

Advance Praise for *IFS Collected Wisdom*

“Reading this collection of talks feels like sitting in on a series of profound, heartfelt conversations among old friends. Each unique voice brings IFS to life in its own way, yet all are filled with curiosity, courage, humor, and compassion. This book is a treasure trove of wise insights and practical applications. Clinicians, IFS students, and anyone drawn to understanding the complexity of being human will turn to this invaluable IFS anthology again and again.”

—**Cece Sykes**, Senior Lead Trainer at IFS-I
and author of *Internal Family Systems Therapy for Addictions*

“Gunter Grass wrote a book called *My Century* (1999), which consisted of short chapters, one for each year of the twentieth century. Its brilliance was in managing to create a multidimensional view of life during those years in Germany. This book, edited by Henriques and Rothman, does the same for IFS by providing print versions of their podcasts that cover the multidimensions of IFS, including philosophy, work with different populations, and in-depth looks at the styles and thought processes of a range of senior clinicians. It’s a gift to anyone who loves IFS and wants to deepen their knowledge and breadth of understanding. An additional gift is to appreciate the skill and wisdom that Henriques, Rothman, and Shull provide in their interviewing. It was a pleasure both to be interviewed by them and to read this book.”

—**Joanne Twombly**, author of
Trauma and Dissociation Informed Internal Family Systems

“Since the ’90s, as an IFS trainer, I have witnessed how IFS has been enriched by other trainers’ and practitioners’ leadership as they uniquely live and breathe this model. And now, in *IFS Collected Wisdom*, the hosts of the *IFS Talks* podcast—Anibal, Lexi, and Tisha—have gathered the extensive collective wisdom of world-renowned IFS trainers, experts, clinicians, and authors. The shared experiences of these experts will feed your soul.”

—**Susan McConnell**, Senior Lead Trainer at IFS-I
and author of *Somatic Internal Family Systems Therapy*

“I’m honored and privileged to be invited to endorse this very special book. The *IFS Talks* series of podcasts was a creative and pioneering initiative in the IFS world when it started, and it has become widely popular since its beginning. It has given a platform to many valuable teachings and provided a diverse offering of knowledge, wisdom, and inspiration. The originators did it with passion, love, and humility, which contributed greatly to its worldwide success. Collecting this precious body of knowledge into a book is also a project of love and dedication for which we’re all so deeply grateful. It will be a pleasure to have this collection of teachings available on paper in this wonderful book, which I’m very much looking forward to having on my bookshelf!”

—**Einat Bronstein**, Senior Lead Trainer at IFS-I

“If you are interested in IFS, this is a very important book. It contains the authentic, spontaneous voices of many of the first generation of IFS trainers and leaders. Everyone can learn from this volume. Anibal, Lexi, and Tisha are wonderful interviewers who do their homework, so they bring out the best in everyone they interview. A valuable and enjoyable read.”

—**Robert Falconer**, author of *The Others Within Us*

“This collection of insightful, smart interviews about IFS covers a wide variety of diagnoses and therapy modalities. If you’re like me and you want to revisit a particularly interesting podcast talk on the page, here you go. If you prefer reading to listening, here you go. If you want to know what an experienced IFS therapist has to say about IFS concepts, IFS technique, shame, trauma, the body, autism, OCD, ADHD, intergenerational influences, spirituality, and so on—here you go! Whether you’re IFS-curious or IFS-smitten, this book will enlighten.”

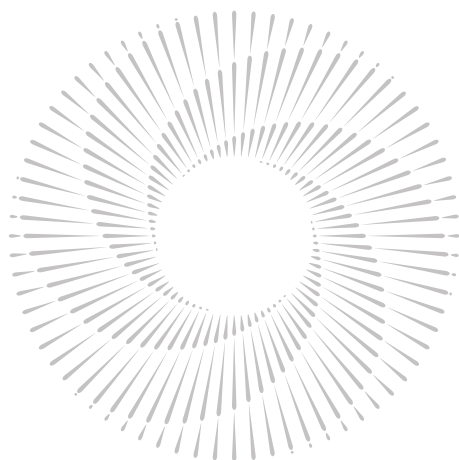
—**Martha Sweezy**, PhD, author of *Internal Family Systems Therapy for Shame and Guilt*

“*IFS Talks* podcasts have been a wonderful gift to the international IFS community. Anibal, Lexi, and Tisha are wonderful interviewers who bring out the best of what their guests have to offer. I highly recommend this fabulous new book, which makes many of those podcasts with great IFS trainers and practitioners available in one easily accessible way. Covering all the key topics that people have questions about, it will be a great way to deepen your IFS skills.”

