

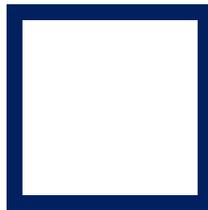
## Excerpt from Chapter 4: Getting a Map of the Different Parts there.....That Might Help

*Internal Family Systems—You Mean there’s more than the Family of Origin that Drove me Nuts and more than the Family of the Present that is Still Driving me Nuts????*

A psychologist and family therapist named Richard Schwartz wrote a couple of books (see the bibliography if you are interested) about some clients he was working with and how they started talking about inside parts of themselves and how getting to know those inside parts better and better actually helped them to heal and develop healthier relationships and lifestyles.

From his work with many different people from all walks of life he began to identify different categories of inside parts and he called the parts that resided within people, including himself, the internal family system. He talked about a group of parts that acted like organizers in the person’s life taking care of all the duties and responsibilities of daily life and keeping oneself and loved ones safe. There were other types of parts too called firefighters and exiled children and one unifying place and space within called the Self.

### *Parts that Help Us Manage Our Lives*



For the rest of this manual we will use the shape above or a variation of it to represent parts that act as managers.

### **READ CHAPTER 2 OF THE CHILDREN’S BOOK: PARTS THAT HELP US DO THINGS- MANDY LEARNS ABOUT MANAGER PARTS**

*Mandy was about to turn 12 years old on Saturday and instead of being happy about her birthday party she felt really worried about it. Both her mom and dad would be together at the party for the first time in the year since they had divorced. She was also feeling a little stressed out because she had a big project due for her history class on the Friday before the party.*



*Mandy had trouble thinking about anything else but her birthday party on Saturday and her history poster project due on Friday. She found out that when she worked really hard on her project she actually could forget for a little while about the birthday party and her worried feelings.*

*Mandy felt glad that she could do something to forget about her worry so she worked really hard on her poster all week long. Every time her worried feelings popped up she got out her markers and art supplies and worked harder on her poster. She worked so hard on it that:*

*On Monday she stayed home while her mom and brother Tommy went to his soccer game....On Tuesday she stayed home while her dad and brother went out to eat like they usually did....*



*On Wednesday she skipped recess to stay inside to work on it...*

*On Thursday she skipped recess again and told her mom that she didn't want to relax and watch TV with her and Tommy after dinner because she still had to work on her poster....*

*And that's when her mother said, "O.K. I'm going to start the movie for Tommy and then you and I are going to have a little chat." After mom got Tommy settled in the rec room she came upstairs to Mandy's bedroom and sat down next to her on the bed where she was working on the project.*

*"Wow", said mom, looking at Mandy's poster, "This is definitely going to get you an A+ in your history class!"*

*"Really?" asked Mandy.*

*"Definitely" said mom, "You're working really hard on this! I'm really proud of you."*

*"Oh" shrugged Mandy, "thanks."*

*"Your teacher called me," her mom went on, "She said you looked full of stress all week and wondered if anything was bothering you. I told her all I knew was that you were working hard on this project."*

*"Yeah," said Mandy and she nodded her head.*

*"She said you looked down or preoccupied, which is another way of saying super focused," said her mom, "Is anything going on Mandy? Are you upset about anything?"*

*Mandy looked up at her mom and she felt the worry come all over her and every muscle in her body felt all tingly and tight and her stomach started getting all upset.*

*She said, "No nothing is bothering me except that I just got to get this poster totally done and finished for tomorrow so ...can you leave me alone please!!!!"*

*Mandy's mom saw all that worry and fear come over Mandy and she felt sad. She took a deep breath and said, "Wow, you just looked really scared about something and then as you felt all that fear you got really focused on finishing your project....which looks like it has been pretty much done for a while....you want to tell me what else is going on....what else are you worried about?"*



*Mandy's mom touched Mandy's shoulder with her hand and started gently stroking her in a loving way. Any annoyance Mandy felt toward her mom just sort of melted away and she stopped working on her poster and looked at her mom and that worry came up again.*

*She told her mom she dreaded her birthday party because she was worried how it was going to work out since it was the first time the family would be together since her parents' divorce. As Mandy told her mom all her feelings she began to cry and then she noticed that she began to feel less worried about the party and more calm about it.*

*Mom listened very well in Mandy's humble opinion and then she said, "So now I know why this poster looks sooooo great and why it's going to get you an A+."*

*"Why?" smiled Mandy for the first time in their conversation.*

*"because the hard working part of you worked really hard on it to help you not think about the party and all the feelings you were having about it.....that is that part of you that does really well in school all the time....Working hard and making sure that you do well all the time helps you to manage all of the sad and worried thoughts or feelings you have about what has happened to our family," Mandy's mom explained.*



*"Is that a bad thing mom?" Mandy asked.*

*"No Mandy, it can be a really good thing a lot of the time," Mom said. She went onto to explain, "We all have manager parts that help us get through the day and finish all the projects we need to or want to get done. Our manager parts help and protect us but, sometimes they work really hard for us and don't seem to get a break.....By looking at all the work you've done on this project I'm wondering if you gave yourself any breaks while you were working on it?????"*

*"Not really," said Mandy a little sadly. "I didn't want to think about Saturday so I guess my 'keep busy and work hard manager part' kept me pretty busy....I don't know how to give myself a break....."*

*"Well," said mom, "you gave yourself a break right now by telling me what you were really feeling about the party, and about the divorce. You're letting some of those feelings from the worried part come up and be let out so that this manager of yours doesn't have to keep your mind off of it.....can you see how that was a break?"*

*"Yeah," said Mandy, as she nodded her head up and down, "and this poster is done! So maybe I can just go downstairs and watch the movie with you and Tommy."*

*“That would be great!” smiled Mom and she and Mandy gave each other a big hug*

### **Meet Mandy’s Mom Jane!**

Some of us might say that she is lucky because she has a daughter who is still bothered by the divorce of her parents but instead of acting out like some children do she internalizes the struggle and tries to do her best to cope and comply. The problem with that though is that all that internal stress and turmoil takes a toll on a child. The toll can be expressed as stomach and headache issues, overwhelm and concentration problems among other issues.



Jane saw that Mandy was acting more stressed out and was able to connect with her teacher to check things out. She was able to sit down with her daughter and have a heart to heart talk with her but let’s explore the turmoil that Jane was experiencing as she watched her child begin to spin up in stress. What parts did Jane have in this situation with Mandy?

Jane could say, “I had parts that .....”:

- Felt anxious that my ex-husband was going to be joining us for Mandy’s birthday in the home. It was really the first time since the divorce that we would be together as a family in this new arrangement.....
- Were ok with us celebrating as a family together because I could see that in the future we would have to do that anyway....both kids would be graduating from high school, going to and graduating from college (hopefully), getting married etc.... These would be times where my ex-husband and I would naturally be together in celebrating the good times of our children so I thought Mandy’s birthday would be a good way to begin...
- After seeing Mandy be so anxious about it wondered if this was the right thing to do....
- I wanted to make it all go away for Mandy....all the heartbreak, all the sadness and fears but ....
- Felt powerless in doing that.
- Guilty because the problems in my marriage were mine and her dad’s ....not hers...so this part really pushed me to sit down and talk with Mandy about the situation....

