

Defense Mechanisms

4. Blowout

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required

Activity Type: Object lesson

Grades: 1-12

Group Size: 3 or more

Time: 5 minutes

Introduction: This activity is designed to show students that “blowing up” or losing control of their temper is not an effective or positive defense mechanism. Blowing up may make us feel better temporarily, but long term solutions come only through communication and understanding.

Materials:

- 1 plastic cone, funnel, or cardstock rolled into a funnel and taped, about 11 inches long, with a 3-4 inch diameter on the wide side and a ¼ inch diameter on the narrow end.
- 1 Ping-Pong ball

Activity:

Have a participant come and sit down in front of the class. Give your participant the cone or funnel, then give him/her the Ping-Pong ball and ask them to place it in the funnel. Now challenge them to hold the funnel high and blow into the bottom, trying to blow the Ping-Pong ball out of the funnel. Once they have made their attempt, repeat with two other participants.



Students will soon realize that it is impossible to blow the Ping-Pong ball out of the funnel, because as soon as you blow the ball up in the funnel, air passes around the edge of the ball and causes it to fall back down. No matter how hard you blow, the most you can do is cause the ball to bounce up and down. This activity illustrates what happens when someone gets mad and blows up. When you are angry, you expend a lot of energy and yet never solve the problem.

Processing the Experience:

- Did you succeed at getting the ball out of the cone? Why or why not?
- Do you think if you blew for long enough that you would eventually see results? Why or why not?
- How did you feel during this activity?
- Why is anger never a very effective defense mechanism?
- Do problems get solved when we get angry?
- What are some positive ways to express anger?
- What are some positive ways to control anger?
- How can you solve a conflict without resorting to anger?