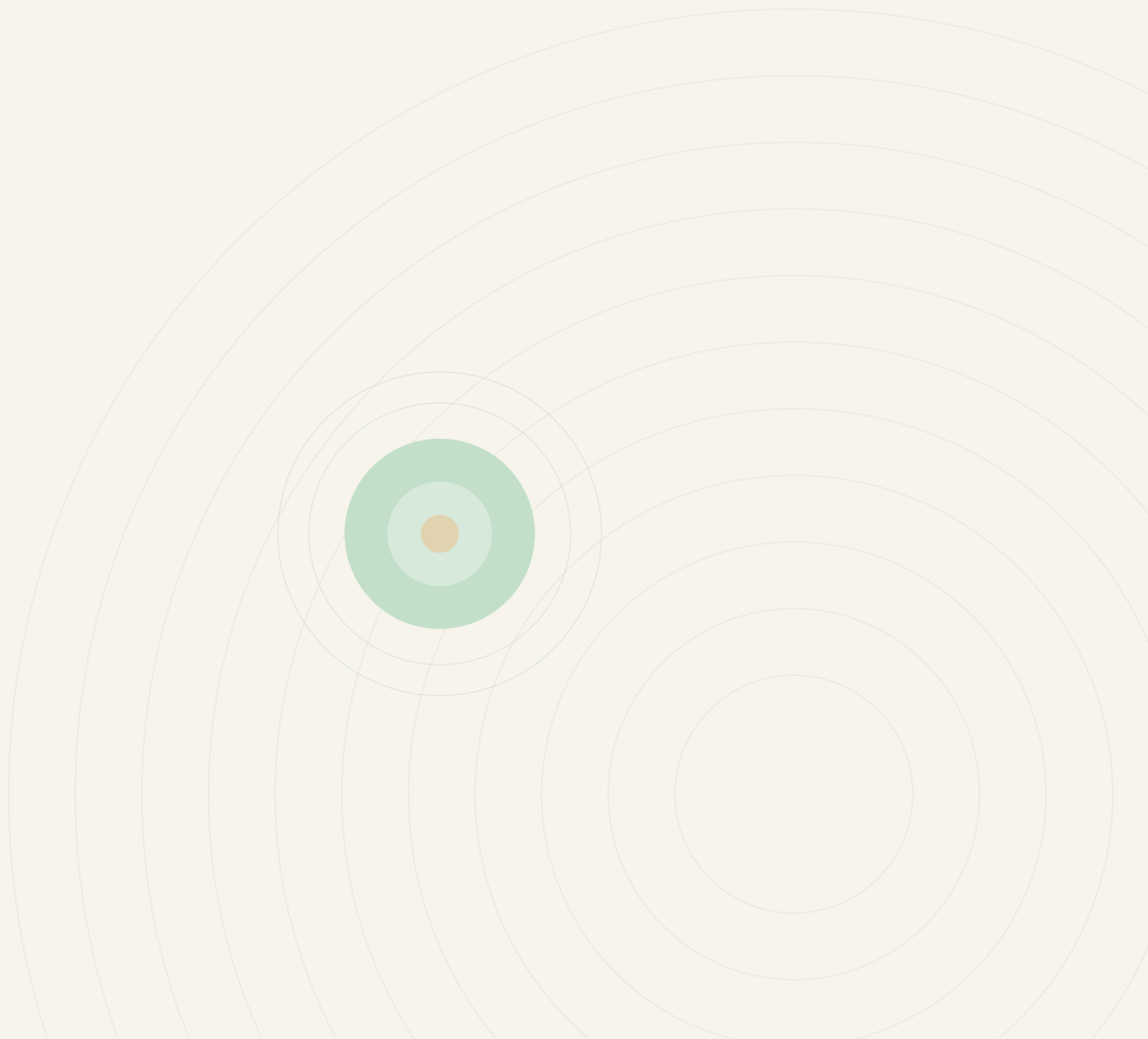

How to Notice a Part Without Trying to Change It

A Reflection Guide

A gentle tool for turning attention inward — with curiosity, not analysis.



