

UTILIZING IFS TO ALLEVIATE ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS

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Goals for Today

- Describe and apply a “Move Towards” approach to addictive behaviors
- Recognize that as Christians, we tend to hate our firefighters, aka addictive behaviors, so we often employ a “move against” or “move away” strategy.
- Some may not agree with this Move Towards approach, and that’s okay.
- Hope: To give you some tools you could apply tomorrow and forward into future addiction or sin-struggle work.

Link To Handouts and Powerpoint

jonathanschlieper.com/aacc-2025



Brief Intro to IFS

- At our core is our God Image (Self)- the source of our 8C qualities, ideally we would always be led by our God Image and demonstrate those 8C qualities. (Genesis 1:26-17)
- Exiles are unhealed wounds (burdened parts) that Jesus came to bind up and heal (Isaiah 53:5).
- Managers are our PROactive self-protective parts—good intentions but rooted in fear, not trust in God (Proverbs 3:5–6).
- Firefighters are our REactive self-protective parts—offering quick relief but not true healing (Galatians 5:19–21).
- True healing comes when the Holy Spirit (Our God Image) helps us face the burdened part with compassion, bringing truth and restoration [Move Towards] (John 8:32).

Part Type	Role / Function	Examples of Behaviors
Exiles	Carry the deepest wounds, shame, or trauma—often from childhood—that the system tries to keep hidden.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Memories of rejection, neglect, or abuse• Deep loneliness• Shame and self-loathing• Fear of abandonment• Helplessness
Managers	Work <i>proactively</i> to prevent emotional pain from surfacing by controlling situations, emotions, or relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perfectionism• People-pleasing• Overplanning• Avoiding conflict• Inner Critic• Control• Stay small• Spiritualizer
Firefighters	Act <i>reactively</i> to quickly “put out” emotional pain once an exile’s wounds are triggered. Often use distraction, numbing, or intense pleasure to override feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Binge eating• Substance use• Impulsive spending• Excessive TV or gaming• Sexual acting out• Picking fights• Over-sleeping

Stage	Definition	Key Traits	Bible Verses
Temptation	The testing or enticement to sin. Not sin itself, but the point of decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can come from Satan, the world, or our own desires• Possible to resist with God’s help• Jesus experienced this but did not sin	1 Corinthians 10:13 – God provides a way out. James 1:14–15 – Desire → sin → death. Hebrews 4:15 – Jesus tempted but without sin.
Habitual Sin (risk of becoming a firefighter)	Repeated yielding to the same temptation over time, forming a pattern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicates a hardened heart (tolerance)• Weakens spiritual resistance• Often rationalized or hidden (denial or justification)	Proverbs 26:11 – A dog returns to its vomit. Hebrews 10:26 – Deliberate, ongoing sin after knowing the truth. Galatians 6:7–8 – Reap what you sow.
Enslavement to Sin aka Addiction aka Firefighters	Bondage where sin controls and dominates a person’s life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sin becomes the master• Willpower alone cannot break free• Requires God’s deliverance	John 8:34 – Whoever sins is a slave to sin. Romans 6:16 – You are slaves to what you obey. Romans 7:14–15 – Doing what you hate.

IMAGINE
with me...



Examples of Firefighters aka Addictions

- **Distraction:** Overworking, social media scrolling, obsessive cleaning, binge-watching.
- **Numbing:** Overeating, substance use (illegal), overmedicating (legal), oversleeping.
- **Escalation:** Anger/rage, risky activities, reckless driving, spending sprees.
- **Pleasure-Seekers:** Sexual acting out, luxury splurges, excessive gaming, gambling.

Important Things to Know about Firefighters

- They have good intentions.
- They don't know they are hurting you.
- Honor their intent; separate from behavior.
- Common diagnosis doesn't require uniform prescription.
- They each have a story
- They HATE their jobs

**We (especially us Christians) tend to
use two approaches with our
addicted & burdened firefighters**

**MOVE AWAY
&
MOVE AGAINST**

Connecting with a Firefighter

this is all part of “Moving Towards”



- Heap coals of kindness (Proverbs 25:21-22).
- Romans 2:4 – God’s kindness leads to repentance.
- Kindness & Compassion can help firefighters step back.
- Ask reflective questions: role, relationships, protection, job satisfaction. (Curiosity)

Connecting with a Firefighter

Kindness

- Definition: Kindness is the act of being friendly, generous, or considerate toward others.
- Focus: It's about doing good for someone — often through words, gestures, or actions.
- Key Trait: It doesn't necessarily require deep emotional involvement; it's more about outward actions of goodwill.

Compassion

- Definition: Compassion goes deeper — it's the emotional response of being moved by another person's suffering, paired with a desire to help.
- Focus: It's about feeling with someone, empathizing with their pain, and being motivated to relieve it.
- Key Trait: Compassion requires empathy — not just doing good, but being present in another's struggle with genuine care.

The Bible often places kindness and compassion side by side, suggesting that kindness cultivates compassion:

Ephesians 4:32 (NLT): “Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

“Kind” and “tenderhearted” (compassionate) are linked. Kindness is the **outward expression**; compassion is the **inward posture** that sustains forgiveness and love.

1 Peter 3:8 (NLT):

“Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.”

Compassion (tenderheartedness) **grows out of** the posture of loving kindness.

✓ **Summary:** Scripture shows kindness and compassion as connected virtues. Kindness often begins with action, but as it’s practiced in the Spirit, it blossoms into compassion, which is empathy-in-action rooted in love.

The 6 F's of IFS



“6 F
Scenario”

Find – Notice the part that is activated.

Focus – Turn your attention toward it with curiosity.

Flesh Out – Get to know the details (feelings, thoughts, images).

Feel – Sense how you feel toward this part.

Befriend – Approach with compassion, not judgment.

Fear – Ask what the part fears would happen if it didn't do its job.

(BONUS 7 F)- Freedom- What does this part need from you to not have to do this job anymore?

Move Towards

(Jenna Riemersma)



“Move towards”
guided meditation

1.Notice

2.Know

3.Need

**So why don't we already do
this?**

Why did that client quit?

The Struggle

- 1 John 4:19 (NLT): “We love each other because he loved us first.”
- → Our capacity to love is rooted in first receiving God’s love.
- Matthew 10:8 (NLT): “Give as freely as you have received!”
- → Jesus tells the disciples that their ministry flows from what they’ve already received from Him (healing, forgiveness, grace). Freely = Without Cause
- Colossians 3:13 (NLT): “Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”
- → Forgiveness flows from first receiving God’s forgiveness.
- 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (NLT): “He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”
- → You can’t comfort effectively unless you’ve first received God’s comfort.

The Struggle

There is a Biblical Pattern:

Receive → Give

Loved → Love

Forgiven → Forgive

Comforted → Comfort

Scripture affirms that we cannot truly offer to others what we have not first received from God ourselves.

Where did all that “knitted in
my mother’s womb....
beautifully and wonderfully
made... parts of Scripture go?



IFS
Firefighters

Guided Meditation to meet a firefighter



“Christian guided
meditation firefighter”

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