



DEAR GRIEF: MEET COMPASSION

A Gentle Introduction to Internal Family Systems (IFS) and Grief

Written by Amy Fairbridge

DO LESS BE MORE





Grief touches every part of us. Grief can feel overwhelming, unpredictable, and isolating — I believe it is, quite simply, unexpressed love. Internal Family Systems (IFS or Parts Work) offers a compassionate way to meet grief by recognizing that different parts of us carry different pieces of the grief experience: some hold deep sadness or yearning, others work hard to keep us moving forward, while protectors may try to numb or shield us from the pain. In this guide, you'll discover how IFS can help you gently witness these parts, bring in the calm presence of Self, and begin to walk with grief in a way that feels more supported, whole, and beautiful.



Amy Fairbridge



Here's what you'll find in this workbook.

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF: AN IFS LENSE

Gift yourself a new and empowering perspective of grief that allows you to turn the pain into possibility.

THE ROLE OF SELF IN GRIEF

Learn how your calm, compassionate Self can witness grieving parts and gently ease the burdens of unworthiness, shame, or self-blame.

A GENTLE PRACTICE

A simple step-by-step practice to sit with your grief, offer compassion, and remind your parts they don't have to carry it alone.

NEXT STEPS

Grief evolves from suffering into honoring; find hope, healing, and your next steps in exploring IFS grief support.

“Being a good steward of your pain ... involves being alive to your life. It involves taking the risk of being open, of reaching out ... at no time more than at a painful time do we live out of the depths of who we are.”

— Frederick Buechner



“Grief is not a problem to be solved, not a condition to be medicated, but a deep encounter with an essential experience of being human.”

— Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*



UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

Grief touches every part of us. It is not one single emotion, but many parts of us carrying pain, protest, longing, or numbness. Other parts work hard to keep the pain away so we can function.

In IFS, we often see two clusters of parts at play:

- Loss-Oriented Parts: sadness, anger, despair, yearning, guilt.
- Restoration Parts: the parts that push forward, trying to keep life going.

These clusters naturally oscillate — moving between feeling the pain of loss and moments of restoration. This is how the nervous system paces grief.

We do not get rid of grief; we unburden the conclusions and meanings made from grief through acceptance, compassion, and integration.

The Role of Self in Grief

The pain of loss is never deleted — but our relationship to the pain evolves.

At the center of your inner world is your Self — calm, compassionate, wise, and unbroken, even in loss. Self can sit with grief and offer:

- Compassion — holding grieving parts so they're not alone.
- Permission — protectors can trust that the pain can be felt in safe doses.
- Unburdening — grief itself isn't unburdened, but the painful meanings and conclusions (guilt, shame, self-blame) can be
- Integration — grief evolves from suffering into honoring and remembering.

“Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life’s search for love and wisdom.”

— Rumi





A Gentle Practice: MEETING A GRIEVING PART



Find Stillness. Sit comfortably. Place a hand on your heart or belly. Take a slow breath in, and out. Close your eyes if that feels comfortable, to help you go “inside”.



Invite a Part of You. Ask inside of you: “Is there a part of me holding grief that wants my attention right now?” Notice if an image, word, sensation, or feeling comes.



Do Less, Be More. There is no fixing here, just calling forward presence and connectedness. Turn toward this part, however it shows up, with gentle curiosity. You might say: “I see you. You don’t have to carry this alone.” Be still and receive from this part. Notice what happens in response to your attention giving.



Offer Compassion. Ask the part what it needs: to be heard, to cry, to rest, or simply to be held? You don’t need to solve or change anything. Just stay with it and offer it your compassion like you would offer a young child.



Close with Gratitude, Clear Intention, and Care. Thank the part for showing itself. For sharing with you. Let it know that you want to continue connecting with it: “I will come back to check in when I can.”

Grief is titrated through the system as it feels manageable to the parts of us that work hard to protect us.



Next Steps

Grief is not a problem to solve — it is a natural, beautifully human process of love and loss. Grief is simply unexpressed love. But when it cannot be expressed honestly it hides in the shadows and re-arises as symptoms. By meeting your grieving parts with compassion, you create space for healing and meaning to emerge.

If this practice resonates with you, I invite you to explore grief support through IFS with me. Together, we can create a safe space for your grieving parts to be seen, supported, and gently guided toward wholeness.



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“Grief offers a wild alchemy that transmutes suffering into fertile ground.”

-Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge Of Sorrow*