—**Paul Neustadt**, IFS Senior Co-Lead Trainer at IFS-I

IFS COLLECTED WISDOM

Conversations with
Experienced Voices in
Internal Family Systems



ANÍBAL HENRIQUES

ALEXIA ROTHMAN

Editors and IFS Talks Hosts

IFS Collected Wisdom:
Conversations with Experienced Voices in Internal Family Systems

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This book recommends activities for wellness but is by no means a substitute for medical or psychiatric care.

Quiet Mind

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*We dedicate this book to our listeners
and the global IFS community.*

*May the wisdom shared here continue to support and inspire
your inner journeys as you hold space for the healing of others.*

Acknowledgments

This book grew out of many inspiring conversations with highly experienced IFS trainers and practitioners over the seven-year (and counting) journey of the *IFS Talks* podcast. We are deeply grateful to each guest who generously contributed to these dialogues and shared their wisdom and experience with the global community of IFS clients, therapists, and practitioners. Their contributions to this podcast have helped make the IFS model more widely accessible and have supported the personal and professional growth of countless listeners. Thank you all for sharing your hearts and minds and for helping us, and the broader community, to deepen our understanding, skill, and embodiment of IFS.

We are profoundly grateful to **Richard C. Schwartz, PhD**, developer of the IFS model, whose vision and courage have inspired and guided the work and healing of so many. We have each been personally impacted by Dick's mentorship, generosity of spirit, and constant support over the many years of our involvement with IFS. Dick's presence, both as the founder of the IFS community and as a podcast guest, brought wisdom and depth to *IFS Talks*. His pioneering work continues to illuminate the path toward healing and Self leadership for people all over the world.

We extend our sincere appreciation to **Carolina Abreu**, IFS Co-Lead Trainer, for her dedication in transcribing many of the early podcast episodes so they could be shared in written form. These transcripts provided the foundation for several chapters in this book.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to **Kirin Alolkoy** for her meticulous attention to detail in formatting and preparing the manuscript for publication. Her efficiency, responsiveness, and care were instrumental in bringing this project to completion.

Finally, this book would not have been possible without the extraordinary editorial skill and dedication of **Hope Delane**. An experienced psychotherapist

and gifted editor, Hope worked tirelessly for nearly a year, transforming each raw podcast transcript into a polished chapter while preserving the voice, spirit, and wisdom of every guest. We are deeply grateful not only for her intellect and craft, but also for her perseverance, warmth, and unwavering support throughout this process.

To everyone who shared their time, experience, and heart in these conversations—thank you for helping to bring more compassion, understanding, and Self leadership into the world.

IFS Talks Hosts



Aníbal Henriques is a Portuguese psychotherapist, trainer, and author. He earned his degree in psychology from the University of Lisbon and completed postgraduate studies in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies, later serving as a trainer and vice president of the Portuguese CBT Foundation. He has lectured in psychopathology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychopathology, clinical and health psychology, and models of psychotherapy.

A founding member of both the Portuguese Society for Constructivist Psychotherapies and the Iberian Association for Emotion-Focused Therapy, he has worked extensively as a consultant, supervisor, and coordinator in psychotherapy since 2005. He has been publishing scientific articles since 1986 and has edited or translated works that include Leslie Greenberg's *Emotion-Focused Therapy* and Giancarlo Dimaggio's *Metacognitive Interpersonal Therapy for Personality Disorders*.

Since 2017, Aníbal has been dedicated to the Internal Family Systems (IFS) model, fostering a growing community of IFS-trained therapists in Portugal. He has promoted and written prefaces for the Portuguese editions of *Innovations and Elaborations in Internal Family Systems*, *No Bad Parts*, and *Introduction to Internal Family Systems*. In 2019, Aníbal co-created the *IFS Talks* podcast, which to date has produced nearly 100 episodes focused on the IFS model. Aníbal serves as the IFS Institute's International Partner for Portugal, organizing official IFS trainings in Portugal and supporting the growth of IFS in the Lusophone community. He maintains a private practice in Lisbon.



Alexia Rothman, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, Certified IFS Therapist, and IFS Institute Lead Trainer. Since 2017, she has introduced thousands of therapists and practitioners around the world to the IFS model through her work as an international speaker and trainer, and she has offered workshops and writings on the integration of IFS and Polyvagal Theory.

