



SHANE LYNCH PSYCHOLOGY

Happy New Year!

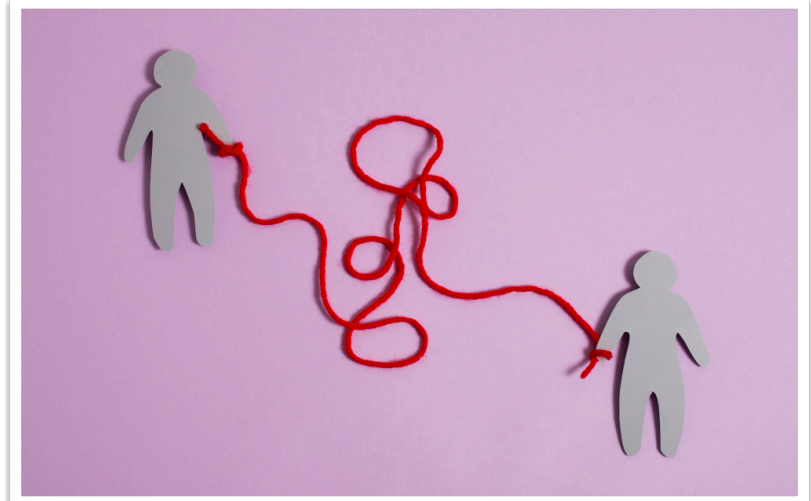
Ready or not, it's 2024!
Wishing you and your family a
happy and healthy year!

Don't forget

Once we are aware of the
impact of early childhood
experiences we can work on
how to make adjustments to
our patterns of behaviour.
Always consider which way
you're adjusting: Am I moving
away from what I don't want?
Or am I moving toward what I
do want? Make it the latter.

About Shane

One of my monthly routines is
to get a massage. I've been
seeing the same masseuse for
years now. When I went in for
my January appointment a
couple weeks ago I had
difficulty finding parking.
Because this has never been
the case to my recollection I
wondered about it while I
waited for my appointment
time. Then I realized the
massage clinic is next to an
Anytime Fitness and it was the
second week of January.



Attachment Theory: Part 1

For the next few issues, I'm going to be writing about Attachment Theory. Some of you may be familiar with the concept from either previous therapy experiences, Google searches, or "experts" on TikTok. I'm going to break this down from theory to practice, and show you how it can be used in a helpful way. I'm choosing my words carefully here because I've noticed two polarizing accounts of attachment: a) It explains everything in one's individual and relationship life; and b) It's harmful and limiting, and ought to be left behind. Let's find the usefulness together and learn how it may be applied, shall we?

There are actually several different attachment theories; however, none get as much attention as Lorenz, Bowlby and Ainsworth. Lorenz was the zoologist who discovered ducklings would attach to the first moving object they saw. He noted that if they hatched and he was their first encounter, they would follow him around believing he was their mother. He believed that for humans, physical features were the visual cues to attachment. Infants



Tips for Dads & Moms

It could be that the ability to remain calm when our kids dysregulate comes from the concept of building secure attachments. I've discussed this in terms of mirror neurons in a past issue, but remaining calm in the face of an upset kiddo not only helps them to regulate, but adds to the ongoing creation of secure attachment bonds.

If we stay calm(er!) we send the message that we are stable, we are a safe place for our kiddo to come when overwhelmed. We create what has been called a "safe haven" and in so doing fortify for our kiddos a secure base from which to launch into all manner of unknowns (e.g., new activities, scholastic challenges, friendships). They can always pause and know we'll be there.



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would form stronger bonds with caregivers because their caregivers viewed them as having "cute" faces. Because of this attraction, subsequent interactions would increase and lead to stronger attachment bonds.

Bowlby believed that under normal circumstances, adults are as biologically predisposed to respond favourably to a baby's signals as the baby is to emit them to their caregivers. However, he did not believe attachment was automatic. Instead he believed secure attachments were developed gradually as parents become better at reading and reacting appropriately to the baby's signals. Moreover, the baby learns what their parents are like and how they regulate behaviour. While humans are biologically capable of attachment, secure emotional bonds will not develop unless each participant (child and parent) has learned how to respond appropriately to the behaviour of the other. (Spoiler Alert: This is where some couples use attachment theory to describe issues in their relationship).

Lastly, Ainsworth created the technique most widely used for measuring attachment called the "strange situation." Containing eight episodes, it was designed to stimulate naturalistic caregiver-infant interactions; followed by brief separations from the caregiver; then an encounter with a stranger (often stressing the infant); and reunion with the caregiver to determine if the infant derives comfort and reassurance from this final interaction.

Results from this work lead to the establishment of four attachment styles: 1)secure attachment; 2)resistant (sometimes called ambivalent or anxious-preoccupied) attachment; 3)avoidant (sometimes called avoidant-dismissive) attachment, and 3) disorganized/disoriented attachment. I will outline each of these in more detail in my next issue. Stay tuned...

For now, I'll leave you with why attachment is important and some of the implications if we didn't fall into "secure attachment" which the majority (approx. 65%) of North American infants land. Our ability to attach contributes a great deal to our ability to feel secure enough to explore our world not just as an infant, but later in school, and in our adult lives. It can have a significant impact on our ability to form and maintain healthy relationships as well as raise children of our own. All that being said, our ability to repair and nurture what some call "attachment wounds" is possible. Important: We do not have to be limited by these early childhood experiences nor do we require others to heal these wounds for us.