

Defense Mechanisms

9. Hands of Stress

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

Activity Type: Object lesson

Grades: 3-12

Group Size: 2 or more

Time: 5-10 minutes

Introduction: This activity is designed to help students understand that when the pressures and stresses of life mount up, they have tools to respond in positive ways.

Materials:

- 16 large books

Activity:

Stack all of the books on top of each other on a table. Ask for a volunteer, and tell the volunteer that you are going to add or take away a book to his/her outstretched hands as the group responds to questions. The volunteer is to keep his/her arms as straight as possible during the activity.

Ask the students the following questions, and add a book to your volunteer's outstretched hands for each negative response. For each positive response, remove a book from the volunteer's hands.

How do you respond or act when you are: (Go through seven or eight, or until the person holding the books cannot hold any more.)

Disrespected

Yelled at

Put down

Laughed at

Mad at parents

Embarrassed

Made a mistake

Under pressure

You are hit

You lose

Confronted

Frustrated

Blamed

Get caught

Hurt

Angry

Processing the Experience:

- What did the books represent?
- Who chooses our defense mechanisms?
- How do you know if you have selected a positive defense mechanism?
- What happened to the volunteer when more books were added?
- What happens to you when you respond in a negative way to pressure situations?
- Is it easier to respond in a negative or positive way? Why?
- What are the reasons to respond in a positive way?