

Ep #216 : Navigating Big Emotions with the Language of Parts



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With Your Host

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This podcast is here to help you better understand the why behind your habits so that you can be more deliberate with your thoughts, deliberate with your feelings, and deliberate with your behaviors. Today's topic: using the language of parts. Let's dive in.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, I'm Kristi Angevine, a physician, Master Certified Coach, Internal Family Systems informed practitioner, and host of this podcast, where we explore the deeper psychology behind why we do what we do.

Hello, hello everybody. So, I'm super excited to bring you this week's podcast. It is going to be tremendously practical, very simple, and if you can practice this regularly in your day-to-day life, like actually implement it, you're going to notice a big change.

Now, before I get into the meat of what I'm going to talk about, I want to just mention real quickly, if you like what you hear in the podcast, if you like what you hear today, please click follow. That simple click means more to the podcast than you may realize. It actually helps the podcast be more discoverable to people looking to learn about their habits, and the more listeners who officially follow a show, the more access we get to interview amazing guests to bring to you insights about your habits. So, click follow, and then you'll get all the episodes auto-populating into your field. So, please and thank you so, so much for doing this.

Now, on the podcast, I bring you tools that I use myself. These aren't just tools in theory, tools I teach. These are tools that they have been vetted by me. They are things that I have experimented with. They are things that I use, and that helps me understand them from the inside. And the reason this tool today is something I'm bringing up is because I got back from a month in Greece about six weeks ago, and I noticed that a part of me is still recalibrating, still feeling very unsettled.

And come to think of it, I stopped my full-time OBGYN practice a couple years back, and there are also parts of me that are still finding my footing

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from that experience and that transition as well. And one thing that has really helped me in this sort of recalibrating, feeling unsettled state that I've been in is the tool I'm going to teach you about today.

The tool is a lifeline for me. I use it all the time. It has changed my experience with big emotions that used to feel pretty crippling. It's helped me feel more calm in situations where in the past, I've been really reactive, and it's helped me steady myself when life just frankly feels nuts. And it's really important to me on this podcast to introduce you to tools and concepts that likely no one taught you growing up, but that have the power to change your day-to-day experience. And this one is no exception.

So, this tool/topic is one I've alluded to in previous episodes, and I'm going to teach you the benefits of it and exactly how to do it in real life. The topic for today is how to use the language of parts to access perspective and calm, even in the most intense emotions.

Now, this is a very, very simple tool, and it's not only simple, but it's very straightforward to do. Now, don't let the simplicity and straightforward nature of it fool you. This is a really powerful practice. And it's great because you're going to have no trouble trying it out. You can literally, as soon as this podcast is over, start doing it.

Speaking using the language of parts is what is called an unblending tool. It's an unblending tool that hails from the world of Internal Family Systems. Now, no matter how familiar or unfamiliar you are with Internal Family Systems, or IFS for short, you will benefit from this simple intervention.

Now, if IFS is something that you don't know much about and you want to learn more, in the show notes, we will link you to the other episodes that have focused on this. You can also start with episode 75, or if you're really keen to learn more, the book by the founder of the model is called *No Bad Parts*, and the author is Dr. Richard Schwartz.

Now, on to using the language of parts. It is very simple, yet it has powerful and deep ramifications of your experience of yourself and your experience

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with others. So, to speak using the language of parts is like this. Instead of, I'm anxious, a part of me is anxious. Instead of, it made me so mad when we were running late, a part of me got so mad. Instead of, that was so rude, a part of me feels like that was so rude. Instead of, I'm just a perfectionist. Ah, a part of me is perfectionistic. Instead of, I am such a dummy. I feel so defeated. A part of me feels like a dummy and feels so defeated.

So, how and when to do this? You can use the language of parts pretty much anywhere, but you specifically use it anytime you feel any big emotion. And how do you do it? You simply name the feeling, and then you tell yourself, a part of me feels. So, this would sound like: A part of me feels tense. A part of me feels behind. A part of me wants to press snooze. A part of me wants to go exercise. A part of me feels worried. A part of me feels overwhelmed.

So here are some examples. Say you notice conflicting thoughts. Well, conflicting thoughts come from different parts. And this might sound like: A part of me really wants to go and be social. Another part of me hates humans today and wants to involute to my couch and read a book under a blanket. And another part thinks I should want to go and feels guilty.

