

GROUP HANDOUTS

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A Basic Outline of Dealing with Unattached Burdens

A few of my case studies follow this outline closely, some don't follow it at all. This outline is a general suggestion of direction rather than a precise method. Follow the client. Follow their beliefs and imagery and myths. Follow their inner world, their system. Welcome flexibility and openness.

You can consider these steps as broad brush strokes that indicate tasks to be accomplished, or areas of concern to be visited.

Clinical Outline

1. UBs are best removed while in Self.

We need our basic IFS skills to get our selves and our clients to have a critical mass of Self. Our first rule or guideline is that these things only get power if you're afraid of them. They lose all power when you're not scared. This is actually one of Dick's laws of inner physics, as he calls it. He says that when we're not scared of anything in the inner world, it loses its power. I want to quote something about self-presence that he wrote in his new second edition of the Internal Family Systems Therapy book:

"Keep in mind as well that Self can handle anything in the inner world. When trauma survivors face a very scary part, I often tell them 'Noting inside has power over you when you're not afraid of it, and your Self will not be afraid.'

This crucial law has never been violated in my decades of doing IFS, and I have encountered many scary parts who engage in nasty behaviors. As a result, parts who seem all-powerful and dangerous become approachable and can be unburdened of their jobs when they are ready. I am filled with awe every time I see one of these inner monsters melt and transform in the presence of Self energy."

This law applies not only to parts, but also to things that are not parts, the legacy burdens, and the unattached burdens that we're dealing with here.

The first job if you're working with these, is to find your parts who find this scary. If you, as a therapist, are frightened of these phenomena, you can't work with clients who have them. You can't power over these inner fears either. You can't bulldoze them. You can't just muscle up and push through. The IFS way to do this is to:

- I. Find the parts who carry the fear,
- II. Unblend from them and welcome them with love,
- III. Get them to separate out so that you can be in Self with them.

This sounds relatively straightforward, but it's one of these things in IFS that's very simple but not easy. When you get unblended from a part who's holding the fear of these unattached burdens, there's two basic paths available. The best path is to work with the Self-part relationship with that part until it's very comfortably attached to the Self and it no longer has any fear.

The other way is to get this part who holds the fear behind the client and you to some safe, comfortable and protected space so that it can let you do your work with the UB. If you do this, it's necessary to come back and help this part later.

These fear parts in us and in our clients are not a problem. They're actually the goal. They hold treasure because working with these fear parts, reconnecting with them, and holding them close is the royal road to our deep healing. So we don't want to push them aside and disrespect them. We really want to welcome them wholeheartedly. Working with them is a portal to transformation of our whole system. It is how to grow deeply as a therapist.

There's a quote I like, *'What's in the way, is the way'*. It's one of the great gifts of doing this kind of work at the outer edges of therapy, is that it will scare and trigger many of our parts and help us get to know them and welcome them in more quickly than we would have if it wasn't for these strange stimuli. There's another saying with the same basic meaning, *'The only difference between a stumbling block and a stepping stone is your attitude towards it.'*

We need to have a loving, welcoming attitude toward the parts of us who hold fear. They are the healing path to becoming better therapists and more comfortable human beings, and deeper spiritual beings too. This is true of the therapist and it's even more true of the client. So once, as a therapist, you've dealt with your frightened parts and are not scared of what's going on in your client in any way and can be in Self with those eight Cs with your client, then you can start to do this kind of work. You do not need all eight Cs one hundred percent. You need a critical mass of Self. Enough Self so that Self can do the session.

Of the eight Cs, there's one that's most important. You can't proceed without it, and that's curiosity. If I'm not curious about a client, I stop the session and ask them to give me a few minutes to get my parts to step back and recollect my Self. Curiosity is that important. You may have more than one part that holds fear or anxiety about doing this kind of work. It's very important to work with all of them who do this. Treat them with love, welcome them, help them. If you're holding fear and trying to muscle over it, you won't really be able to do good work.

Once you have dealt with your fear parts, preferably before a session with a client, you ask the client, how do you feel towards the unattached burden? How do you feel towards that presence in you that's not a part of you? If there's fear or anxiety, or anything like that, you do regular IFS with those parts. You welcome them, help the client unblend from them, you get to

know them, you have the person relate to them from Self and love them up. The other alternative, just like in working with yourself, is asking the client to have these parts go to a safe place behind them so you can complete the work with the unattached burden. It is best, in working with unattached burdens if they can be removed from Self. If there's any fear, you need to work with that first. That's the number one rule, that's how they gain power. But anger can also keep people connected to these things. It's very understandable that people can have parts who are absolutely enraged at these things. They often appear in a person's system as angry, sneery, contemptuous, threatening, or doing all sorts of nasty stuff. Anger is a natural response, and in many ways healthy, but it can become something that keeps us connected to the unattached burden.

Years ago, when I was working with Pia Mellody, I learned an important lesson about justified anger. We'd been working together for a long time and she knew me very well, and in a small group she said Bob, today I'm going to tell you about your character defects, which is a phrase that's frequently used in 12 step environments. And she said she'd gotten a list of six and that I wasn't to take notes, somebody else would do that for me, and I was just to listen and understand. And she started with Bob, you're arrogant. She gave examples of how I'd been arrogant and gone one up on other people and she was very accurate and very right. And then next she talked about my sarcasm and how I'd caused pain with that and again, she was very accurate and very right. And after she'd done six of them, I'd felt like a puddle on the floor. But Pia said okay, Bob, you got that? I said yes, I do. She said, now we're going to do the hard part. She said, I know your father raped and beat you and tormented you throughout your childhood, but your anger is now something that keeps you connected to him. It's like a spear you hold in him and it keeps you two connected. To break that connection, you're going to put him in that empty chair over there, put his spirit in that empty chair over there, and you're going to tell him how much he hurt you without getting angry. How close do you want the chair? And I just started swearing at the top of my lungs, screaming every four-letter thing you could think of. That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard of and all the four-letter words. And she just had a little tight smile on her face and when I'd ran out of breath said, okay Bob, how close do you want the chair?

