



## Reliant Services

### **Our defenses can keep us from discovering real feelings. When they are in control, possibility of change is limited.**

In the process of change, it is crucial to identify and NAME commonly used defense mechanisms. Remember, these are defenses used to avoid acknowledging real feelings. They are NOT defects of character. Other words for defense are PROTECT, SHIELD, GUARD, BARRIER. The following are examples of defense mechanisms commonly used.

**BLAMING/ACCUSING:** These defenses claim that your behavior is the fault of someone/something. This allows you to “point the finger” at other people or things rather than deal with your own responsibility.

Example: “I have too much stress in my life.”, “The cops have it in for me.”, “It’s all about the money.”

**JUSTIFYING/RATIONALIZING:** This is when you make excuses or reasons for why you drank/used to justify or rationalize your behavior.

Example: Lost job, strained relationship, financial difficulties, bad childhood, pressure at home.

**AGREEING/COMPLYING:** With these defenses you will “go along” with others just to avoid being confronted about your behaviors. These allow you to tell others what you think they want to hear. Always straddling the fence with no real authentic contribution.

**DEFIANCE/AGGRESSION:** These defenses allow you to act so stubborn or resistant to change. If confronted, you lash out to deflect any focus on you.

Example: “Nobody is going to tell me what to do!”, “You think I’m acting unreasonable now?”, “I’m not going to take this shit!”

**GENERALIZING/MINIMIZING:** These defenses allow you to admit a problem exists, but you'll leave out specific details or normalize your behaviors as if they are common in others.

Example: "I only have a problem with alcohol, weed is okay.", "I don't drink as much as my friends do."

**ARGUING/DEBATING:** These defenses allow you to disagree with others to avoid talking about your own behavior.

Example: "Who died and made you God?", "You don't know me!"

**EVADING/DODGING/SWITCHING:** These defenses allow you to side step the real issues by changing the subject. "Shuck and Jive", the old "Razzle Dazzle". Anything you can do to switch, dodge or evade the topic.

Example: "That guy isn't taking this seriously.", "I really like your watch."

**SMUG/SUPERIOR/ARROGANT:** These defenses allow you to act and behave as if you are better than other people and not as affected by substances as others.

Example: "I will never understand you drug addicts.", "You all are teaching me how I don't want to end up.", "AA meetings are just bitch sessions."

**JOKING/GRINNING/SMILING/LAUGHING:** These defenses allow you to make a joke out of serious things like your drinking/using patterns or behavior. Instead of acknowledging the impact it has on you (and loved ones), you make a funny story out of it.

**VICTIMIZING:** This defense allows to be the one who is always picked on or taken advantage of. Usually failing to admit your role in putting yourself in these situations for personal gain to begin with.

**INTELLECTUALIZING:** This defense allows you to be the "floating head" and not attached to the feelings. You want reasons and explanations for everything. Rather than "feel", you need to explain. You use lengthy philosophical arguments or petty disputes to distract from the larger issue.

***PLEASE TAKE TIME TO IDENTIFY WHICH OF THESE DEFENSE MECHANISMS YOU HAVE USED. REMEMBER, THIS EXERCISE IS MEANT TO HELP US BE BETTER WHILE ADDRESSING PATTERNED BEHAVIORS THAT HAVE BEEN WITH US FOR A LONG TIME.***

**GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK!!!**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group:** \_\_\_\_\_

Are any of the defense mechanisms familiar to you? \_\_\_\_\_

Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe when you would use these defense mechanisms and with whom (or when you have observed someone else using them).

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How long do you think these defense mechanisms have been a part of your life?

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