Say you're going to use the language of parts for the rapid feeling of anger, like that red-hot anger that just takes over really quickly. It sounds like: A part of me is really, really angry right now. It believes that what I just saw was wrong and disrespectful. If you have the urge to do something, you can use the language of parts for an urge. A part really wants to eat. A part wants to scroll. A part wants to press snooze. A part wants to go shopping.

For an impulse, a part just wants me to walk away. I hear it saying, I'm out of here. For a worry about disappointing others, a part of me imagines their disappointment. A part of me is so worried.

You can use this for a behavior you notice yourself doing. So instead of, I'm overthinking, I'm procrastinating, I'm beating myself up, a part of me is

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overthinking right now. A part of me is second-guessing. A part of me is procrastinating. A part of me is being really critical of everything I do.

So, that's how you use the language of parts. You simply say a part of me before you describe what you're feeling, what you're thinking, what you're doing. Now, there's some bonus things here that you can do also. They are not necessary. You can completely skip them, but for some of you listening, this is going to be a really helpful adjunct to enrich this practice.

So, bonus number one is, after you notice that you're feeling something, and after you say a part of me, then you go on to elaborate. What's this part thinking? Elaborate on the feelings, the impulses, the actions of this part. Make it a little bit more than just what the part's feeling. For example, a part is criticizing me. It is saying I should know better. What is my problem? Only an idiot does this.

Now, bonus number two is take a minute and notice what it's like to experience the emotion you're experiencing, and add that to how you describe it. I notice this part is in my chest and my arms. It's attention, it's black, it's heavy, it's stagnant, it's sharp.

Now, most people, when they start using the language of parts, they will quickly notice a little bit of space from their experience that mere moments ago could have been flooding every cell of their being. Think about something like road rage. If somebody cuts you off or people are going too slow or they're not using their turn signals or they don't know how to enter the roundabout or whatever it is that drives you crazy when you're out using a vehicle with humanity.

Using the language of parts sounds like: A part of me is so infuriated right now. A part of me wishes people understood driving rules better. A part of me wishes everybody would go faster. A part of me feels really impatient. Notice how saying a part of me gives you a little space from what could be a really, really intense in-the-moment feeling.

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So, let's talk about why this works and how this works. When you use the language of parts, it reaffirms that what you are feeling is not representative of all of you. It's not the whole of you, but it's one part of the whole. It's one side, one facet of this larger ecosystem, as it were, that is you. By using this language of parts, you can get access to a watcher role, just like in mindfulness practices, where you purposely try to observe your thoughts and feelings with a bit of distance. Being in a watcher role by using the language of parts permits perspective.

So, when we are flooded by a big emotion, we get emotional blinders on. All we can see is what that emotion shows us, and it's often quite limited and narrow. But usually in the moment, we can't see that, right? This is usually something in hindsight we look back and say, ah, those were the blinders.

For example, think back to a time that maybe you got really peeved at somebody, maybe somebody that you really love, and later on, you found out more to the story, and it took all the wind out of your sails. So, let's see.

Say you got really upset because your kid seems really unenthusiastic about the very thing that you went to extra effort to make happen for them. Maybe you had to adjust a schedule, maybe you had to pay money, maybe you had to skip something, maybe you had to bend over backwards and pretzel your schedule in order to make this thing happen that they were so excited about. And then you see them kind of not seeming as excited as you think they should be. And so you get frustrated, maybe even angry. And all you can see in that moment is how they maybe made you late because they're going slow. They seem like they're complaining when you thought they would be excited or they would be thankful.

And then fast forward to later on, you find out that maybe earlier in the day, there's some kid on the playground that told them they're no good at kicking a ball, and they should just leave the group of kids alone and not play kickball with them.

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So, you realize that your kid's in slow motion and cranky and preoccupied and doesn't seem very grateful for the things that you've done and doesn't seem enthusiastic at all about soccer because they're mulling over this previous event. It's not because they're actually unenthusiastic. It's just because something else is going on.

But in the moment, from the vantage point of the part of you that's super frustrated, you can see nothing but the most negative interpretation. You have frustration blinders on because when a part is present, you see the world through the eyes of that part. And that part of you was the frustrated part that only showed you all the proof for how your frustration was justified.

