



SHANE LYNCH PSYCHOLOGY

Plant a seed and see what grows...

That's both the title of a lovely children's book my sister gave my sons, and a wonderful metaphor for life. It reminds us of Spring and that change is gradual and requires time and effort.

Remember...

Don't get too far ahead when it comes to change. Instead, think about what adjustments lead to change.

About Shane

It's the busy activity time of the year leading into summer. My oldest son decided not to do baseball this year, but is trying a climbing (bouldering) class instead. His wirey frame is perfect for it and he's doing quite well. His younger brother is in his second year of T-ball and both of them are also in swimming lessons. Meanwhile, the littlest guy is doing a class with me called "Messy Hands" full of fun crafts and tactile experiences. Mom and dad have our chauffeur licenses.



Change: What's the point, anyways?

Usually we associate going to therapy with making a change. Whether we want to change something about ourselves—or sometimes hoping to learn how to change someone else—change can be challenging. Clients of mine might remember me speaking about change and my general dislike for the word. I often explain my preference for the word: “adjustment.” It's the accumulation of *healthful* (healthy + helpful, Tasker, 2012) adjustments taken together, that make change possible and sustainable.

One of the reasons why I prefer adjustment instead of change, is that simply “making a change” often assumes simplicity and ease when the change and accompanying process is often complex. From the Internal Family Systems (IFS) perspective, change often comes about by making adjustments to inner relationships between parts of us that have become polarized.

One significant barrier to adopting new perspectives is internal polarization. People often have conflicting parts—for example, one that longs for connection and another that fears



Tips for Dads & Moms

Kiddos + Change = ???

Anyone with kids or nieces and nephews or grandchildren will tell you that sometimes change goes over well and other times not so well. What we can be certain of is when we luck out and the change is accepted without protest, we're good. But when it doesn't go that way, reasoning with a frustrated, anxious, angry, or indeed defiant part in that child is a fool's errand. Instead, we need to employ calm, curiosity with the bundle of feeling parts that are running this kiddo's current state. We are actually *not* trying to get them to understand the change, we are trying to understand *their* reaction to it. By doing this we learn what adjustments need to be made on the path to change.



Shane F. Lynch, MA, CCC, R.Psych

intimacy. When we try to adopt a new mindset, a protective part may resist, believing the shift endangers the system's fragile balance. For example, a person trying to develop self-compassion may encounter inner voices that criticize them for being "lazy" or "weak," reflecting longstanding protective strategies aimed at avoiding perceived failure or rejection. These parts aren't sabotaging change out of malice; they're doing what they believe is necessary to survive.

Another struggle comes from attachment to familiar narratives. From an IFS standpoint, parts often cling to old stories because they confer identity or provide a sense of control. A part that believes "I must succeed to be loved" is not easily persuaded to accept a new paradigm like "I am worthy regardless of achievement." Letting go of old narratives can feel like death to these parts, which often developed during formative years. Without proper acknowledgment and healing, these parts will resist even the most rational or emotionally appealing alternatives (Schwartz & Sweezy, 2020).

This is why no matter how convincing a rational part may sound, anxious or fearful or angry or guilty or sad parts often do not respond in a way, or on a time table that makes sense to the rational part of us. How could it make sense? The rational part sees the "change" as making sense, but before that is possible, adjustments need to be made to the relationships between each of the parts that are triggered by the prospect of the change. The change threatens some parts and makes sense to others. Polarized parts need to be settled down by the *Self* with calm, compassionate curiosity—characteristics of which none of the *parts* possess.

Successful change requires what IFS calls Self-leadership—a state characterized by curiosity, compassion, calmness, clarity, connection, creativity, courage, and confidence. When we access our Self, we can relate to our parts with understanding instead of judgment, allowing for genuine internal dialogue.

In this space, protective parts feel safe enough to step back, and exiled parts feel heard and validated, making space for authentic transformation (Anderson, 2023). In therapy, my role is not to help you force change but to help you foster relationships with your parts, to recognize that resistance is not pathology but protection. True change is not about forcing parts to comply; it's about making adjustments within a system where all parts can evolve together.