I eventually did this, with the chair as far away as it was possible to get it in that house, and it did make a difference. It broke a connection between me and the spirit of my father. This same kind of connection can form between people and unattached burdens who've been tormenting them for a long time in the inner world. UBs often seem to be doing everything they can to provoke a fight, to provoke anger. This keeps us connected to them. This is the big difference between IFS UB work and exorcism. The UBs like the fight and they love provoking us into our protector energies. It is a standard idea in IFS that protector parts usually create in the outside world exactly what they are trying to protect against. It is the same with UBs.

It's absolutely necessary to deal with all the fear-holding parts before you do this work and it's important also to clear anger, at least substantially, or it will keep the person connected to this thing. That's the number one most important thing about doing this; they only get power when you're afraid of them. Sometime I tell people that any being who would gain power by scaring child parts is not really powerful at all. Often the UB will become enraged at the me for saying this. This is actually a good development, because the client can see that you are totally unafraid and the UB can not harm you at all. As a corollary, they're quite good at scaring you. But this actually has a benefit, it shows you your tender parts who need more attention and care from you. I think it's rather like ants in the kitchen. The ants obviously don't have any good intentions to help you, but they unerringly show you where the food is spilled. These unattached burdens show you the weak, tender, frightened parts of you who need help. So they actually can be a very well disguised blessing.

2. Assume it's a Part

The second basic piece of working with unattached burdens is that you need to assume this thing is a part of the person's system and not something from outside the system. Do this over and over and over again until it's proven that it's not a part of the system. There's a great price to pay if you try to amputate a part of the system. The whole system won't trust you anymore because you've tried to expel a part of it and it can take a long time to repair this.

One of the great advances of IFS is that it realized parts are not their burdens, they all at their core are well-intentioned and have great gifts to give once their burdens can be gotten off of them. Most other therapies before IFS would try to amputate parts or at least lock them in some soundproof dungeon, deep in the psyche, so they wouldn't be heard from again. This is not good.

I've helped train the staff in some eating disorder clinics and there they obviously have to get the anorexics to eat because they will die if they don't. We do need to control the eating disorder part, but we do it from a place of compassion and respect, knowing that it is doing this destructive behavior for what it see as good and important reasons. As Dick colorfully says, *"If you get in a battle with ED [eating disorders] ED will kick your ass"*.

With alcoholism we want to befriend and help the part who wants to drink. We do not want to shame and imprison it. This IFS approach is often revolutionary in a person's system and it requires time and care to build internal trust. Therefore, if you attempt to amputate and expel a part thinking it's a UB, you can undo a lot of valuable work. The mistake of trying to expel a part from the system causes a great deal of damage. So assume it's a part, assume it's a part, assume it's a part. There's a saying that almost every medical student has heard when being taught diagnosis, *'When you hear hoof-beats, do not think of Zebras.'* You don't go to the weird, exotic thing first, you stay with horses or mules or donkeys. You go with those first, and parts are the familiar thing in a person's system. Many people never have any unattached

burden or legacy burden that they're aware of, and they can do powerful and life-transforming therapy without going to these things.

The first thing about checking if it's a part is to ask the intention. Parts always, if you look deeply enough, have a good intention. Suicidal parts are an excellent example. Most people have them; most people have thought of killing themselves at some point in their lives. If you ask a suicidal part, why do you want to kill them? They might say, well, then they wouldn't be on the planet any more. Then you ask, what's good about not being on the planet any more? Then they might say, they wouldn't suffer any more. There's your good intention. Sometimes you have to drill down many layers because the good intention isn't clear, but if it's a part, eventually there will be a good intention.

If it was an unattached burden that was trying to get the person to kill themselves you could ask the same question. What would be good about you killing them? It would say something like, they wouldn't be on the planet any more. You could ask, well what would be good about that? They might say something like, well then it means I would have won. There's no good intention in that. That might be an unattached burden. You need to keep asking, "What's good about that?" or "...and then?" over and over. Drill deep when you look for the intentions; they can be well hidden.

A slightly different angle to approach this same issue is to ask about and look for a productive function. This slightly different line of questioning can add clarity. These things can be very intimidating and have seemingly serious deleterious effects on a person. Suppose one of these had ruined a relationship. You would still need to know more. Did it ruin the relationship with what it thought was a destructive partner? Then it's a part. Or did it ruin the relationship to isolate the person to make them vulnerable and pliable? Then it's probably an unattached burden (UB). UBs are purely malevolent. Stay in Self, stay curious, take your time and it will become clear.

There is another diagnostic question. When the being expresses a belief or opinion, ask where it got that belief. For example, if it says, 'It would be better if she were dead'. Ask where and when it took on that belief. We use this question often with parts. When a part can answer, it begins the process of deconstructing the belief; helping the part start to dis-identify from the burden. UBs typically cannot or will not answer this question. If they do, their answers often reveal what they are.

Once you've very carefully explored for good intentions, the next thing to do is to ask this thing, are you a part of her? Or better, have the client ask it. Are you part of her, are you a part of her system? It's very important to ask the thing directly and not let any other parts speak up. Almost everybody has polarizations in their system. One part that wants to eat the ice cream after dinner and another part that's saying no, you're already a few pounds overweight. And very often those polarization parts will point at each other and say, hey that one's not a part, get rid of that one. You have to ask the thing itself, are you a part? Very often they'll

refuse to answer, just like that first case I mentioned. The thing did not want to answer that question, but if you just keep asking calmly and clearly, eventually, usually they will. Be persistent until you get a clear answer.

Dick has said that these things cannot lie about this even though they seem to be masters of lying and dissimulation in many other areas. I've heard some that are almost lies but they seem to be very rare. Sometimes these things are still blended with or attached to a part and then they can say they're a part until all the parts who were attached to them let them go. I was teaching about this point once and one of the students, a powerful woman from Nigeria, interrupted and said forcefully almost yelling, "*They lie!*" When I got past my surprise I was so grateful she spoke and gave us some insight into another culture's views. She also said that in her tradition many were believed to be the spirits of deceased people, some of whom had been dead so long that they forgot and came to believe they were parts of the person.

