

Fire Drill: A Meditation

Richard Schwartz: Take some deep breaths and think of a person in your life who seems to really trigger you and activate you, a person that brings up your protectors in a big way. It could be a family member, could be a coworker or a celebrity even.

And in your mind's eye, put that person in a room by themselves. And you're in another room watching them through a window. And then as you watch the person from outside the room, have them do the thing that gets to you so much.

Notice the parts of you that come up to protect you. You may notice one big one jumps in, or that there's a whole room full of them with you. And now let these protectors know that you're not going to go into the room in this exercise with that person, so it's safe for them to stand down a bit. You're just going to spend some time getting to know them and then see if you can get curious about them.

So let's start with the protector that came up the biggest and spend a little time with it. And at some point, ask what it's afraid would happen if it didn't jump up so big with this person.

And as you get to know it and how it's been trying to protect you from this person and other people like this one, then extend that appreciation to it for how hard it works to protect you and other parts of you from people like that, how hard it's worked to try and keep you safe.

You may want to just stop this exercise after learning about this protector or other protectors. But if they're up for it, you could take this one step further and ask this one, or all your protectors, if they'd be willing to let you go into the room, while they stood outside, to let you deal with this person.

And if they're willing, then go ahead and be with the person, not expecting the person to change, but just see how it goes if they let you handle this person. So if they give permission, then go ahead. And notice how it feels to be with this person without the protector and interact with them in whatever way feels right.

And as you're doing that, you might sense a protector jumping in. And if that happens, then just see if it's possible to trust you to keep going and for it to go back outside. And just reassure this part that you can handle this person.

Then whenever it feels right, you can leave the person and go back and see how your parts are reacting to what you did and whether they'd be up for actually letting you do this in the outside world with this person or not.

And then whenever all that feels complete, then you can shift back outside.