



SHANE LYNCH PSYCHOLOGY

Heads Up!

February can be a tough mental health month for many.

Remember...

Attachment issues we decide apply to us are just parts of us attempting to cope. They have good intentions, but poor delivery. Watch out for critical or impatient parts that try and trample insecurity. Instead consider your natural ability to feel compassion for an insecure part.

About Shane

It takes a village. This is something I've heard about raising kids in many contexts from many different people over the years. I started a martial arts family class with my two older boys in January. Self-discipline is important to me and sometimes it just hits different when it comes from someone other than dad. When being recognized for good class attitude, my boys were reminded to follow my example in class. Thanks for your help, Sensei!!



Attachment Theory: Part 2

For Part 2, I'm going to discuss each kind of attachment by name as they are commonly known and begin to discuss how "parts language from IFS may be applied. (For an introduction to this topic, see Part 1 on my [website](#).)

I'm going to save the secure attachment pattern for the end. Let's start with resistant attachment, sometimes called ambivalent or anxious-preoccupied attachment. Resistant attachment is characterized by ambivalence and inconsistency in the infant's interactions with the caregiver. In Ainsworth's experiment, infants with this attachment style display intense distress upon separation from their caregiver and difficulty being soothed upon reunion. They may simultaneously seek proximity to and resist comfort from their caregiver, displaying conflicting behaviours such as clinging while pushing away. This pattern of behavior indicates an uncertainty about the caregiver's availability and responsiveness.



Tips for Dads & Moms

Last issue I reintroduced the concept of remaining as calm as possible when addressing our kiddos' big feelings. Easier said than done, yes, but largely this is due to parts of us that are not calm.

If we want to encourage secure attachment with our kids, we need to connect with them from Self, not from parts like impatience, criticism, and judgment. These parts have good intentions but poor delivery. Even though impatience may signal it's time to "hurry up," criticism may be attempting to motivate, and judgment may be trying to teach, most parents will agree impatience makes things slower, no one (kids included) feels motivated when criticized, and judgment is a poor way to teach.



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Avoidant attachment is characterized by a lack of emotional closeness and avoidance of the caregiver's attention or comfort. Ainsworth found infants with this attachment style show minimal distress upon separation and little interest in seeking comfort from their caregiver upon reunion. Instead, they may actively avoid or ignore their caregiver, appearing indifferent to their presence. Their behaviour suggests a suppression of their attachment needs, possibly due to past experiences of unresponsiveness or rejection from their caregiver.

Disorganized attachment (an additional category discovered by Mary Main and Judith Solomon) characterized infants as exhibiting a variety of behaviours distinct from resistant, and avoidant. Disorganized characteristics included dazed expressions or erratic movements especially in response to being reunited with their caregiver. Infants appeared to lack a consistent strategy to deal with their caregiver's absence and return. They will simultaneously exhibit apprehension or fear with a desire for closeness and comfort. They desire security from their caregiver but have learned to expect unpredictability instead.

The keys to attachment or perhaps to developing a secure attachment style might be summarized as being seen, heard, and valued. Can I be seen and heard accurately? Is the other person open and available? Can I trust that I am valued?

Infants learn this early from the caregiver's ability to provide a safe haven, a secure base (from which to launch into developmentally appropriate activities; e.g., independent play), proximity maintenance (e.g., infants ability to confidently seek closeness and comfort from their caregivers) and, separation distress (e.g., the normal reaction of infants to be in distress when separated from caregivers, but to be comforted when they return).

Based on these attachment styles it makes sense if one did not identify as being securely attached, the revelation may carry with it a daunting perspective of doom only to be addressed through some kind of therapeutic, corrective parenting. However, IFS holds that Self (actual you) is not doomed and unaffected by these early experiences. What can be addressed is one's inability to access Self because parts of you that have attempted to cope with these attachment issues have blocked access to the Self. If we can understand the survival patterns of stuck parts with insecure attachments, we can unblend from them and access [Self](#).