These are the two most basic and most important things about dealing with unattached burdens, or anything inside a person's system that doesn't seem to be part of them. You can't really go on unless these two are in place; no fear in you, the therapist, and little fear or minimized fear in the client, and sure knowledge that this thing is not a part of the person's system. If you're in doubt, keep working these two steps. Just working these two steps can make an incredible difference for people because the young, tender parts of them that held all the fears can be welcomed and unburdened, and they will get more and more clear about what is them and what is not. These steps seem fairly universal in doing this work. All the other steps are much more a reflection of the person's ideology, and their own internal imagery, and mythology, and the metaphors they use. The other steps can diverge much more widely, but these two are pretty solid and need to happen at the beginning.

I am going to repeat this because it is fundamentally important.

Now we have probably the two most important things about dealing with unattached burdens. First, they lose all power when you're not afraid of them. This is very simple and also very difficult. This goes against much of the Hollywood version of exorcisms. It takes a lot of the drama out of it, but it's really important and profoundly true. The second very, very important thing is, assume it's part of the person's system until it's proven otherwise. This is another error that many exorcist and deliverance ministers have made. They've tried to amputate parts of a person. This always fails and it always causes deep damage. It might look as though it succeeds for a while but the part will come roaring back and it will be angry and in no mood to cooperate because it's already been betrayed once.

The parts work model is a huge advance over old ways of dealing with these kinds of issues because it allows us to own, accept and welcome what is parts of us, and to get out of our system what is not. Terrible damage was done by well-meaning people who tried to amputate and banish parts. These parts were often the very parts who had taken on the heaviest burdens in order to save the person.

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3. Create some distance between the person and the unattached burden.

Very often, unattached burdens are bullies. They are contemptuous and sneering and say things like, 'I'll never go, you can't make me', and stuff like that. This is a lie, the truth is when all parts of a person's system are ready to let them go, they cannot stay. In the deliverance ministries, they said that there had to be ground for what they would call a demon to stay in a person, and they often thought of this ground in terms of sin, which I think is a sad and limiting way to view it. The reason these things can get into a person and stay in a person is because some part is allowing them to attach. Dick has said in the past that in his belief, all of these things promise power to the powerless. The vast majority do. It's very easy to imagine a young child being hurt and traumatized looking for any kind of power it might get, and something comes to it that offers it power. That would be an irresistible temptation. There's also another, at least one other, motivation for children taking in these kinds of external energies. They offer companionship to the lonely. Abandoned children need companionship and they can be so desperate that they will do anything to get it. Remember that isolation IS a mortal threat for young children. They will die if abandoned and their bodies seem to know this. It is biologically hard wired in us.

If it is impossible to get any degree of separation with the unattached burden, this is not a disaster. It just means we need to find the parts who are letting it stay so close. Ask the client to find the parts. Ask how she feels toward them. Once your client is in Self in relationship to this part (and this often may require getting other frustrated parts to step back) have her offer the part compassion and care. This is standard, classical IFS. With steady presence, a strong Self-Part relationship will form. This is much more secure, warm and loving than any of these unattached burdens. Just patiently work with every part who is unwilling to get any distance from the unattached burden.

Once all these parts have been worked with, you and the person will be able to get some separation. My favorite metaphor for this is to use light. I'll say something like, "*Surround this thing in a ball or egg-shaped container of light and pull it out of your body to a good conversational distance, perhaps six or eight feet away from you*". Or sometimes I say, "*Surround yourself and this thing in you in a ball of light, and then you back out of the ball of light, leaving the thing in the light.*" Light is definitely the most popular metaphor for this. Orthodox Christians talk about the uncreated light, Buddhists talk about the clear light or basic luminosity, there's all kinds of special phrases that fit in different traditions. Some people find this light metaphor repellent, 'oh that new-age bullshit.' I've also used the metaphor of a magnetic field and talked about how if you have iron filings mixed with sand, the job of separating them looks impossible but a magnet does this easily and quickly. Another metaphor I've used is combing it out. I watched a film about Mongolian Shamans and they often do this, they spread their fingers wide and comb the air around a person they're working on to heal. I'll ask the client what metaphor works for them, washing, any kind of metaphor that they bring. If at any point a client's metaphor differs from my preferred

metaphors, I drop mine and go with the client's. We want to use the mythology, the images, the metaphors that are the most powerful for the client. We need to be able to put our belief systems on hold, to bracket them, so that they don't interfere with the client's process. I believe we can really make a difference in the client's system, in how the client experiences their world, and in their emotional wellbeing by doing these kinds of processes. We need to use the client's language, the client's culture, the client's worldview as much as is possible.

As we will see later, meeting beings like these UBs is very common in psychedelic work. Stan Groff, a great pioneer in this field developed his own way of dealing with them. He would challenge them asking, *"You do not really know who you are, do you?"* When they stumbled with this, which they almost always did, he would press the point asking them more questions, *"Where do you come from?"* This would often disorient them and shake their confidence but it is dangerous to do anything with any protector energy in it. They grow stronger when they meet protector energy. Paths like this can make the removal of the being more traumatic than it needs to be.

Once the unattached burden is in that ball of light, or whatever container works for the client, at a conversational distance, I ask the client to notice are there any attachments of any kind coming back from that being to you and your body. Any cords, tubes, lines of smoke, anything. Many people immediately want to cut these connections. I say *"No, no, no, no, please don't."* These things are very valuable diagnostic indicators. I ask the client *"where do these things touch your body?"* This shows the place in the client's body where the part who still has some attachment to this thing lives. Again, it's back to very basic IFS. How do you feel towards that part? We keep working until you get compassion or at least curiosity. Curiosity is the Self quality you can't go ahead without.

Extend the curiosity towards that part, see how it responds, and work to develop the relationship, slowly and patiently until that part, of its own accord, turns towards Self and lets go of this other thing, the unattached burden. Sometimes, you can not get a strong relationship with the part. It might be important to get the UB out before the Self-Part relationship can form. In the case ask the part if it's willing to go to a safe, contained space so that you can work on removing the unattached burden. Sometimes that's necessary. I think establishing the full Self part relationship is a much-preferred method but it's slower.