Ben Carey Donaldson

Certified IFS Therapist · bencareydonaldson.com

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WHAT THIS GUIDE IS

This is a quiet, prompt-based reflection guide for anyone who has noticed something happening inside them — a reaction, a tension, a feeling, an impulse — and wants to get a little closer to it without immediately trying to fix, suppress, or understand it. It draws on the IFS (Internal Family Systems) idea of the U-Turn: gently turning attention inward with curiosity rather than judgment.

HOW TO USE IT

Work through the prompts slowly. There is no right order, no required number of questions, and no analysis expected at the end. The prompts are structured around one idea: *notice, don't change*. You don't need prior experience with IFS. If something feels too much at any point, pause.

IMPORTANT NOTE

This is an educational resource. It is not a clinical assessment and does not constitute a diagnosis of any condition. It is not a substitute for professional mental health care. If you are experiencing significant distress, please seek support from a qualified professional.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben Carey Donaldson is a certified IFS therapist, meditation guide, and group facilitator based in the Fontainebleau–Paris region of France. He works online with English- and French-speaking clients across Europe and internationally, supporting people who want to understand their inner system — including the reactions and responses that sometimes seem to come from nowhere.

Begin with something you've noticed recently — a feeling, an impulse, a tightening, a pull. It doesn't have to be dramatic. It just has to be real.

1. What did you notice?

Describe it as simply as you can — without explaining why it happened or what it means. Just name what was there. A sensation, a thought, an emotion, an urge. Any of these count.

2. Where did you feel it?

Was it anywhere in your body? A tightness in the chest, something in the throat, a heaviness in the shoulders? Or was it more like a tone — a colour in the background of things?

3. Did it feel familiar?

Is this something you've felt before? Not just today, but in other moments — maybe even across different situations or different years? What's familiar about it?

4. What did it seem to want?

Not what you think it should want — what did it actually seem to be pulling toward or away from? Closer to something? Further away? More of something? Less?

These prompts are not about understanding the part or making it leave. They are about getting a little closer — letting it know it's been noticed.

5. Can you just acknowledge it?

Not fix it. Not explain it away. Just let it know you've noticed it. You might try: *"There's a part of me that feels _____."* How does it feel to say that?

6. How do you feel toward it right now?

Curious? Annoyed? Afraid of it? Wanting it to stop? Whatever is honest. There's no wrong answer here — your reaction to the part is also worth noticing.

7. What might this part be trying to do?

Not what you think it *should* be doing — what does it seem to be trying to do? Protect something? Prevent something? Hold something together? Stay with the question lightly; you don't have to answer it completely.

8. What would it need to feel just slightly less urgent?

Not gone. Not resolved. Just slightly less urgent. Is there anything it might need to know, or to feel, for that to be possible? You don't have to provide it — just notice if anything comes.

Noticing without changing is already doing something. It creates a small internal pause — a moment in which the part is no longer invisible, and you are no longer entirely inside it. That gap, however brief, is where something can shift.

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS

You don't need to do anything with what emerged here. You might return to a particular prompt over the coming days — or just sit with whatever came up. The value isn't in completing the guide; it's in the quality of attention brought to it.

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

This guide pairs with the article *What Is a 'Parts' Reaction? Why You Sometimes Surprise Yourself With Your Own Response* — which explains what's actually happening when an internal reaction seems to arrive from nowhere. Read it at: bencareydonaldson.com/blog/what-is-a-parts-reaction-why-you-sometimes-surprise-yourself-with-your-own-response

IF YOU'D LIKE SUPPORT

Ben works online with English- and French-speaking clients. If you'd like to explore IFS therapy or find out more about working together: bencareydonaldson.com

Ben Carey Donaldson is a certified IFS practitioner. He is not a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, or medical doctor. Resources on this site are educational in nature and are not a substitute for professional mental health care.