Now, I want to take a moment to talk about what happens when you use the language of parts and you find yourself instead of describing one part, you end up describing multiple parts. And it sounds something like this. A part of me is really excited and recognizes that, you know, probably everything's going to turn out fine. And this part feels really optimistic. Another part is scared that this part is wrong and that things are going to be way harder than I'm realizing.

And then there's another part just wants to go watch the news. It's focusing on a Netflix documentary we heard about. It just wants to scroll social media. I'm not hungry right now, but I notice there's a part that thinks that pizza crust left over from my kids, dipped in some cheese sauce, is a really good idea right now. And maybe also some of those muffins or maybe some chocolate that's melted, or maybe muffins and chocolate. And then there's a part that feels really guilty. And then there's a part that feels a little bit crazy because there's all these different parts here.

So, if you use the language of parts and you start noticing that there are lots of parts, this is okay. This means you're in good company. You don't have a new discovery of multiple personality disorder, AKA dissociative identity disorder. You are not suffering from some weird inner pathology. This is simply you noticing the nature of how the mind works. Think of using the language of parts like doing an internal roll call, where you're just

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naming and noticing all the different parts of your system. So, regardless of how many parts you notice, naming them and talking about them in this way helps you go into that watcher role. This is what in IFS is termed unblending.

Let me explain unblending. When a part is fully present and blended with you, you will see the world through that part's eyes. You will think what that part thinks, you will feel its feelings, and you will feel the impulse to do what that part wants to do. Versus when you have unblended and gotten some space from a part, you can see more clearly

Now, there are lots of different words to describe this phenomenon of unblending, but basically, it's a type of separation, a type of space that gives you access to a bit of objectivity and perspective that's only available when you can step back from or get a little bit of space or softening from emotions and thoughts and actions. And the important thing is what you get access to when you unblend.

By saying a part of me, you open the door to perspective. You also realize that you are not your emotions, but you have parts of you that have emotions. Your emotions are not all of you, but they're just a part of you. And when you do this, you get access to a much broader way of looking at things, a broader perspective. And sometimes, you might even get access to a slight bit more calm, which can open the door to curiosity.

So, it could sound like this. It's not all of me that's furious, but in that moment, a part of me was very mad. This part is not just a little mad, but it is really, really, really mad. Hmm. That makes sense that in this situation, a part of me is mad. I get that. Deep breath. Okay, you know, I can see how that part's got a point, and I can also see how there could be another way to look at this. There could be some other variables at play. Or it could sound like, a part of me is so anxious, but it's not all of me that's anxious. It's just a part. Hmm. I wonder how come this part showed up right now.

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So, to do this, simply say, a part of me feels, a part of me, fill in the blank. And you can do it anytime you need a bit of space, a bit of clarity, a bit of calm, anytime you feel a big emotion, or anytime you just want to explore what's going on in your system. If you want to take it a little bit deeper and do the next step, you can describe more of what the part is doing. Describe more of the thoughts and feelings and desires and impulses that a part brings. And you might even also notice how the part makes itself known in your body.

So, to recap, using the language of parts works because you get to go into a watcher state and slightly more neutrally, possibly even more compassionately, observe yourself and your parts. And it works because it gives you some space and perspective, possibly also calm, possibly also compassion, and then curiosity as well. And it's in this space of more calm where you can access choice.

And you can feel less like the victim of your feelings and more like you're on the same team with yourself because there's you, and then there's the part of you who has anxiety. There's you, and then there's the part that's really angry. There's you, and then there's the part that's overthinking. And when you can start to differentiate between yourself and that part, experiences that once left you reeling and ruminating and feeling stuck are so much less debilitating.

And the cool thing about using the language of parts for yourself is that you can also start noticing other people's parts. Is your partner cranky? Well, that's not all of them, but a part of them is really cranky. Is someone sounding really sharp with their tone, even though they're saying friendly-sounding words? Well, that may be because there's a part of them that's upset, but another part's trying to be diplomatic. Are you watching your kids fight when five minutes ago they were just being super loving and sweet? Well, it's basically a parts party that you're observing, and their different parts are now battling.

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So, on future episodes, we're going to get into some of the common parts and types of parts you might start noticing once you do this practice more regularly. And this is going to be how you're going to get an even deeper appreciation for why you do what you do. So, I hope this was useful for you. Until next week, we will talk soon.

Thanks for listening to *Habits On Purpose*. If you want more information on Kristi Angevine or the resources from the podcast, visit HabitsOnPurpose.com. Tune in next week for another episode.