4. Detaching from the unattached burden

You continue doing this until all the attachments from the thing that's contained in that ball of light fall away and there are none coming back to the client's body. A very useful question here is, *"Ask inside if there are any parts of you who will miss this thing when it's gone."* We do not want parts who will miss it hiding in shame or fear. Therefore I often add that it makes sense that you might miss it. It's been here a long time. It's crucial to carefully and lovingly find all parts who had attached to that UB. Then it cannot stay or reenter. It will leave without

rupture or violence. This question is carefully phrased - *“Who will miss it when it’s gone?”* contains the pre-supposition that the UB will leave the system. It’s only a matter of when.

Michi Rose developed a series of statements that can be very useful in this phase. She would have the client say to the UB, *“You are no longer welcome in my body. You are no longer welcome in my emotions. You are no longer welcome in my thinking. You are no longer welcome in my beliefs. You are no longer welcome in my spirit.”* At first when I tried this I was only using it as a ritualized way of marking an end. Several times UBs popped up and said things like, *“Well that other stuff might be true but I’m still here in her thinking.”* Now when I use this protocol I watch the client very carefully looking for ‘tells’ as the poker players call them, physical signs that give away the information that something is still going on in the area I have just mentioned. This has been so useful that I have added to Michi’s list. Now I also say, *“You are no longer welcome in my exiles. You are no longer welcome in my managers. You are no longer welcome in my firefighters.”*

If any physical difficulties or illness has been associated with the UB I also mention the body parts involved. For example, *“You are no longer welcome in my stomach.”* or what ever areas have had problems. In this list, beliefs are often especially significant. Sarah Axford has helped me by emphasizing this. One belief that UBs almost always work to implant is that the person does not deserve love. We need to look for this belief. It prevents parts from letting go of the UB by convincing it no-one else will ever be there for it. In the context of the external world Marshal Rosenberg, the creator of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), said that the most dangerous word in the english language is “deserve.” This may also be true in the inner world.

In step 3 we got the UB out of the client’s body. Now we are sending it off entirely. These are imagistic-imaginative ideas, obviously. But they can have great emotional power. Very often these steps are intermingled, and not so clearly separate. I typically address the energy in that ball of light, the unattached burden, and these are messages I would have been giving it all along, *“we’re not doing this to punish you or judge you. You are lost, you are in the wrong place, you can no longer stay here. Even though you pretend to be tough and strong we know that you too also suffer. We are going to send you to where you can transform and grow and get the nourishment you really deserve.”*

More and more I am telling the UBs *“When you go to the healing realms you will get real power, not this fake, small stuff you have been fooling around with.”* This is very, very different from a traditional exorcism. There’s a group that’s centered in Seattle of Neo-Shamans who talk about compassionate dispossession, and it’s very much like this. Also, the Spiritists of Brazil believe that all of these things that get into people, no matter how horrendous and Devil-like and mean and terrifying they appear, are really just lost souls in the wrong place and they are very frightened and they are suffering deeply too. The Spiritists actually seem to believe that it becomes our job to help them, almost as much as helping our client. In Tibet

there is a long tradition of befriending the demons which is exemplified in the Chod rituals. Tsultrim Allione has adapted the Chod rite for western use and has a book (Feeding Your Demons, 2008) explaining this in detail.

Typically a UB says, 'I'm not going, you can't make me,' it snarls and rages and hisses and often there's a lot of very colorful swear words. It seems that we have some kind of basic free will, that these things cannot stay in us when there is no part that wants it in any way anymore. There is no longer any "ground" in us as the deliverance ministers say. But the UBs also seem to have some kind of free will. I would like to send them all to the healing realms, but some of them seem to want to scurry back into the darkness and I don't have choice over that, I can only encourage.

These unattached burdens do seem to be uniformly miserable, even if they pretend to really love what they're doing. What they're doing is not actually pleasant and it's left them in a starving or semi-starving state. One of the very major reasons they won't go is that they fear punishment or they believe that a good realm would never welcome them because they've done so many truly terrible things. I keep working to reassure them, you will be welcomed there, there will be a feast like for the prodigal son. All you need to do is turn and look and you will see kind beings leaning down to help you. I have started using imagery from near-death experiences, telling the UBs, *"If you look upward, you'll very likely see a tunnel and light at the end of the tunnel, and you might see those kind beings there."* Adopting near-death experience (NDE) imagery for this work is very promising. There are now more and more studies of NDEs and there are many vivid descriptions of imagery you can offer. Dr. Grayson and others have made lists of what images are the most frequent, and you can work from these lists. I tell the UBs they'll be feasting in celebration when they return to their true home. Still, many of them don't believe this and won't go. Most of these UBs seem strongly focused on power so I remind them and tempt them by telling them that if they go to the healing realms they will find real power, not the cheap counterfeit they have been using here.

William Baldwin, the founder, of Spirit Releasement Therapy had two things that he did at this point. I have no idea where he got these ideas but, pragmatically, they often seem helpful. He would say to these beings, *"You have been lied to and deceived about the nature of your world and I can prove it to you. The first lie is that light will hurt you and cause immense pain. This is not true, take one finger and touch the light that surrounds you and you'll see."* Very often, these beings will refuse but they'll bluster and give all sorts of reasons, but once they do touch the light, it almost always feels good to them, at least warm, definitely not painful. Dick used to have the experience that when he worked with these things with light, that they would be hurt by the light, and if they came into contact with anything that was like light, they'd be screaming and flailing in pain. I think it was actually their fear, their terror of light that was hurting them, not the light itself. They resisted being forced through their terror.

The second lie that William Baldwin would tell these things they'd been told, was that if they looked inside themselves there was nothing but dark and that they were mortal beings who

would die. And he would tell these things, “*Look inside yourself and you will see a spark of light.*” Often, they would balk at this task too, and bluster and huff and puff. But every time they’ve done it, when they looked inside, they did see a spark of light. When they realized that the light didn’t hurt them and that they had a spark of light deep inside of them, they were much more willing to take the risk of going up into the light, into a realm of healing. These beings are uniformly proud, or perhaps I should say I haven’t met one yet who is not proud. This can be used to manipulate them, and I’m perfectly willing to be quite confronting with them. I’ll say things like, “*A powerful, proud being like you is too frightened to touch the light with one fingertip? Or are you really a coward or weakling?*” I issue other challenges very much like that. I’m not really hostile when I do this. I’m trying to get them to do something that I believe will help them and help them transform. I behave with UBs in ways I never would behave with a part.

