

INTEGRATED PARTS THERAPY
LEARNING FROM A CASE HISTORY

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I would like to describe how I work with Parts Therapy using a case history to illustrate what I do.

Tom is a fifty year old accountant who consulted me for help with his anger (he called it rage).

He is married with two teen aged boys and he is having problems controlling his anger at home and work.

His childhood was difficult as his father drank too much, and his mother was anxious and frightened.

There was a period at school where he was bullied, and did not receive support from his parents or teachers.

The following is a précis of our sessions to describe how I work.

“Tom I would like to help you find out more about your rage, and how it is represented in your inner world.”

“I will be asking you some unusual questions, and you may find some unusual answers. If it doesn’t make sense that is fine, the stranger the better.”

“There is only one direction I want to give you, and that is not to try. Just allow whatever happens to happen. Allow yourself to float, drift like a leaf floating down from a tree.”

“Would that be O.K?”

Tom nods.

“Good, Place your feet on the floor, rest your head on the back of the chair, and close your eyes.”

“Good, now when you feel the rage, where in your body is this rage?”

Tom pointed to his chest and said “In my chest.”

“Good Tom, I would like you to go into your chest—from your mind, through your neck, into your chest where the rage is when you feel rage.”

Tom nods his head.

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“Is there any rage there now?”

“A little. Not as much as when I am really angry.”

“That’s fine Tom. Let’s learn about this rage.

Does it have a shape, colour, temperature, weight? Is there anything that describes it? It doesn’t need to make sense.”

After a little while Tom says—“There is a blob there, a dark red blob in the centre of my chest.”

“It is moving-- pulsating, it is heavy, tense and hot.”

“Good Tom. When you have more rage what happens to the dark red blob?”

“It gets bigger, moves faster and becomes hotter.”

“Good. I would like to ask you an even stranger question. Could you ask the blob what it would like to be called?”

“He says “Blob”.”

“So Blob is a male is he?”

“Yes.”

“Ask him how old Tom was when he became part of him. “

“He says five”.

“Ask him what was happening in Tom’s life then.”

Pause, “He said there were a lot of problems at home and at school and he came there to protect me.”

“Good. Does he know how old you are now?”

“He says no, he still thinks I am five.”

“How does he think he can protect you?”

“He says so I won’t get hurt.”

“He says as I am still alive he thinks his protection worked.”

“Tell Blob that you are now grown up, and that the rage is causing problems not protecting.”

“He looks sad”

“Ask him if he would be able to change and help you in another way.” 3

“He seems confused.”

“Well tell him when he makes you angry it frightens the family and causes problems at work. Tell him there are other ways to protect you that don’t cause so many problems.”

“He says what do you want him to do instead?”

Well Tom, it is not for me to say, it is what you want. What would you like inside your chest? What would help you?”

Tom thinks for a while.

“I would like a blue sky that is calm and peaceful. Blue is my favourite colour, and I feel so good when I am with blue. I feel confident and relaxed. I would like Blob to tell me things that will make me feel good, calm, confident and comfortable. Like telling me it will be alright, perhaps praising me for what I have done.”

“Let’s ask Blob if he will do this.”

“Yes, he said he will try. He says he will need my help to change as he is not very good at calmness and praise, but he will try to help. He didn’t realize he was causing problems, he thought he was helping by protecting me.”

“I would like you to spend a few minutes working with Blob. Tell him you will meet him every day and review how you two have got on during the day. Then you can use that learning for the days ahead—review and preview. It may be helpful if you praise Blob too, I am sure he would like that.”

I then wrote up Tom’s notes while he communicated with Blob.

I asked Tom and Blob to agree to meet for at least ten minutes a day, and help each other make Tom’s life the best it can be.

I then asked Tom to slowly and calmly and easily return back to the room.

“That was amazing. It seemed so real. I didn’t have to do anything ,it just seemed to happen.”

“That sounds good Tom. How long do you think you had your eyes closed?”

“About ten minutes.”

Look at the clock.

Tom looks amazed.” Was it really three quarters of an hour?”

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“Yes, when you are in that altered state there is what is called “Time Distortion”. It is a good place to go. It is where your problems are stored and where you can find the solutions.

All I ask is that you spend time with Blob every day and we will talk about it when I see you next.”

The role that I play is that of a guide. I guide the client to find the symbol or metaphor responsible for the symptom

In this case it was “Blob” responsible for the rage.

In my experience the most common reason for the symbol is TO PROTECT.

The reason symptoms are created is that this protection is ---out of date, inaccurate or unhelpful.

Our aim as therapists is to help our client have a symbol that IS accurate, up to date and helpful.

As a guide your task is to help the client do what is required to achieve this.

Some of the important components of this therapy are—

Allow time for the client to discover what is happening in their inner world; guide the client to “go into” the feeling and describe it—shape, colour, weight, temperature, relaxed or tight, light or dark, moving or still, male or female.

The only limit to the symbols representing the feelings, is the limit of the clients’ creativity. Clients I have seen have had symbols such as—the devil, a concrete bunker, a black hole, a red fire, a gremlin, a cloud, a metal block etc.etc.

Allow the client to go at his own pace. Leave spaces of silence if you feel they are doing “good work” exploring their inner world.

Don’t make your own suggestions, use “clean language” allowing the client to explore in his own way. Provide support as they are going into a “Crazy World” where you talk to dark red pulsating blobs!!

I have done this for years, it comes naturally. I am not surprised, I am amazed at the creativity of the inner world—both to create problems and resolve them. I am amazed how simple it is to help clients make changes , how simple it is with guidance to discover the symbols causing their problems.

Changing the symbols is not so easy and depends on many factors--- how entrenched they are; the personality of the client; the “brainwashing” they received in childhood; the belief systems they have; the severity of the incidents that created the symbols in the first place; rapport with the therapist; motivation of the client; compliance to do the “homework” of communicating with the symbol on a daily basis--- and many more.

Children respond very well to this technique. They have an amazing ability to imagine; their minds are less cluttered with past experiences; they follow the instructions of the therapist; they believe what is told to them by someone of authority; they are very creative and they question less the images, symbols and characters they discover under the guidance of the therapist.

My suggestion to you is to be brave and try integrated parts therapy amongst the other techniques you use.

I will be surprised if you are not surprised at the responses you get, the amazing responses you will observe to the clean language questions you ask; the intrigued responses you will hear from the client and the positive changes the client makes as a result of your treatment.