

Important Safety Information

This workbook is intended as a supportive educational resource.

It is not a substitute for psychotherapy, medical care, crisis intervention, or emergency services.

If you are experiencing thoughts of harming yourself or others, are unable to maintain your safety, or are experiencing a mental health emergency, please seek immediate assistance.

Emergency resources include:

- Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)
- Call 911 or your local emergency services
- Go to the nearest emergency room
- Contact your therapist, psychiatrist, physician, or crisis support provider

Please use this workbook within your personal limits.

If an exercise feels overwhelming, stop and return to a Lighthouse Practice focused on orientation, grounding, or support.

Healing does not require pushing beyond your capacity.

Going slowly is often the fastest way forward.

Please remember:

You do not have to do this alone.

Support is available.

Chapter 7: Meeting Protective Parts

There Is Nothing Wrong With You

Many people come to therapy believing they are somehow broken.

They may wonder:

"Why do I react this way?"

"Why can't I just get over it?"

"Why do I keep doing the same thing?"

"What is wrong with me?"

What if there is a different possibility?

What if the behaviors, reactions, emotions, and patterns you struggle with are not evidence that something is wrong with you?

What if they are evidence that parts of you have been working very hard to protect you?

The purpose of this chapter is to help you approach yourself with curiosity rather than criticism.

Understanding Protective Parts

Throughout our lives, we develop strategies to help us survive difficult experiences.

Some of these strategies become so automatic that we stop noticing them.

Examples may include:

- Staying busy
- Avoiding conflict
- Taking care of everyone else
- Perfectionism
- Overthinking
- Emotional shutdown
- People pleasing
- Withdrawal

- Hyper-independence
- Constant productivity
- Self-criticism

These responses often began for a reason.

At some point, they likely helped you.

The goal is not to get rid of these parts.

The goal is to understand them.

A New Question

Instead of asking:

"Why am I doing this?"

Try asking:

"What part of me might be trying to help right now?"

Notice what happens when you consider that possibility.

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Becoming Curious

Take a moment and think about a pattern that frequently shows up in your life.

Perhaps:

- Anxiety
- Perfectionism
- Overworking
- Avoidance

- Self-criticism
- Isolation
- Caretaking
- People pleasing

What pattern comes to mind?

Rather than judging it, become curious. Ask:

What might this part be trying to accomplish?

Meeting the Part

Choose a protective part that feels present today.

You do not need to choose the most difficult one.

Start with something manageable.

What would I call this part?

Examples:

- The Worrier
- The Planner
- The Critic
- The Caretaker
- The Achiever
- The Protector
- The Avoider
- The Perfectionist

Name:

What does this part do?

When does this part usually show up?

What is this part trying to protect me from?

What does this part fear would happen if it stopped doing its job?

Appreciating the Effort

Protective parts often work tirelessly.

Even when their strategies create problems, their intention is usually protection.

Take a moment to consider:

What positive intention might this part have?

Can I acknowledge how hard this part has been working?

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Thanking the Part

You do not need to agree with everything this part does.

You do not need to like its strategies.

Simply see if you can acknowledge its effort.

Complete the following:

Thank you for trying to protect me from:

I can see that you have been working hard by:

What do I notice in my body as I say thank you?

Parts and Needs

Many protective parts carry important needs.

Ask your part:

What do you need me to know?

What do you need from me right now?

When Multiple Parts Show Up

Sometimes more than one part is present.

For example:

One part may want rest.

Another part may want productivity.

One part may want connection.

Another part may want distance.

One part may want change.

Another part may want safety.

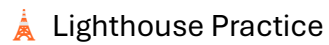
This is normal.

Many of us carry multiple perspectives at the same time.

Part A Wants:

Part B Wants:

Can I make room for both?



Finding Your Center

Take a moment to notice:

You are not your anxiety.

You are not your fear.

You are not your perfectionism.

You are not your self-criticism.

You are the one who can notice those experiences.

Take a breath.

Notice the part.

Then notice the part of you that is observing.

What do you notice?

Building a Relationship

The goal is not to eliminate protective parts.

The goal is to build a relationship with them.

As you continue healing, you may discover that some parts soften when they feel seen.

Others soften when they feel appreciated.

Others soften when they no longer have to carry their burdens alone.

Reflection

What did I learn about my protective part today?

What surprised me?

What would I like to remember?

