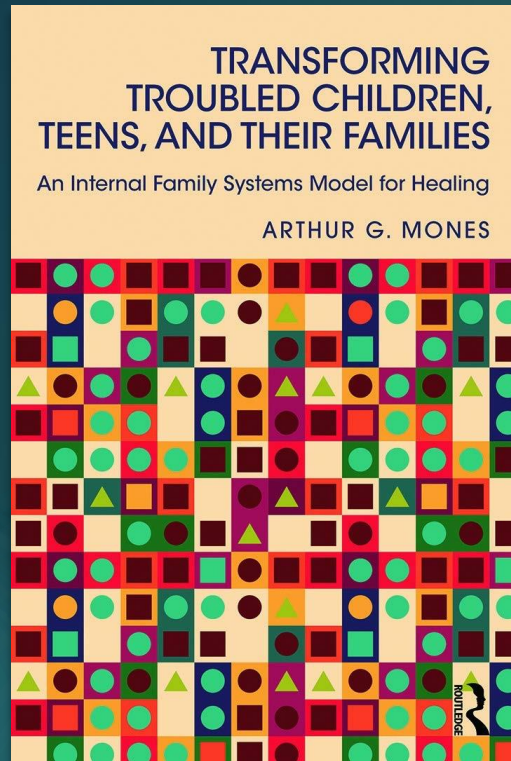
- ▶ Take time to introduce the model and concept– bring the language of parts into the conversation quite early on:
 - ▶ Maybe there is a part of you that really doesn't want to be here with me right now, and another part curious whether this might be helpful for you?'
- ▶ Invite the YP to use the statement of 'a part of me feels...'
- ▶ Use characters to help with understanding of the key principles of IFS e.g. Inside Out
- ▶ Start to map out any parts that the YP might talk about
- ▶ Depending on the age of the child, don't worry too much at the start to talk about managers and exiles – this can confuse
- ▶ Create a Parts Map
- ▶ How do the parts feel towards each other?

How parts might show up in CYP with diabetes



Key parts of the process - clinicians

- ▶ When working with children and families, remain curious about the following:
 - ▶ Your own parts - rescuer, caretaker, problem solver are everywhere in the helping professions!
 - ▶ Learn to notice these parts, when they show up, why are they there, what is their purpose and how can they step back
 - ▶ The protector parts of the child/young person – how do they show up in the therapy space?
 - ▶ Permission seeking from those protector parts – noticing them and sharing this back with the YP, working with those parts and showing appreciation for all they have done for the child/young person.



References