

Three IFS Practices for Empaths



Reclaim Your Energy & Set Loving
Boundaries

Kim Burkland-Ward, LICSW

Why Empaths Need IFS

As an empath, your ability to feel deeply is a gift—but it can also leave you overwhelmed, exhausted, or unsure where your emotions end and others' begin. Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy helps you:

- **Differentiate** between your emotions and others'.
- **Compassionately reparent** parts that over-give or absorb pain.
- **Strengthen your "Self"** (your calm, confident core) to set boundaries with love.

These 3 practices blend IFS, somatic awareness, and nervous system regulation to help you thrive as a sensitive soul. Let's begin!



Practice 1: The Emotional Filter

"Is this mine or yours?"

Why it works: Empaths often carry emotions that aren't theirs. This practice helps you identify and release "foreign" energy.

Steps:

1. **Pause & Ground:** Place a hand on your heart. Take 3 slow breaths, exhaling longer than you inhale (activates the vagus nerve!).
2. **Scan Your Body:** Notice where you feel tension (e.g., chest, stomach). Ask: *"Is this emotion mine, or did I pick it up from someone else?"*
3. **Visualize a Filter:** Imagine a glowing filter around your body. Say: *"I release what isn't mine."* Picture the emotion leaving your body like dark smoke.
4. **Check In:** Return to your heart. Ask: *"What do I need right now?"*

Example:

After a draining family gathering, Madison used this practice to release her sister's anxiety. She realized her tight chest was not hers—and her body relaxed.



Practice 2: Befriend the Caretaker

"Thank you, but I've got this."

Why it works: Many empaths have a Caretaker part that feels responsible for others' pain. This practice helps you reassure it.

Steps:

1. **Identify the Caretaker:** Notice when you feel urgency to "fix" someone's mood.
2. **Dialogue with Curiosity:** Ask internally: *"Caretaker, what are you afraid will happen if I don't help?"* Listen for its fears (e.g., *"They'll reject us!"*).
3. **Reassure It:** Say: *"Thank you for wanting to protect me. But I'm safe even if others are upset. Let's trust them to handle their feelings."*
4. **Offer a New Role:** Invite it to step back and "stand guard" instead of taking action.

Example:

Mark's Caretaker part pushed him to over-advise his struggling friend. After reassuring it, he simply said, "I'm here if you need me," and felt lighter.



Practice 3: The Boundary Bubble

A somatic tool for energetic protection.

Why it works: Empaths often lack physical boundaries. This practice uses imagination and body awareness to create a safe space.

Steps:

1. **Tune into Your Body:** Stand or sit tall. Shake out your limbs to release stuck energy.
2. **Visualize a Bubble:** Imagine a protective bubble around you (color, texture, or sound is up to you!).
3. **Set an Intention:** Say: *"This bubble allows love in and keeps overwhelm out."*
4. **Anchor It:** Touch your wrist or take a deep breath to "lock in" the bubble. Revisit this anchor when you need to reinforce it.

Pro Tip: Use this before entering crowded spaces or difficult conversations!



Bonus: The Empath's Reset Routine

After using these practices, try this 5-minute reset:

1. **Humming Breath:** Hum like a bee for 5 breaths (stimulates the vagus nerve).
2. **Self-Compassion Mantra:** *"I honor my sensitivity. My needs matter too."*
3. **Hydrate:** Drink water to flush out stagnant energy.



Your Next Steps

1. **Journal Prompt:** *"Which practice felt most empowering? What did I discover about my parts?"*
2. **Go Deeper:** [Book a free consultation](#) to explore IFS therapy tailored to empaths.

Your empathy is a superpower—not a burden.

With IFS, you can cherish your sensitivity *and* protect your peace.

About the Author

Kim Burkland-Ward, LICSW is a Certified IFS therapist (Level 3 trained) and an Approved IFS Clinical Consultant specializing in helping empaths reclaim their energy, set boundaries, and heal through compassionate parts work. Connect with Kim at www.nashuatherapy.com.