Resource Check

What feels supportive right now?

What feels neutral?

What feels difficult?

What do I notice in my body after completing this chapter?

Is there anything that feels even 1% easier?

Before Moving On

The parts of you that developed during difficult experiences were often trying to help.

Some may still be carrying jobs they accepted long ago.

Some may be tired.

Some may be frightened.

Some may simply want to be understood.

As you continue this work, remember:

Curiosity is often more healing than criticism.

Compassion is often more effective than force.

And understanding creates possibilities that judgment rarely can.

When you are ready, continue to Chapter 8: Working With Inner Conflict.

Chapter 8: Working With Inner Conflict

When Different Parts Want Different Things

Have you ever found yourself thinking:

"I want to do it, but I don't."

"I know what I should do, but I can't seem to do it."

"Part of me wants to move forward, and part of me wants to stay where I am."

Many of us experience internal conflict.

One part wants connection.

Another part wants protection.

One part wants change.

Another part wants certainty.

One part wants rest.

Another part believes it must keep going.

When we are caught in inner conflict, we often become frustrated with ourselves.

We may believe we are indecisive, unmotivated, lazy, stuck, or broken.

What if something else is happening?

What if multiple parts of you are trying to help in different ways?

The goal of this chapter is not to force one part to win.

The goal is to understand the needs, fears, and hopes that exist beneath the conflict.

Recognizing Inner Conflict

Think about a current situation where you feel stuck.

Perhaps:

- A relationship decision
- A work decision
- A health decision

- A family issue
- A boundary you need to set
- A change you want to make
- Something you keep avoiding

What situation comes to mind?

Identifying the Parts

Part A Wants:

Part B Wants:

Take a moment and notice:

Can I feel both of these perspectives inside me?

What do I notice?

Understanding Part A

Imagine Part A could speak freely.

What does Part A want?

What is Part A hoping for?

What is Part A afraid of?

What is Part A trying to protect?

Understanding Part B

Now imagine Part B could speak freely.

What does Part B want?

What is Part B hoping for?

What is Part B afraid of?

What is Part B trying to protect?

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Listening Without Choosing

Many of us believe we must immediately choose a side.

Instead, try simply listening.

Imagine sitting between Part A and Part B.

You do not have to solve anything.

You do not have to decide anything.

Your only job is to listen.

What does Part A most want me to understand?

What does Part B most want me to understand?

Finding Common Ground

Even when parts disagree, they are often working toward a similar goal.

For example:

Part A wants connection.

Part B wants protection.

Both may ultimately want safety.

Part A wants change.

Part B wants certainty.

Both may ultimately want stability.

Ask yourself:

What might these parts have in common?

The Cost of Ignoring a Part

Sometimes we try to silence one side of the conflict.

When we do, that part often becomes louder.

Choose one part.

What happens when I ignore this part?

What happens when I listen to this part?

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The Wise Observer

Take a moment to notice:

Part A is here.

Part B is here.

And there is also a part of you capable of observing both.

Take a slow breath.

Imagine stepping back slightly.

Not away from the parts.

Just enough to see them both.

Ask:

What do I notice from this perspective?

What feels different?

Exploring Possibility

Many inner conflicts are not solved through force.

They are resolved through understanding.

Ask yourself:

Is there a solution that honors at least some of what both parts need?

What would a small step look like?

Remember:

You do not need a perfect answer.

You only need the next step.

When No Answer Appears

There may be times when you do not know what to do.

That is okay.

Sometimes the next step is not making a decision.

Sometimes the next step is gathering information.

Sometimes the next step is waiting.

Sometimes the next step is caring for yourself while clarity develops.

Uncertainty is not failure.

Uncertainty is often part of the process.

Reflection

What did I learn about this conflict?

What surprised me?

Did I discover any new understanding?

Resource Check

What feels supportive right now?

What feels neutral?

What feels difficult?

What do I notice in my body right now?

Is there anything that feels even 1% easier than when I began this chapter?

Before Moving On

Inner conflict does not mean something is wrong with you.

Often it means that multiple parts of you care deeply about your well-being.

Each part may simply have a different idea about how to create safety, connection, healing, or protection.

The goal is not to eliminate conflict.

The goal is to listen with enough curiosity that new possibilities can emerge.

When you are ready, continue to Chapter 9: When Anxiety Takes Over.