As the unattached burden becomes more and more ready to leave the person, it’s important to make sure that it’s taking all its parts, employees, minions, objects, anything like that that it left in the person. We do not want any residues left in the client. Some of these things are devious and intelligent in their strategies. One, for example, gave a twelve-year-old boy part a pocket knife in the imaginal, internal world, and the twelve-year-old boy did not want to let go of this. It was a treasure for him, but if that had stayed in the person’s system it would have been a way back in for this UB energy. It’s important to check for any things or parts of slaves or employees left behind. If one of these things is especially resistant to going to the healing realms when it’s out there at the conversational distance, I will say that “*Yes, you have free will, but so do all of your slaves, employees, minions, underlings, whatever words you want to use, and they can all go to the healing realms now.*” Several times people have reported that they see these beings getting smaller and smaller, and looking more frightened and concerned as their army melts away.

Another reason why these things sometimes will not go is that they’re frightened. They’ve been sent there by some other being that they consider more important, more powerful than themselves or than us. If one is recalcitrant, I’ll say something like “*It seems like you’re an underling, let me talk to your boss.*” Sometimes there is a boss who sent them, and it’s the same procedure with this thing. If you’re not afraid of it, it has no power. And very often the unattached burdens are very terrified of this boss and that’s how these bosses get power. For them to see you standing up to it makes all the difference in the world. You can do the entire same procedure with this boss. Surround it in some containing field, move it out, make sure all the connections back to the person are gone, and then send it away. Some therapists find this idea of asking for the boss scary, and you would need to work with your parts before you did this. Often UBs are organized into local hierarchies with bosses and underlings.

Even if you’ve done all this, some of these unattached burdens will still just be snarling, contemptuous, spewing hate and scorn, and vowing to destroy you and destroy the person they’ve been in. They don’t have that power and if you have no fear of them, they have no

power whatsoever. I'll just remind them that they cannot stay here anymore, we cannot force them to go to the healing realms, but they have to leave. I encourage all the parts of them and all of their soldiers to go to the healing realms themselves. Then I release this being. I don't like letting them go back to the dark but I don't have control over that. I think it's bad for them and I also have concerns that they'll come and harass others. As the UBs leave the person's system, especially when it is going toward healing, there are some valuable questions to ask. *"Have you left any parts of yourself or objects in the person?"* and *"Are there any other beings like you still in them?"* The UBs seem to be know about the presence of others who may be trying to hide to get to stay in the person. Tom Csordas, the anthropologist, pointed out that hidden possessing spirits, hidden demons, are often the most powerful. The strongest try to hide and sacrifice their underlings. It is good to check.

These UBs seem to be some kind of parasite. One group I know who works with them, calls them the feeders, based on the belief that they feed on the negative emotions and pains of humans. This would seem to be a fair description of how they've appeared in my clients. As I said before, they often get into a person by promising power. Power to the powerless, what a seductive offer. They might give the appearance of power or enough to give the person the illusion that they have more power, but actually, they cripple a person. They keep people weak, dependent and powerless so that they can feed off of them. Very often, people with unattached burdens in them are terrified much of their lives. They don't know where the fear comes from and it seems irrational. When the UB offers companionship to the lonely and abandoned child what they do is increase the isolation of that person so that the person becomes more dependent, more isolated, and more in need of the energies of that unattached burden.

Sometimes, the unattached burdens come in offering numbness when there is great pain, and then they cause pain to create the need for numbness. All of these parasitic behaviors are an offer of a solution that actually makes things worse. This reminds me very much of the addiction process. For example, alcohol promises conviviality and confidence and all those things but actually leads a person down a path to loneliness and more and more dependence on the alcohol, and more and more is needed. There's a very odd parallel here. When the UB is leaving it is good to ask the client to watch it until it disappears completely. Several have reported that it went through a hole in the sky and is totally gone. If it balks and turns back at the last minute, do not get discouraged. This is valuable information. It means that there are parts of the client that are still holding on to it or allowing it to hold on to them. Charles Upton once said that the devil is an opportunistic infection. These things can not help but show us where we need to heal. These parts need our care and love. Removing UBs can help us find deeply hidden parts and inadvertently facilitate the client's healing.

5. Clean up phase.

The UB is entirely gone. The client is welcoming back all their parts. After the unattached burden has moved on, hopefully to the light but perhaps back into the darkness, it's really important to check with all the parts in the person's system if they're all okay with its absence. Very often, these things have been in people for decades. It was very familiar to have this external energy in them and it can be disorienting and odd to have it gone. We need to check with all the parts we got to detach from it, to make sure everybody's okay and well connected with Self.

If we did get any parts to step back and go into a safe room, it's vital to bring them all out and have them look around and see and feel how it is without that UB in the system. Most of the time, people feel good when this is done. Even then, we need to look for any parts who are uncomfortable, frightened, disoriented, anything like that, and take the time to reconnect with them in a good way. Sometimes, when these things have gone, they immediately turn around and offer to come back as guides or protectors. Do not trust this. I do believe there are energies we can connect to that are guides and protectors, and these are very valuable and wonderful for a client to connect to, but it's a very bad and dangerous idea to allow one of these things to return in that guise right away. Usually, it's just a guise, a front, a pretense, and they still want to do damage. And even if they want to do good, they haven't had a chance to receive any healings themselves. I discourage this intensely when it's proposed to a client, even though it's a very seductive offer.

Quite often, these things leave apologizing, saying something like, *"I am so sorry, I didn't realize how much damage I was doing. I was lost, please forgive me."* Sometimes people are sort of sad to see them go and the parting is poignant and sad. But still, it needs to happen. There is another phenomena that can happen. Sometimes parts, especially deep exiles, could have been hiding behind the UB and all the ruckus it caused. It's good to inquire gently at this point to see if anyone is feeling exposed or pulled out of their hiding place. If there are any parts like this offer them a new, more comfortable hiding place, and let them know you will be coming back to help them fully join the system.