An IFSI-approved clinical consultant since 2015, Dr. Rothman has provided training, supervision, and psychotherapy to IFS therapists and practitioners across five continents, with a deep commitment to supporting their professional development and personal well-being. She is co-host of the *IFS Talks* podcast, which features in-depth conversations with highly experienced IFS trainers and practitioners.

Dr. Rothman has served as an adjunct professor of psychology at Emory University and Agnes Scott College. Her work reflects a deep dedication to integrating neuroscience, compassion, and the IFS model to foster healing, personal growth, and Self leadership. She has maintained a private practice in Atlanta, Georgia, since 2004.



Tisha Mesa Shull is a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor and Certified IFS Therapist based in Vermont and Alaska. She has been in private practice since 2011, specializing in complex trauma, anxiety, and the integration of mind, body, and spirit in healing. Tisha is a co-founder of IFS Vermont, where she provides supervision, consultation, and advanced training for clinicians.

Tisha serves as an Assistant Trainer with the IFS Institute and teaches for the Integrative Psychology Institute, helping to expand access to IFS education and practice. Her approach weaves Internal Family Systems with somatic awareness, mindfulness, and creative process. She has been described as a warm and approachable teacher.

Tisha is a co-creator of *IFS Talks* and the creator of *Parts and People*, podcasts dedicated to exploring the transformative power of IFS and human connection.

IFS Talks Guests



Dr. Osnat Arbel, PhD, LMFT, is a Senior International Lead Trainer with the IFS Institute and the co-founder and co-director of the Israeli Institute for IFS. With over 30 years of experience as a therapist, supervisor, and teacher, she is devoted to bringing compassion and depth into the healing space. Osnat is passionate about mentoring therapists around the world, exploring themes of legacy burdens, therapist presence, and the tender work with attachment wounds and deep vulnerabilities, while embodying the IFS model in both heart and practice with clarity and presence.



Sarah Bergenfield is an autistic writer, educator, and Certified Level 3 IFS Practitioner. Her work supports autistic individuals and the people in their lives to make sense of how the autistic mind, body, and nervous system experience the world. Sarah integrates IFS, Predictive Processing, and the science of constructed emotion. Her approach bridges lived experience with emerging neuroscience to reveal not what's broken, but what's working—often in beautifully complex ways. Sarah offers workshops, talks, and resources that challenge pathologizing narratives and invite more nuanced, respectful understandings of neurodivergence. She is the co-author of *Embodying Autism*, coming in January 2026.



Fran Booth, LICSW, is an IFS Lead Trainer and a Certified IFS Therapist and Consultant. With more than 40 years of clinical experience, she integrates multiple modalities into her IFS framework, including psychodynamic theory, attachment theory, and somatic methodologies. She has had the privilege of teaching IFS to thousands of professionals and seekers worldwide. Fran graduated with honors from Cornell University and earned her MSW from Simmons School of Social Work. Beyond her professional work, she enjoys music, theater, dancing, adventures in the natural world, and time with grandchildren.



Einat Avni Bronstein, MSW, is a seasoned psychotherapist with over 30 years of clinical experience with individuals, couples, families, and groups. She has lived and worked with IFS since the early days of the model and learned closely and directly with IFS founder Dr. Richard Schwartz. Einat is a Certified IFS Therapist, a Certified IFS Supervisor, a mentor, and a Senior International Lead Trainer for the IFS Institute. She has taught IFS in Israel and all over the world, bringing the model to many different communities and cultures. She is also the co-founder and co-director of The Israeli Institute for IFS. She recently received the IFSI Lifetime Achievement Award.



Ruth Culver is a Level 3-trained Certified IFS Practitioner based in Brighton, UK, where she has a private practice working with adults and adolescents as well as offering experiential workshops and trainings both in person and online. Her interest in chronic illness, trauma, attachment, and resilience led to the creation of the Survive/Thrive Spiral, an infographic that maps the inter-relatedness of IFS and Polyvagal Theory. She also developed Drawing into Self, a method for doing IFS through spontaneous scribbling, and IFS Constellations, a method for doing IFS through the phenomenological group process of constellations.



Deb Dana, LCSW, is a clinician, consultant, author, and speaker specializing in complex trauma. Her work focuses on using the lens of Polyvagal Theory to understand and resolve the impact of trauma in our lives. Deb's work shows how an understanding of Polyvagal Theory is applicable across the board to relationships, mental health, and trauma. Deb is well known for translating Polyvagal Theory into a language and application that are both clear and accessible—and for her significant contribution to pioneering Rhythm of Regulation® methodology, tools, techniques, and practices.



