

## Establishing communication flow with parts

When we first make contact with a part, it may be difficult to develop comfortable communication between patient and part. It is a new experience for both parties and requires a short learning process for each. In order to help develop ease of communication, I usually draw from a standard set of questions to establish that communication can take place at all. Parts sometimes appear to express themselves with articulated speech so that the patient views them with mouths moving and individual words expressed. In other cases, a part will be immobile and whatever information is transferred to the patient from the part comes as a phrase or a completed thought, and sometimes not as speech at all but as a scene requiring interpretation by the patient and the therapist. In time, however, the information transfer between patients and parts becomes more efficient. Remember that images of parts have no actual organs of speech articulation that work as the physical body organs work. Consequently, it is just as easy to talk to a physical object like a balled fist or a color as it is to an image with moving lips. Here are the questions I usually ask, adjusting them to the part's responses.

1 Ask the part if it knows who you (the patient) are. Ask for a guess if it is unsure or declines to answer.

2 Ask the part who it is and how it is related to you (the patient).

3 Inform the part it is a part of you (the patient); then ask if it accepts that. Continue orienting questions regardless of response.

4 Ask the part if it knows your mother, father, brother, sister, spouse, son, daughter (with individual questions for each relative).

5 Ask the part if it considers your mother, father, etc. to be its own mother, father, etc.

6 Ask the part if it likes your mother, father, etc.

7 Note: it is often helpful to ask the patient to provide an image of the relative in question. Often a part will indicate it knows the person by image rather than name.

8 Ask the part how old it is or how old it feels. In the absence of a precise number, ask the part if it feels like a child, a teenager, or an adult.

9 Ask the part how old it thinks the patient is.