It seems that for Westerners, people almost always want to send these things up, that the healing realms are imagined as being above us. I think this is very deep in our history, it's in almost all of our mythologies, but it's not necessarily the case. Our mythologies indicate an upward direction and light, but it's also perfectly possible for these things to go down, to sink into the Earth or into the primeval waters. Again, go with the person's mythology, the person's religious orientation, the person's metaphors, and worldview. Michael Harner, the great anthropologist of Shamanism and a Shaman himself, divided the spirit world up into three realms; the upper world, the middle world where we live, and the lower world. I think this model is useful, at least to open our symbolic systems so that we are not upset or bothered by the idea of sending things down into the waters or down into the Earth.

Harner and his school also say that you can find real guides on any of these levels but it's much better and safer to look in the upper world or the lower world because many of the beings in the middle world where we live are tricksters and are not reliable. They might well fool us.

A lot of the people who work with these things are aware of the cords, connections, and ties coming back to a person and they cut them rather than work with the parts they're attached with. As I've said before, I don't like this practice very much because I think you're losing something valuable here. These things actually do us the service of showing us where in the client there are frightened parts who need our love and attention and we should make use of that valuable information. There's often been a high price paid for that information. There is a high tuition at this school. If you feel you need to cut these cords there are ways. There is a shamanic method called the Jaguar breath. When the client is seeing the cords they have the client purse their lips and blow downward, three strong exhales, moving their head from side to side and visualizing that each breath is cutting across each one of those cords. They do three breaths with each cord. This ritual does seem to be helpful for some people.

As a part of cleaning up, very often it's necessary, or a good idea, to find out how the UB got in in the first place. Sometimes UBs are passed down as legacy burdens from our ancestors but when this is not the case they usually get in when, in one way or another, we weren't in our bodies. Very often these things get in through rape and the place they got in was the place that was raped. Trauma of all kinds lets these in. Sometimes they get in when someone is under anesthesia. If there is concern about the presence of UBs it is good to ask about childhood surgeries. Sometimes they get in through betrayal, and I've noticed that very often, betrayal entry is in the back of the heart. You can ask the client to look around and find, any sense of where this thing got in.

Now, there are many different kinds of visualization and other methods to keep safe. The most basic and sure rule is when you're not afraid of it, it loses all power. This is the real power. I hesitate to use other ways because they can be fear based. There are some other things I offer sometimes. Very often, people build some kind of boundary around themselves or have imagery about that, this feels powerful to them, and I go with what the client wants and the client's imagery, the client's mythology. But I prefer an approach that I've heard in many meditative traditions, which is building up inner light inside that fills more and more, fills the whole body and whole person more and more so there is no way the person can be penetrated. This is different imageistically from creating a shell around something.

I believe it was William Baldwin who created a meditation called the sealing light meditation to do this. He would tell people to look inside themselves, and deep inside they'll find a spark of light. As they focus on that spark of light, slowly and calmly they will notice it growing. The more of attention that is on that spark of light, the more it grows. Then have that light grow until it fills the entire body, all the way to the skin. From an IFS perspective I add, notice if there are any shadowy areas or places where the light does not penetrate. Do not fight or

blame these, welcome them, and befriend them. These are trailheads that guide us to where we need to focus next. They're really important clues to guide our work in the future. Then William Baldwin would say, when the body is entirely full of this light let it burst forth and extend a foot or two beyond you in every direction. I also have people look in this area around their bodies for any clouds or obstructions. The idea is that in this state, no external energy can get into you. There is no room for it. William Baldwin suggested that if you practice this meditation, it might take you a half-hour to do thoroughly at first, but it becomes so automatic that you can do it in a breath or two. Once it's become that automatic, it can be very useful in real-time during a session. This is something you can train clients in if they're open to this sort of thing.

I've heard several people who work in this area say that it's extremely rare for the same unattached burden to return. This is also my experience. Some say that it never ever happens. But when there's an opening in a person, other ones will come in, they'll see an inviting door. So it's a good practice to check with the person and look for any openings, any access points, and work with them.

6. Invitation.

Now that the unattached burden is out of the person, the place that it got in has been addressed and sealed, or filled, or dealt with in some way, and all the parts who stepped back or had been connected to this thing in any way have been reconnected with and reassured, there's still work to do. This is very much like the phase called the invitation in regular IFS where we get a regular burden out of a person. In regular IFS we ask the client to ask the part to welcome in any qualities it may need in the future, and that's basically what we do here. We encourage all the parts in the system to welcome in any qualities that will feel good. Very often it's just light or warmth or something like that that comes in. Sometimes it's courage, excitement, playful, could be any of those things. I ask the person to say them aloud if they're willing to. This filling process is sort of like the sealing light meditation. We don't want to leave a big, empty space in that person's system, in that person's imaginal field.

Now, there are some energies that get in from outside that are benign and benevolent and wonderful and important. Self sometimes is experienced as coming in from outside when it's experienced as part of a wave. The twelve steps talk about higher power. Almost every religion talks about contact with Spirit, the Holy Spirit, whatever it is, and this kind of experience has been happening to people throughout history and often changing their life dramatically. In IFS we call these energies guides because this term seems to offend the smallest number of people. It still offends some. The word guidance is even more inoffensive. Use whatever term is OK with your client. Many more IFS therapists are willing to talk about these kinds of energies which we tend to call guides than are willing to talk about dark energies, the unattached burdens. This is very understandable but I think it's quite unfortunate.

One of the things about IFS that is central and important is that it's a constraint release model. Basically, we are this Self that's curious, compassionate, courageous, connected, calm, clear, all those wonderful qualities, and the reason that doesn't shine forth all the time is that there are constraints, things blocking it. Our path is the removal of these constraints rather than building up some kind of muscle that isn't there.

In IFS we view even the most damaged person and even the person who's done horrendous things as having this fundamental Self that cannot be damaged even tarnished. We need to remove the constraints and it will shine forth. When there is a huge storm the sky is black; there can be mudslides; trees get blown down; our house might be destroyed. When the storm is over and the clouds part the sun is there, undamaged, not dirtied, not effected in the slightest. IFS says Self is like an inner sun no matter how bad the trauma. This is a tremendously liberating and positive idea for people who have suffered big T trauma or addiction. I also think it's a tremendously liberating idea for pretty much everybody.

