

Working with Perpetrator Introject Parts

Brief background: Client (“Rae”) is in her late 30’s and is a survivor of *Organized Cult Abuse*. She was abused from the age of 3 to the age of 17 when she left home for college and did not return. Her diagnosis at this time in treatment was DID. I had been working with Rae for almost 2 years at this point in therapy. At this time in my practice I would speak either through the emerging adult self or directly to alter ANP’s because the client often dissociated in session whether we wanted parts to present themselves or not... they, at times, would “barge in” to do their own work. We missed one session, due to my cancellation (I was sick), which resulted in a phobic reaction and led to an episode of self-harm. This resulted in a *Perpetrator Introject/Imitator Part* burning down part of her peaceful place AND abusing parts internally. We had identified the PI in the past and asked if that part would be present to be sure we didn’t talk about things that were off limits, or talk about things with parts who did not need to know, and this had resulted in a cooperative working environment internally where the client was able to process disturbing material.

T = therapist

R = Rae

T – I’m sorry we missed our last session together. I’m glad you are here today. I want us to work on re-establishing safety and putting your safe house back together.

R – Ok, It’s been hard. I’ve been trying. I’ve kind of sent them (*meaning her parts*) all away because I don’t know what to do for them right now.

T – Ok, so they are resting?

R – No, Ive been sort of impatient. Back to telling them they’re liars, that those things didn’t happen and to go away. It feels like I’m back at the beginning. (*tears*)

T – Ok, I want to help with that, I have something for you to keep in your backpack. (*An actual backpack containing items for each part to reorient to present should she dissociate*)

I also love that you have the bandaids, I’m glad you can give them one when they need it. (*She has kid parts that think she is bleeding, so she wears colorful bandaids, – this is her attempt to take care of her child parts.*)

R – Thank you. I have something for you too. (*hands me a pile of post it notes with disturbing material that emerged throughout the week... this is because her internal peaceful place was burned down BY THE PERPETRATOR INTROJECT PART, and she cannot find her inner vault, so she was keeping them in a box we bought for her backpack in case of emergencies.*)

T – Thank you. I want to go through these but first let’s make sure that everyone understands what we need to do today to get things feeling safe again.

R – Ok, they’re listening.

T – I know that having step-father part show up was really terrifying, and I know he’s scary for you all. **pause** (*step-father part is the introject, we have worked with this part to negotiate some way to process the traumatic material. Step father part says not to talk about any of the abuse or rituals... and he makes threats of more abuse, of how he will hurt her if she talks*) I want to help that part so he doesn’t hurt anyone anymore. Remember our rules for the treehouse about not hurting one another? (**pause**) He hasn’t learned all of the rules. I know most of you

want him to go away forever, but that would be like cutting your arm off. He is telling you the old things that you heard your real step father say, he isn't saying anything new to you, and he isn't showing you anything new, it is all old threats, and old ways of hurting you. Is that right?
Rae – I hadn't thought of that Yeah, that's right. He's _____ and _____ a few parts this week. (The blanks are forms of abuse)

T – So, he showed up this week?

R – yeah, twice. He punched Fighter in the face. (*this client's husband is involved in her treatment, and he did call me to say she woke up with a black eye and he was concerned.*)

T – That's not ok.

R – *cries for several minutes while we titrate eye contact to counteract the shame.*

T – He doesn't realize when he hurts other parts he hurts himself. He hasn't learned yet that he's part of you, but adult self and I are going to help him understand that today. Would that be ok with all of your parts?

R – Ok.

T – Can you allow everyone to listen to me for a few minutes? (she consents) Ok, This STP is an inside part just like all of you. He doesn't know how to behave or be helpful yet, but what he is telling you – to be quiet and not to talk about any of it – he is trying to prevent you from getting in trouble with the abusers.

Rae – (*nodding, understanding, some psychosomatic triggering behaviors alert me that parts are present and moving forward.*) He screamed at a lot of parts this week and hurt them.

T – I don't think he knows what else he can do other than repeating words your real outside step father said to you over and over again.

R – That makes sense.

T – So, I need parts to go and rest, or do something fun, so that adult self and I can talk with him and help him learn the rules, so that he isn't so scary, and so that he stops making the threats and hurting you.

R – Now? (nervous)

T – Yes, so we can talk to him and help him understand he is part of you, part of all of you, living inside the adult self with you. He doesn't know yet.

R – Ok

... At this point we do some set up work to prepare parts and make sure they are tucked away where they do not have to be present or hear our discussion with the step father part... This takes about 10-15 minutes of the session. Then she gets activated by the needs of a younger part, that is the next part of the transcript.

R – Little wants _____.

T – Then she should have that.

R – Ok. (*client begins pulling at mouth, this is her checking for tape... a repeated behavior of an EP*)

T – There is no tape there. Can you tell?

R – Yes, but it feels swollen even though I don't think it is. Is it?

T – No, there's no swelling or bruising. Would you like a mirror?

R – No, sometimes mirrors get confusing.

T – Ok, are you alright? Do you want to keep going?

R – Yes...(nods, laughs, keeps working on details to get parts settled internally)

T – (after another 5 minutes) So, is everyone ready?