Mike Elkin is a renowned leader in Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy. His career has spanned over 50 years in psychotherapy, trauma healing, and addiction treatment. From his 1984 work *Families Under the Influence*, close collaboration with Dr. Richard Schwartz in the early adoption of IFS, and years as an IFS trainer, Mike has leveraged his expertise to innovate the most effective methods of healing trauma, including hypnotic techniques to supplement IFS. His dedication to spreading the principles of IFS therapy extends beyond professional circles, as he actively works to make the model accessible to individuals and organizations worldwide.



Robert Falconer is a pioneering consultant and international educator in IFS. He co-authored *Many Minds, One Self* with IFS founder Richard C. Schwartz and wrote *The Others Within Us*, which explores the porosity of mind in healing. He has also published three other IFS-related books. Drawing from personal and clinical experience, he has taught in over a dozen countries and across the U.S., including in Indigenous communities. Bob advocates for a spiritually integrated, holistic approach to therapy that challenges Western paradigms and expands our understanding of human consciousness.



Janina Fisher, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist and former instructor at Harvard Medical School. She is an executive board member of the Trauma Research Foundation and a patron of the John Bowlby Centre. Dr. Fisher is the author of *Healing the Fragmented Selves of Trauma Survivors: Overcoming Self-Alienation* (2017), *Transforming the Living Legacy of Trauma: A Workbook for Survivors and Therapists* (2021), and *The Living Legacy Instructional Flip Chart* (2022).



Daniel Foor is a doctor of psychology, experienced ritualist, founder at Ancestral Medicine, and author of *Ancestral Medicine: Rituals for Personal and Family Healing*. He is an initiate in the Òrìṣà tradition of Yoruba-speaking West Africa and a practicing Muslim, and has learned from the older ways of his English and German ancestors. Daniel is passionate about training aspiring leaders and change makers in cultural healing, animist ethics, and applied ritual. He lives with his wife and two daughters near Granada, Spain, in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas.



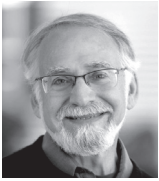
Susan McConnell, Senior Trainer for the IFS Institute since 1997 and creator and developer of Somatic IFS, teaches an embodied approach to therapists throughout the world. By embodying the internal system of both the subpersonalities and Self, individual and societal burdens can be safely and compassionately witnessed and transformed. Susan McConnell is the author of *Somatic Internal Family Systems: Awareness, Breath, Resonance, Movement and Touch* (2020) and the companion workbook *The Somatic Internal Family Systems Therapy Workbook* (2025).



Dr. Arthur G. Mones, PhD, ABPP, Diplomate in Clinical Psychology and former faculty at the Derner Institute, Adelphi University, served as an AAMF Approved Supervisor and a Certified IFS Therapist, and had a private practice working with children, families, and couples. Publications include *Transforming Troubled Children, Teens and Their Families: An Internal Family Systems Model of Healing* (2014), *KidsWorld Inside and Out: A Psychotherapeutic Board Game for Children* (2015), *A Therapist's Guide to KidsWorld Inside and Out* (2017), and *The Essence of Healing: A Quest for a MetaModel of the Psychotherapy of Trauma* (2021).



Melissa Mose, LMFT, is a Level 3-trained Certified IFS Therapist and an IFS-I Approved Clinical Consultant who has been in private practice since 1995. Melissa's experience as the parent of a child with OCD led her to specialize in the treatment of OCD and anxiety. She is currently the president of OCD Southern California, a nonprofit affiliate of the International OCD Foundation. Melissa is the author of *Internal Family Systems Therapy for OCD: A Clinician's Guide* (2025), which outlines an IFS-informed approach to OCD treatment that is grounded firmly in evidence-based principle of OCD treatment.



Paul Neustadt is a clinical social worker and IFS Senior Co-lead Trainer. He has worked in community mental health and the counseling program of a working-class state university as well as having been the director of a community-based counseling and prevention program. Paul sees himself as a spiritual being in a human body, on a healing journey, in this life to learn lessons, to connect with his soul, and to live in accordance with his life purpose. Part of his life purpose has been to share the gift of IFS with others.



Mariel Pastor, Senior International IFS Lead Trainer, was an early adopter of IFS—a psychotherapist trained in the model since 1998. She is the principal author of the official IFS Level 1 Training Manual and co-founder of the IFS Consultation Collective. In addition to developing the Unburdened System infographic, Mariel brings the model to her work with actors, writers and directors through Character Mapping, an innovative coaching and online masterclass series supporting storytellers in their relationships to characters, craft, and their Selves.