With this constraint release model, it makes sense that we would need to focus on these unattached burden energies first. They're the constraints. With the idea that when enough of these constraints are removed, Self and guides will appear. Just as with Self, guides are always there, and we just don't experience them because there are constraints and things blocking. The constraint release model is a model of subtraction, not addition. It's based on the fundamental belief that we are good and whole and that Self, the goodness and wholeness, is who we really are. It is absolutely undamaged even in the most traumatic and deprived lives.

This constraint removal model of psycho-spiritual growth has a very long history. It's found in many religions. Perhaps every religion has people within it that practice this way. The theological name for this is kenosis. It is the removal of obstacles from our path to God, to holiness. The Cloud of Unknowing by an anonymous British monk of the late medieval era is a classic example. This text teaches that we approach the divine by progressively shedding more and more of our thoughts and ideas including all our concepts of God and holiness. William Johnston, the Irish jesuit priest, who lived, worked, and taught in Japan for over 40 years has written brilliantly about kenosis in Christianity and Buddhism (Johnston 1995 & 2006). A related term is apophaticism. The narrow meaning of this word is the attempt to describe God, or the divine by what it is not. This again is our constraint-release paradigm. Apophatic texts are found in all religions.

Even though we worked hard to prevent this, one question I am sure to ask in these later stages of this work is, are any parts missing this unattached burden? We really need to make room for this, and we really need to ask this question in a way that's not shaming. Maybe even preface it with, "*It's okay and understandable if you are, it was around for a long time. Are any of you missing this?*" We don't want these parts to feel they have to hide from the rest of the system, we want to bring them forward and love them. That is our real safety, the loving connection between Self and the parts, all the parts. Also, even though the UB was a very

negative presence having something big removed can be a trauma in itself, just as a healing medical operation is a trauma. This too can need room and time.

Once it's clear that there are no parts missing the unattached burden and that all that other work has been done thoroughly, you could see if the client wants to invite in guides or invite awareness of guides at this time. Again, follow the client's mythology, worldview, metaphor system, religious orientation, don't impose anything, and make any statements like this in a very permissive way, not in a command form. Like you might say something like, "*Some people, at times like this, when they're clear and open can feel a presence of some kind of guidance or guides. Let's just make a few moments here to see if anything like that occurs for you.*" I use the word guidance first because it is the one that is hardest for people to be reactive to. We want to be open and non-directive. If I know about the client's spiritual orientation, I will gently suggest that language. For example, with a 12-step person I might say, "*Some people at this time feel good connection with their higher power. Let's pause and see if anything like that happens now.*" We will talk more about this later, but Dick has said, the only really safe time to ask for guides is when you're in Self, when there's a critical mass of Self available. Very often, at this stage of this process, there's a lot of Self radiating throughout the system and that's why I often use this as an opportunity to see if the client wants to open to guide energy.

Step 7 Last Phase.

The last phase of these sessions is usually what I would call clean-up. The presence of something like this in a person's system often causes a lot of damage that appears as regular burdens carried by parts. For example, if somebody is seeing vivid imagery of some kind of negative being inside themselves and they try and tell others, others will often think of them as insane and then they'll start hiding that and they'll doubt their sanity. So there'll be a whole bunch of parts of that person's system who are full of shame, who doubt their sanity, and who feel a need to hide. Those parts will have to go through a regular IFS unburdening process to be freed from where they're stuck in the past. There are many other ways that the presence of these external energies can damage a person, especially when they're young. There's what I call the developmental cascade. Let's say for example that the UBs presence caused the person to isolate because they felt weird and strange and didn't know how to relate to others, then that isolation causes all sorts of social difficulty and deprivation and loneliness. The existence of a UB can cause many other normal burdens that then have to be unburdened and grieved.

Dick has said many times that he considers this world a school and that it's a very, very tough school, and that our guides are proud of us for having chosen such a tough and challenging education. He sees the burdens we had to take on as children as being the curriculum, as being the great teachers, as difficult as they are. I think the unattached burdens are also teachers. Unintentionally, they do us a lot of good and can give us a great deal of knowledge. I've already mentioned comparing them to ants in the kitchen. There are several spiritual

traditions which explicitly say this. The Kabbalists talk about the opponent and they mean the Devil or the evil one. There are all sorts of different names for it. The idea is that without the opponent, we couldn't really grow. We would not grow strong unless we wrestle with something strong. The Jungians and other psychological- philosophical traditions have talked about how without darkness there is no light, how the existence of evil is what allows good, that we can't have one without the other, all that sort of stuff. I want to stay at a very practical, pragmatic level and not go off into those enticing philosophical discussions. I have distrust of going up into my head where I can take the light and speculation and never need to do the hard emotional work. There's a saying from the twelve steps that I really like, "*When I'm in my mind, I know I'm in a dangerous neighborhood.*"

DRAFT

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Cheat Sheet

Here is the same Basic pragmatic outline reduced into cheat sheet form for easy reference. It's more of a basic set of suggestions so that you have an orientation and direction, so that you have a sense of where you're going, and the general flow.

Follow the client, follow their imagery, their spiritual orientation, their mythology. The most important thing is that you, the therapist, stay in Self. If you lose your curiosity, stop the session and work with your own parts until you are genuinely curious about the client and the clients process again.

Step One: Work with fear

When you are not afraid of UBs, they lose their power.

Work in your Self as therapist first, then with the client.

Two basic methods:

- Find the part who is frightened and do classical IFS with it until there is a strong Self-part relationship and the part feels secure.
- Help the scared parts go to a safe contained space until the UB is out.

Step Two: Assume it's a part until proven otherwise

“When you hear hoof beats, do not think of zebras.”

Two basic steps:

- Look for the intention. Look for a good intention or positive function. If the initial answers seem negative ask what's good about that and drill down for the deeper intention.
- Have the client ask the being directly, “Are you a part of me?” Do not let other parts answer. Be calm and persistent. It might resist answering but UBs do not seem to lie about this.

Step Three: Create some distance between the UB and the client.

- a good conversational distance is best. If the client has trouble creating this distance help them get into Self with the UB by asking how do you feel toward it.
- it is often good to use the light or a ball of light to pull the UB away from the person.

Have the person notice if there are any connections, cords, or strings of any kind coming back from the UB to their body.

