



Defense Mechanisms

What are defense mechanisms?

They are your body's natural warning systems that can be used to protect you; however, they can also be harmful. Everybody has at least one defence mechanism and a lot of times they can blend right into personality traits; meaning they can be difficult to spot unless you are able to identify them by name.

Defense Mechanisms:

Avoidance - Changing the subject when someone confronts you; not responding to them; staying busy for a majority of the time.

Blaming – Not taking responsibility for your own actions; perhaps placing the blame on another or a situation instead.

Rationalizing – Making excuses or justifying; giving reasons for your actions.

Displacement – Expressing anger at someone else (had a bad day, first person to speak or increase your load receives all the feedback from that bad day.)

Isolation – Different from a time-out because you do not come back, you just continue to stay away and have little to no contact with others.

Internalizing – Blaming yourself for everything or assume you are or “must be” at fault for most things.

Escape – Running away from the problem(s).

Defiance – Rebelling against truth and/or responsibility; rejecting another's input or advice.

Compliance – Agreeing just to “skip” the argument.

Lying – Denying the truth to both yourself and another.

Aggression – Using verbal and/or physical force such as yelling, controlling, bullying, threatening, throwing, stomping, and/or aggressively touching another (slap, poke, hit, and even pretending to – i.e. balling up a fist and holding it over another).

Denial – “It’s not real. It cannot be real.”

Intellectualizing – Constantly thinking about it, and unable to think about anything else even after going through all the details two or three times.

Projection – Putting thoughts of self-worth on another person. For example, if you feel bad or guilty, then saying to someone else, “What’s wrong? You look guilty? What have you been doing?”

How do I work with defence mechanisms?

Now that you are aware of them, use them as a stop sign. Ground yourself and take a time-out in order to figure out what is bugging you.

1. If you cannot figure out what it is right away, use your physical sensations as a cue – did you sleep well? Has your appetite changed? Do you feel anxious or weighed down (depressed)? When did those feelings start?
2. If you are still unable to figure it out, use a coping mechanism such as walking, drawing, and reading and then come back to it – if you spend too long thinking about it, you run the risk of dwelling which can add further stress.
3. If you are still unable to figure it out, try journaling and/or talking to a trusted friend or support.
4. If that does not work, make note of it; for example, “I know that something is bugging me, I just cannot figure it out despite my best efforts, I will keep an eye on it for now and be aware of any more signs and/or cues, until then, what healthy coping can I do to take a deep breath to lessen my load?”

Do you need more help?

Don’t be afraid to reach out for more help. If you’re not sure who to talk to, consider calling **Timmins Family Counselling Centre** to learn more and if counselling is right for you.

You can reach us at **705-267-7333**.

You can also visit our website at www.timminsfamilycounselling.com