Richard C. Schwartz, PhD, is the creator of Internal Family Systems, a highly effective, evidence-based therapeutic model that de-pathologizes the multipart personality. His IFS Institute offers training for professionals and the general public. He is currently on the faculty of Harvard Medical School and has published five books, including *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model* (2021). Dick lives with his wife, Jeanne, near Chicago, close to his three daughters and his growing number of grandchildren.



Ann L. Sinko, LMFT, is an IFS Senior Trainer, teacher, and ceremonialist. She lives in the Connecticut River Valley and is in private practice in Portland, CT. Ann is passionate about experiential teaching and easily creates an inviting safe learning environment. She has a down-to-earth style and integrates the spiritual nature of IFS into her teaching. Ann loves being in nature, gardening, travel, and her animals.



Nancy Sowell is an IFS Senior Trainer with the IFS Institute. She specializes in the application of IFS therapy to heal mental and physical health problems related to chronic stress, shame, and trauma. Nancy is a Harvard Medical School teaching associate at the Center for Mindfulness and Compassion, where she has been a clinical supervisor and teacher for many years. Nancy knows personally and professionally the healing power of compassionate relationship with the body, oneself, and others, which enables us to take the risk of being real and living courageously.



Martha Sweezy, PhD, is a part-time assistant professor in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, a research and training consultant at the Center for Mindfulness and Compassion at the Cambridge Health Alliance, and a psychotherapist in private practice. She writes a blog on topics related to IFS for *Psychology Today* and cohosts a podcast called *System Updates: IFS Chitchat*. She has authored, co-authored, or co-edited eleven published books on various applications of IFS and teaches IFS therapy nationally and internationally.



Cece Sykes, LCSW, ACSW, is an IFS Senior Trainer and consultant with over forty years of clinical experience specializing in recovery from trauma and addiction. One of the founding trainers of the IFS Institute, Cece piloted an IFS approach for addiction and educates therapists around the world on IFS treatment for trauma/addictive processes. Her recent book, *IFS Therapy for Addictions: Trauma Informed Compassion-Based Interventions for Substances, Eating, Gambling and More*, with Martha Sweezy and Richard Schwartz, was released in 2023.



Joanne H. Twombly, MSW, LICSW, is a psychotherapist in private practice in Arlington, MA. She has over thirty years of experience working with C-PTSD and dissociative disorders and provides trainings and consultation. She has written on EMDR and dissociative disorders, on EMDR and IFS, and on working with perpetrator introjects. She is a past president of the New England Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation and the author of *Trauma and Dissociation Informed Internal Family Systems: How to Successfully Treat Complex PTSD and Dissociative Disorders* (2023).



Catia Vinnik, MD, PhD, is a Level 2-trained neuroscientist with an IFS lens. With a PhD in cognitive neuroscience and research published in *Nature Communications*, she bridges science and psychotherapy. A sought-after lecturer and creator of educational games, Catia makes brain science engaging and relevant to practitioners. Her seminars and games help therapists and HRs alike reframe mental health and work challenges as dynamic, neurobiologically grounded processes.

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Preface

When *IFS Talks* began as a podcast, it emerged from several of the “C’s” of Self, especially curiosity and connection. It was born from a deep desire to continue learning about the Internal Family Systems model and share the living voices of its community with others walking the same path. Each episode became a meeting place: between theory and story, teacher and learner, therapist and human being. Over the years, those conversations have taken on a life of their own, revealing the collective wisdom of a vast community.

This book grows out of that living archive. It gathers dialogues that, in different ways, illuminate the heart of IFS and of those who dared to contribute to its development and establishment as a popular model. It honors the understanding that we each encompass many parts and that within us all exists the naturally compassionate, calm, and connected energy of Self.

The perspectives you will find here are not presented as definitive answers, but as reflections and shared discoveries along the way. Transforming spoken dialogue into written form has allowed us to appreciate the texture of these exchanges anew—to notice how ideas emerge in conversation, how understanding deepens when met with curiosity and presence. Some sections have been gently edited for clarity or length, yet we have sought to preserve the rhythm and intimacy of the original exchanges.

This volume includes guests whose work and presence have helped shape the contemporary practice of IFS. Their insights remind us that this model is both personal and collective: it heals, but it also invites us to reimagine how we meet one another.

To all who listened, learned, and shared—thank you. May these pages serve as another bridge between voices, parts, and cultures, and may they continue to open space for Self to lead, within and among us.

Aníbal Henriques and Alexia Rothman
Lisbon, Portugal, and Atlanta, Georgia
November 2025