



DEFENSE MECHANISMS

TO AVOID THE REALITY OF YOUR
CIRCUMSTANCES....

Defense mechanisms can distort our reality so that we can continue to use drugs and drink without guilt.

If we were honest with ourselves, we would see past our own lies!

- ▶ Denial
- ▶ Regression
- ▶ Acting out
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Displacement
- ▶ Regression
- ▶ Repression



List of Defense Mechanisms

DENIAL: Is the refusal to accept reality or fact

Most people use denial in their everyday lives to avoid dealing with painful feelings.

▶ "I don't have a problem with drugs. You're crazy."

Acting Out: Is performing an extreme behavior in order to express thoughts or feelings the person feels incapable of otherwise expressing.

- ▶ Instead of saying “I’m angry with you” a person who acts out may instead throw a book at the person or punch a hole through a wall.

PROJECTION: is the placement of a person's undesired thoughts, feelings, or impulses onto another person who does not have those thoughts, feelings, or impulses.

- ▶ Finding something you find irritating in others without realizing it is a character trait **you possess** unknowingly.
- ▶ Creates an environment of suspicion **on others** for no reason, because **you** are planning to do something unethical and shady.

Displacement: the redirecting of thoughts feelings and impulses directed at one person or object, but take out upon another person or object.

- ▶ Classic example- A man who gets angry at his boss, but cant express his anger to his boss in fear of being fired. He instead comes home and kicks to dog or starts an arguments with his wife.

RATIONALIZATION: Making up plausible excuses as to why you continue to do what you do.

- ▶ "I work hard all day; I deserve a little time to unwind and drink"
- ▶ "My kids drive me crazy, of course I need "mother's little helper" to cope.
- ▶ "If you worked my schedule, you'd also have to stay on the meth to work 16 hour days."

MINIMIZATION: Reducing something to the smallest amount

- ▶ "I only smoke on the weekends" (smokes a pound a week, can never pass a drug test, spends all of the extra money on weed.)
- ▶ "I don't drink nearly as much as she does, at least I don't get knock-down drunk" (can't remember how you get home, or who is asleep next to you)
- ▶ "I only smoke crack at home, it never bothers me at work" (stays up for 3 days, can't make it to work, falls asleep on the job after the second day)

LYING: a statements that a person believes to be false and is made with the intentions to deceive.

- ▶ "I only have to run down the street to get a pack of cigs" (runs off to the dealer's house and gets stuck there, has to come up with more excuses as to why you're not home.)
- ▶ "I need money, I'm out of diapers/gas/food/etc."
- ▶ "My car broke down. I need to borrow your car"

AVOIDANCE— behaviors that avoid dealing with a stressor.

- ▶ "I will stay out long enough until I know for sure my wife has gone to bed, so I don't have to deal with her 20 questions"
- ▶ Cell phone turned off
- ▶ Isolating
- ▶ staying away from friends and family who support your recovery
- ▶ staying off facebook, etc.

DEFLECTION: The act of changing or causing something to change direction.

- ▶ "Don't talk to me about my drinking, when you gamble our money away"
- ▶ "I don't drink as much as you go shopping"
- ▶ "What about YOU?"
- ▶ My kids aren't doing anything wrong! It's all YOUR kids' fault!

BLAMING: Assigning the responsibility for something bad to someone else.

- ▶ "If it weren't for your nagging, I wouldn't HAVE to drink"
- ▶ "Not my fault! If you didn't introduce me to that dope dealer, I wouldn't be hooked on it"
- ▶ "I didn't lose my job because of all of those sick days I missed, it was because of your car running out of gas on me. All your fault!"



Which defense mechanism do
YOU recognize in yourself?

If you can recognize it, you can change it.