



SHANE LYNCH PSYCHOLOGY

Spring?

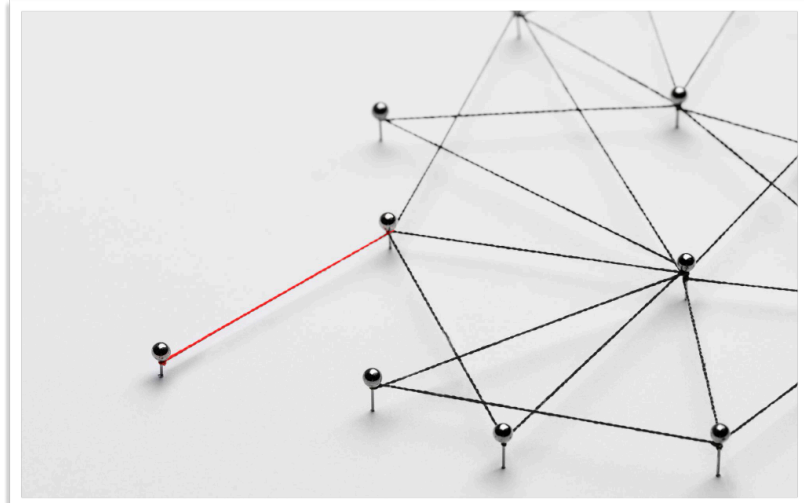
Please come. I'm ready.

Remember...

Attachment theory is a huge topic with many interesting areas of exploration. These newsletters serve to introduce and address a small portion of the topic to engage your personal reflections and, I hope, shed some light for what might be.

About Shane

As it turns out, I am really enjoying my reconnection to martial arts. I practiced for a short time as a kid, and now with kids of my own, I have inadvertently found myself interested again as an adult. The issue of course is now managing/balancing my own interest and desire to work at this discipline with my boys' interest in it. I may have to take an adult class, too, just in case the boys' interest waxes and wanes over time. Remember, we take a lot of care with our kids and we also have to care for ourselves, too!



Attachment Theory: Part 3

For Part 3, I'm going to discuss how we can further conceptualize Attachment Theory through the Internal Family Systems lens.

First, attachment wounds as they are often called are addressed in therapy in many ways. Many therapeutic approaches identify, examine, and help clients deal with the wounds they believe they carry due to early childhood traumas. Instead of wounds we still carry, IFS might call these trauma experiences "parts of us" (or "exiles") that continue to carry burdens today. And, as such, these traumatized parts require a primary attachment figure; however it isn't something we need from our parents or our partners. It is the Self that becomes the primary attachment figure. Exiled parts carrying trauma burdens can be seen, understood, and valued by the Self. Secure attachment occurs quicker and has more resilience if done internally — that is, between the Self and exiled traumatized parts.

Self-to-part communication is key here. Where we tend to get



Tips for Dads & Moms

Ever catch yourself saying: “My parents did that and I’m never going to do that”? Do you sometimes also notice that in the heat-of-the-moment you might mistakenly and even unknowingly repeat exactly what you already decided you weren’t going to do? Sometimes this is a result of how we learned to attach, which is a factor to consider when we reflect on how we learned to relate with our parents when we were kids, how we relate to ourselves, and with our own kids. Because all parts of us have good intentions, usually it’s the delivery we endeavour to adjust. Think about that the next time a part of you criticizes how you handled an interaction with your kiddo. There were good intentions in there that need a new delivery method.



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into problems is when parts attempt to communicate with other parts. For example a traumatized part will not respond to a rational part that tells it it’s unreasonable to continue to be traumatized by an attachment wound that occurred in the past. IFS views that traumatized part (attachment wound) as still believing it resides in the past. That is, a part of us that has an attachment wound continues to understand the world as if it is stuck back in our childhood still attempting to deal with its insecure attachments. When this attachment wound/part interacts with others, it operates as a wounded child-like version of ourselves. And as a result, other people in our lives will relate to it instead of to us.

For example, this could manifest in relationships. Let’s say one partner’s need for closeness is interpreted by the other partner as clinginess. This happens because closeness isn’t asked for in a healthy, mature way, but in what is interpreted as an annoying, clingy way. The annoyed part of one partner rejects the advances of their partner’s clingy part and confirms its belief that it is unwanted, unsafe, and unloved. Of course, this may not be the case, but when the attachment wound/part feels annoyance it gets what is familiar to it: “when I seek out closeness, I get rejected.” This is what happened when they were a child and what happens now in their adult relationships.

What this calls for is a reset in the internal family system. The Self is now the parent who can relate in a loving, connective, safe, trusted way with the attachment wound/part. These unmet attachment needs can now be met internally by the Self (i.e., from Self-to-part). When these needs are met, the wound can be healed and the attachment wound/part can be free of this relational burden. When this occurs, the person will operate differently in their relationships with others because it will not be the attachment wound/part seeking connection in a way that only pushes possible connections away, but the person’s Self that operates. The Self is aware of and is able to ask for what it needs in an adult relationship in a way that fosters healthy connection.

This is a complex topic to discuss in such a small space. I hope you’ll take this away from this snapshot of attachment and IFS: Attachment wounds can be healed and need not only be coped with. Relationship dynamics can change and need not only be repeated over and over again to the detriment of present and future relationships.