

# Defense Mechanisms

## 5. Creative Pyramid

**Spatial Requirements:** Gym/outdoor space required

**Activity Type:** Movement/group or object lesson

**Grades:** 4-12

**Group Size:** 6 or more

**Spatial Requirements:** Gym/outdoor space required

**Time:** 15-20 minutes

**Introduction:** When we are in a stressful situation, we often respond or act in a negative way. This response actually makes the situation worse. The goal of this activity is to learn that there are many positive ways to react to a pressure situation.

**Materials:**

- Gym pad, carpeted area, or lawn

**Activity:**

Tell the group that they have two minutes to plan any type of pyramid, and one minute to put it together. The teams will create different types of pyramid formations using members of the group. The ideal group size is six to ten members. Many of the teams will come up with the traditional cheerleader pyramid. Tell them that they have to come up with a different type of pyramid for the second round. They will have one minute to plan and 45 seconds to execute. Speed up the process by allowing 45 seconds to plan and 30 seconds to build the pyramid. Next, allow only 30 seconds of planning and 15 seconds to form the pyramid. Then shorten the planning time to 20 seconds with ten seconds to build. To close the challenge, give ten seconds to come up with a new pyramid and five seconds to put it together.

At the end of the activity, discuss why many of them chose the traditional pyramid the first time. Relate how, in real life, people may apply the same negative defense mechanism over and over, running into the same negative results each time. In a pressure situation, "If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got." If you don't like what you're getting, do something different. Review the different types of pyramids the groups came up with.

**Processing the Experience:**

- What was challenging about this activity?
- Why did many of you choose a traditional cheerleader pyramid the first time?
- Why was it difficult to "think outside the box" and create a different kind of pyramid?
- Did it become more difficult as there was more pressure with less time?
- How is this like real-life pressure situations?
- Why do we often respond in negative ways when confronted with pressure situations? What are the results when we respond this way?
- Why is it difficult to do something different?
- What approaches can you use to respond in positive ways next time you are in a pressure situation?