Have the client look inside their body where the cord connects and find the part of them that is allowing the attachment. Develop the self- part relationship with that part until it willingly lets go of the UB. Do this with each connection.

Step Four: Offer healing to the UB

Tell it *“we are not here to punish or judge you; we want to send you to a place where you can heal.”* It has to leave the client now that no part is allowing it to stay.

Make sure it takes all of its soldiers, employees, underlings, and objects with it.

Sometimes UBs balk at this stage because they fear punishment by a boss. Call out that boss and deal with it in the same way you've dealt with the UB.

Send the UB out and watch it until it's completely gone

Step Five: Rebalancing the system

Ask if all the client's parts are glad it's gone. Does anyone miss it for any reason. Be kind and non-judgmental. Having the UB in the system was often very familiar.

Clients can feel disoriented with this energy out of them. Help them balance.

Be sure it is gone from the body, emotions, mind, beliefs, and spirit. Gone from the exiles, managers and firefighters. Going through each look for where and how it got in and close that entry point.

Being fearless, being in Self is the best protection. You can also teach the sealing light meditation now.

Step Six: Invitation to guidance and guides.

Invite in new energies, perhaps a guide. To fill the empty space.

Step Seven: Cleanup

Having had a UB in the system will most likely he have caused damage to the system.

Use classical IFS to work with any hurt parts.

Selected and Annotated Reading List on Unattached Burdens

Modern therapists:

Soul Centered Healing by Thomas Zinser.

Spirit Releasement Therapy by William Baldwin These two books by relatively recent therapists will probably be the most practically helpful.

An Amazing Journey into the Psychotic Mind by Jerry Marzinski and Sherry Swiney. This is the best book on unattached burdens and psychosis, even though they do not use IFS terminology.

William James On Exceptional Mental States: The 1896 Lowell lectures. Edited by Eugene Taylor. The great thinker tackles the more bizarre areas of study.

Shamanic Depossession by Peter Salomone. a modern shaman gives a simple and clear account of his work.

Other modern authors worth reading on this subject:

Obsession by Arthur Guirdham, MD

The Unquiet Dead by Edith Fiore, MD

Thirty Years Among The Dead by Carl Wickland, MD

Entity Possession by Samuel Sagan, MD

Egregores by Mark Stavish

Remarkable Healings: A Psychiatrist Discovers Unsuspected Roots of Mental and Physical Illness by Shakuntala Modi, MD

The Presence of Other Worlds by Wilson Van Dusen Minds in Many Pieces by Ralph Allison, MD

Brazilian Spiritism:

The Spirits Book by Allen Kardec. Kardec in about 1850 began writing what turned out to be six thick volumes on spirits. These he compiled by asking about 1000 questions in each book and sending these out to a group of mediums. These books, written in France, became the basis of spiritism in Brazil. Most people start with this book. It is not easy.

Nosso Lar by Francisco Candido Xavier. AKA Chico Xavier all over Brazil. He was a spiritist medium who channeled more than 400 books. Some 90 of them have been published. There

are translations in more than a dozen languages, and more than 35 million copies have sold worldwide. This is perhaps his most famous novel. It is an easy read. It is the basis of the film Astral City, available on YouTube.

Spiritism and Mental Health by Emma Bragdon. An American psychologist writes about spiritism and psychiatry.

Modern exorcism:

Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry in the Twentieth Century by James Collins. This was his PhD dissertation and reads like it.

Pigs in the Parlor by Frank and Ida Mae Hammond. This book sold over 1 million copies. It is written by two very popular Texas Protestant fundamentalist ministers who did deliverance.

History in the west:

Possession and Exorcism: Among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times by Traugott K. Oesterreich. This is the great text written in the 20s or 30s. The author, a German Professor, spent his lifetime compiling cases and this is the result.

Spirit Possession in Judaism by Matt Goldish & Joseph Dan. A wonderful collection of scholarly articles.

Spirit Possession and the Origins of Christianity by Stevan Davies Discerning Spirits by Nancy Caciola.

Believe Not Every Spirit by Moshe Sluhovsky.

General anthropology: (There is so much written here it's very hard to choose.)

Possession by Erika Bourguignon.

How About Demons by Felicitas Goodman. Both of these books are short, easy and full of information,

Our Most Troubling Madness by T. M. Luhrmann. This is a great book about the treatment of psychosis worldwide by an amazing woman; all of her writings are worth reading. She also has a good website. tanyaluhrmann.com/

How God Becomes Real also by Luhrmann is in a class by it self. It is a deep exploration of how to deepen interoception and how this has been done in many traditions.

I have picked Haiti to give a more detailed list in the hope of encouraging you to learn one other culture in some depth.

Divine Horsemen: the Voodoo Gods of Haiti by Maya Deren. Voodoo in Haiti by Alfred Metraux.

Tell My Horse by Zora Neale Hurston.

Related interests:

Dispelling Wetiko by Paul Levy.

Daimonic Reality by Patrick Harpur. These are both fascinating and original studies & will expand your thinking.

The Self Possessed by Frederick Smith. This is a huge, magisterial study of the history of possession states in Vedic and South Asian civilization. It will set the standard for decades and decades to come. It is not an easy read but very rewarding. The author is a Sanskrit scholar and there are many original translations in the text.

Tibetan Buddhist Medicine and Psychiatry, the Diamond Healing by Terry Clifford.

The Mind Parasites by Colin Wilson. This is a novel. Enjoyable and thought provoking.

Three great classics in this field:

Ecstatic Religion by I. M. Lewis. Deep and readable, fascinating.

Shamanism by Mircea Eliade. This book has set the standard in the field for more than 50 years. All scholarly works on shamanism make reference to it.

Both of these are more readable than you would expect. The conflicts in their opinions have been discussed for more than 50 years. Great books.

The Varieties of Religious Experience by William James. May be the greatest text written in the west on psychology and religion, but I am prejudiced, I love William James.

Full Bibliography on Unattached Burdens

It has been said that if you steal from one it is plagiarism, but if you steal from many it is research. This book is research; you may think the ideas are nuts or useless and you have every right to your views but I want you to get how much work, study and thought has gone into developing them.

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