SHANE LYNCH PSYCHOLOGY

April Foolishness

Is it just me or is April Fools just not the same as it used to be? My adolescent clients have no reaction to days like April 1st or Fridays that happen to fall on the 13th of the month.

Remember...

Emotionally-laden messages from others, including social media or the news are designed to trigger a specific emotional reaction. If this happens, it's your first clue the sender hopes you won't check to see if what they're saying has any basis in fact. They may even claim it's "common sense" which is a further attempt to discourage you from critical thinking.

About Shane

Nothing like a blizzard to get us in the mood for spring… in April. I think we should at least wait until May long weekend, don't you?

Don't forget to stretch before and after shovelling!



When the Alarm Never Stops

In my work with clients, I have noticed a quiet but persistent wound that doesn't always announce itself as trauma. It arrives in the therapy room as exhaustion, as low-grade dread, as a creeping sense that the world is fundamentally unsafe — and that this lack of safety is always *someone's fault*. When I inquire further, a common thread emerges: many of these clients have been marinating for years in emotionally charged messaging specifically designed to keep them afraid.

Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy, offers us a powerful lens for understanding what happens inside a person when they are subjected to relentless fear-based communication. Messages that may contain distortions, exaggerations, or outright fabrications, but are delivered with such emotional intensity that the nervous system cannot easily distinguish them from genuine danger.

As you may recall from previous newsletters or sessions, when we feel safe, the Self can lead. When we perceive threat, protective parts mobilize. This is where emotionally manipulative



Tips for Dads & Moms

The most productive way to approach behaviour change is called "positive reinforcement." Responding positively to what we want our kiddos to do.
One of the biggest blocks parents have is how much they respond to behaviours they don't want. This can actually reinforce the behaviour. Oops.
For toddlers, any attention is good, so they will more likely keep throwing food on the floor if we have a big reaction. For, school age kids, behaviour isn't better because we correct more, it's better because kiddos are just trying to avoid correction. For tweens and teens, their autonomy is more important to them than compliance to correction. Build influence with your kiddos by reinforcing the behaviours you want to see.



messaging does its deepest damage. These messages are engineered to activate our threat-detection system. They typically follow a recognizable architecture: *identify an enemy, amplify the danger they pose, and position the audience as uniquely vulnerable*. The content need not be factually accurate to be emotionally effective. Fear doesn't fact-check.

When a person is chronically exposed to such messaging, certain protective parts become hyper-activated. *Managers* (the forward-thinking protectors who try to keep us safe through control, vigilance, and preparation) go into overdrive. Clients describe obsessively following news cycles, arguing with strangers online, or lying awake cataloguing threats. These aren't character flaws; they are loyal parts doing exactly what they were shaped to do.

Beneath these exhausted managers often lives a younger, more vulnerable part; what IFS calls an *Exile*. These are the parts who carry the actual terror: the belief that catastrophe is imminent, that the people we love are in danger, or that we are powerless to protect what matters. Fear-laden messaging doesn't create these Exiles from nothing. Instead, it finds them and speaks directly to wounds that were already there, convincing them their worst fears are finally being confirmed.

This is what makes such messaging so extraordinarily persuasive even when it is demonstrably false. It isn't asking us to evaluate evidence. It is whispering directly to our most frightened parts.

When the Exile's pain becomes unbearable, *Firefighters* emerge (reactive parts that seek immediate relief regardless of consequences). In clients saturated with fear-based messaging, I often see firefighter activity in the form of rage (a powerful antidote to helplessness), tribal bonding through shared hatred, or paradoxically, avoidance and numbing. These responses make complete sense from an IFS perspective: the system is simply trying to survive an unrelenting state of alarm.

The path forward is not to dismiss or argue with the frightened parts which may be leading us or others we care about. Instead we need to learn to *unblend* from the most activated protectors, so we can calm frightened exiles and gradually restore access to Self-led discernment. Here we can critically evaluate information rather than simply *feel* it as a threat.