R – Yes. Ok. They're gone. (client settles down physically, tears well up in her eyes) How long do they have to stay away? I get so lonely without them.

T – I know. We will bring them back at the end of our session today. Remember, they are only going because none of them feel safe with the step father part when he is present.

R – Oh, ok, yeah. The rest are gone now.

T – Ok, would you allow me to talk through you to the step father part?

R – should I answer?

T – Is he present or listening at all?

R – yes, but there's hesitancy. I can't see him

T – Ok. We know this. He may not know what to do when he wants to keep parts safe, so he abuses them, ends up hurting them. He may not have any other idea about how to behave. He may not be aware that he's a part of you.

R – (shifts on couch) I just wanted them all to stop talking but they wouldn't listen to me.

T – Well, do you realize how long you've been coming here and talking about the abuse? It has been a long time. Do you realize that you haven't been (punished for talking) since adult self started coming here?

R – They aren't supposed to talk about it.

T – Yes, that is what you were told over and over again but do you know what year it is now?

R – no.

T – It's 2017, and it has been 15 years since _____ told your husband and the other therapist about the abuse.

R – (louder, a little rushed) He doesn't know – he doesn't know much – I didn't tell him. (*she is arguing with her part who is shocked that her husband knows, this is new information for the PI part.*)

T – No, he doesn't know much, but he does know some things that you were unaware of. And nobody was (punished) for him knowing for the last 15 years, nobody came to get you, for him knowing what happened, **for that long.**

R – (nods) I just want them to stop talking about it.

T Well, is screaming in their face, threatening to hurt them and hurting them a helpful way to get them to be quiet? In fact, doesn't it make them cry and wail?

R – (sad and upset, droops head and shoulders) Yes, there's lots of crying.

T – and you've been trying to get them to listen to you so you could keep everyone from (being punished or abused) for talking. But what if there was another way you could protect them, without harming them – which hurts adult self and you.

R – (small child voice) I just want them to be quiet and stop talking about it but they won't listen.

T – how do you remind them to be quiet about it?

R – I put on a mask and I get really BIG and really LOUD and really SCARY

T – a step father mask?

R – yes, I have two of them. Step father and mother and I have (torture devices) and ...

T – how old are you?

R – like 9 or 10

T – ok. Well since you really need to have them not talk about it, and we do talk about it, what if you could listen in and let me know when they're saying something you are worried is going to get them in trouble, or you could ask me to stop instead of hurting them?

R – (cries a little) Ok (tugs at neck)

T – Do you want to check, there's nothing around your neck.

R – nods and checks, If I (hurt) one of them then I don't have to (be hurt) I don't want to (be hurt) again, I don't want to be bad.

T – You are not in trouble. (*the client frequently asks this question in therapy*) I am not upset for what's happened inside. You did not know what else to do. We can agree to work together to keep you and all the parts safe from harm.

R – I'm scared that if they keep talking I'm going to have to (be hurt/punished) again.

T – What if you could have a hiding place inside and you only had to be present when we are talking about stuff you know and I can check with you first to see if it feels safe?

R – Ok.

T – Our rules here are that we don't hurt each other. Parts don't hurt anyone or any part, adult self doesn't hurt anyone or any part, and I don't hurt anyone or any part.

R – I want to give it all to you.

T – Ok, what else?

R – the masks, the (torture devices... etc) I want you to take it all.

T – Ok. How should I call you when we gather? What would you like to be called?

R – (shrugs) I don't know it's all burnt over there

T – I know, we will work on it. I may need to call you though, what's your name?

R – I'm Scary... Commander makes noises and stomps and yells

T – We will work on that with adult self Ok? Would that help?

R – yes, she's mean.

At this point we orient the part to tucking away safely so that R can bring her EP's back and we can close the session down.

T – Ok, I'll call on you soon, and adult self and I will work with Commander to be less noisy and threatening. Can I talk to adult self now?

R – (pause – psychosomatic shifting – settles down – client begins blinking)

T – What are you aware of?

R – It's quiet. I feel calmer. I'm not sure.

T – Ok step father part gave me some things, are you aware of that?

R – (nods) a little ... (I tell her some of what happened) oh, ok, (sad, tearfulness)

T – She said her name is Scary and that she is 9 or 10. Where do you think she belongs? Is she here already or do we need to add her? (show client the mind map and hand her a pen).

R – (takes pen thoughtfully...) here... that makes sense.

T – she was using the mask to get big and scary, but she's agreed to work with us. She was (punished) at that age, she's been trying to prevent that from happening again.

R – Ok, that makes sense (cries some more)

T – (eye contact to titrate shame and connect with her) She said Commander is mean to her.

R – that's right, she isn't really nice ever, but she's not always mean.

T – We can work on that. Are you ready to bring everybody back?

R – yes (pause) Ok. yeah. Ok. They're here. The safe house is coming back, some of it is there. We need our vault.

T – Ok, for now use the blue box and be sure to push it away a little so it's not right there in reach. We will work on the vault next time

R – How do I do it?

T – We will do it together.

R – OK

At this point we do some grounding, orienting to present, and close the session down.