

What are Parts of Self & The Boardroom?

The boardroom metaphor is a popular way to conceptualize the different "parts" of your personality, particularly within the framework of **Internal Family Systems (IFS)** therapy. It helps to visualize the mind not as a single, unified entity, but as a system of distinct inner parts, each with its own perspective, role, and agenda.

The Roles in the Boardroom

The metaphor works by assigning a specific role to each part of yourself, similar to a corporate leadership structure.

The Self as the CEO: The core of the metaphor is the **"Self,"** which is the wise, calm, and compassionate leader within you. The Self is like the CEO of the company (your mind). It's the part that is not an emotion or a belief, but the pure essence of who you are. The goal is for the CEO to be in charge, listening to all the board members but making the final decisions from a place of clarity and wisdom.

The Parts as Board Members: Your various personality parts are the **board members**. They each have a distinct and important function, like a Chief Financial Officer (CFO), a Chief Operations Officer (COO), or a Chief Marketing Officer (CMO).

"Managers" are like board members who try to proactively control your life to avoid pain and keep you safe. They might be your inner critic, your perfectionist, or your people-pleaser.

"Firefighters" are reactive board members who jump in to extinguish emotional pain when it gets too intense. These parts might manifest as impulsive behaviors like binge eating, substance use, or rage.

"Exiles" are the wounded, younger parts of you that hold on to past trauma, shame, or fear. They're often seen as the "waiting room" or the "unseen board members" who need to be heard and healed.

How it Works in Therapy

Using this metaphor in therapy helps you to:

Identify and Understand Parts: It gives you a language and a visual way to recognize the different voices and impulses within you. For example, you might say, "My inner critic (the CFO) is worried about a bad budget decision, but my creative side (the CMO) wants to take a risk."

Resolve Internal Conflicts: The boardroom can be a chaotic place with parts fighting for control. Therapy helps the CEO (the Self) to get all the board members to the table, listen to their concerns with compassion, and negotiate new, healthier roles for them.

Restore Leadership: The ultimate goal is to have the Self-led system. This means the CEO is in charge, the

board members feel heard and respected, and they work together as a cohesive team to move the company (your life) in a healthy, integrated direction.

How it works in EMDR Therapy

Wounded Parts**:** The wounded parts of self are connected to traumatic events. The wounded parts of self tend to hijack the boardroom. When those parts are in charge of the boardroom you are not showing up as your best self. These are the parts that get triggered and have flashbacks that allow you to engage in behaviors the are not preferable.

Protector Parts**:** The protector parts are the best versions of you. The CEO/Chair is the best of every part of you. But there may be an athlete, or parent part or heroic part.

In reprocessing a traumatic memory, the protector is there with the wounded part. Metaphorically speaking you are getting your own back.