

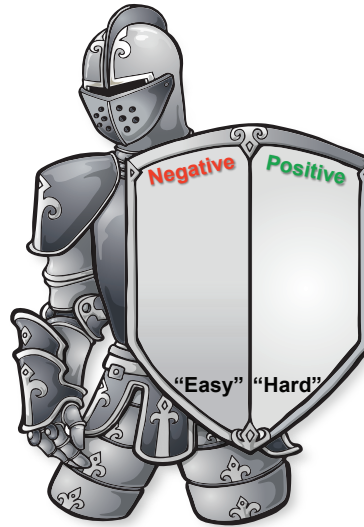
Defense Mechanisms

Introduction

Key Concept:

Pressure situations are best handled by maintaining control of your emotions and selecting positive defense mechanisms (those that don't hurt yourself or others).

Defense Mechanisms



Am I in control of my defense mechanisms?

Vocabulary

- Defense
- Self-discipline
- Impulse control
- Pressure situations
- Negative response
- Positive response
- Confronted
- Express feelings
- Self-control

Secondary Concepts:

- In pressure situations, our natural reaction is often negative.
- We can make a conscious choice to react positively. This gives us control over the conflict situations we encounter.
- We can identify techniques to calm and control our emotions.

Personalize your Lesson:

- Do you have any personal stories where you lost control of your defense mechanisms?
- Do you have any personal stories of times where you controlled your defense mechanisms in a pressure situation?
- What are your techniques for calming your emotions (i.e. take a time out or count to ten, etc.)?
- What are some typical pressure situations your students might face daily at home, at school, and with friends?

Activity:

To introduce this lesson, complete the attention activity "Blow-out." (See the "Learning Activities" section under "Defense Mechanisms.")

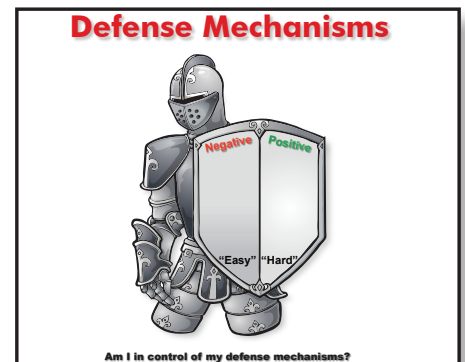
Defense Mechanisms

Lesson Plan: Introducing Defense Mechanisms

You use defense mechanisms to protect yourself when you feel threatened. The problem is that some of your defense mechanisms are destructive, and instead of protecting you, they just get you into trouble. As you learn to recognize and control your own defense mechanisms, you will also begin to recognize the defense

mechanisms other people use. You will begin to understand why people sometimes act out in ways that hurt others and get themselves into trouble.

Learning to control your defense mechanisms will give you more power to control your life than almost any other skill.



Defense Mechanisms

Lesson Plan: Visual Analogy Walkthrough

1. Defense Mechanisms

Question:

Does anyone know what a defense mechanism is?

Discussion:

Tell the group that most adults don't understand what defense mechanisms are or how to use them properly. Tell them you are going to teach them about defense mechanisms, and when you are done they will have a tool to help them when dealing with challenges at home, at school, and with peers.

If students know what a defense mechanism is, congratulate them and tell them you are going to teach them how to take control of their defense mechanisms. Whether students do or do not know the

Defense Mechanisms



answer to this question, don't formally define "defense mechanism" yet; this will be done in a few steps.

Discussion/Activity:

Create a paper shield labeled "positive" on one half and "negative" on the other, or simply draw a shield on the blackboard or overhead.

Put the paper shield on the board and go through several hypothetical situations. Have students tell what they would do in each situation and list their responses on the side of the shield it best fits into: positive or negative.

Question:

"How would you respond or act in the following situation?"

Some possible hypothetical situations are:

- Your brother comes over and takes your favorite toy right out of your hands and walks away with it.
- You are lining up and someone pushes you out of line.
- Your mom asks you to take out the garbage and you forget. She sees the garbage still sitting there and yells at you.
- You are playing kickball in P.E. and you trip and fall while running the bases and everyone in your class starts to laugh.
- You are playing soccer and a member of your team says, "You stink at soccer."

- You are playing a game with some friends at recess and you lose.
- Your teacher asks you to come up and do a math problem on the board and you don't know how.
- The kid who sits by you has candy in his desk, and while he is in the restroom you reach over and take some. Your teacher sees you and asks you what you

- are doing.
- Your sister hits you.
- Your little sister breaks a glass and your mom blames you.

Question:

Ask again, "Do you know what a defense mechanism is?"

Discussion:

Tell them that all of their an-

swers are examples of defense mechanisms.

Explain that there are two kinds of defense mechanisms: positive defense mechanisms, which help us gain opportunity, freedom and self-respect, and negative defense mechanisms, which can hurt ourselves and others and lead us to crash.

NOTE:

Teaching Tip: A defense mechanism is what you use to protect your feelings in various life situations, like a bulletproof vest for your feelings. Christian Moore's experience is one example: "While I was in school, I was a bad reader. If a teacher asked me to read out loud, I felt uncomfortable or embarrassed, so I used the defense mechanism of acting out by being disrespectful to the teacher, talking a lot, and so forth." A defense mechanism is any behavior used to divert attention away from the pressure situation. People can learn to identify negative defense mechanisms that hurt them and to select positive defense mechanisms that will help them deal with difficult situations.

2. Negative vs. Positive

Activity: "Easy vs. Hard"

Make two shields, one out of paper that says "negative" and the other out of cardboard that says "positive." (If you have access to a metal or wooden shield, that would be even better.) You will need a Nerf dart gun that shoots darts.

Have a student come forward and tell them you are going to shoot darts at them from the Nerf gun. Ask them which shield they would like to hold for protection. Why?

Discussion/Explanation:

Paper: Hold up the paper shield and explain that negative defenses may give short-term



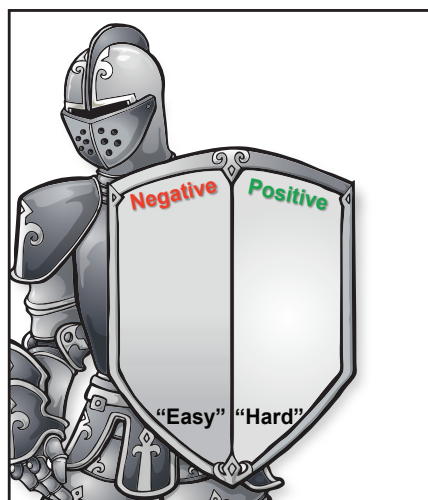
relief from a situation, but too often they make the situation worse. The paper is flimsy and might deflect a few darts, but it might tear or crumple and eventually it won't give much protection. Negative defense mechanisms are usually the easiest to choose, since the paper is lighter and easier to hold up. What are the consequences

of negative defense mechanisms? Refer to the shield on the board with the positive and negative defense mechanisms and their hypothetical situations. Emphasize that this can lead to losing control of our defense mechanisms.

Cardboard: Hold up the cardboard shield and explain that a positive defense mechanism can be harder to choose because it requires strength and effort. A heavy shield is harder to hold up, but it provides more protection. The more we choose positive defense mechanisms, however, the easier it becomes to choose them. As we do this, eventually we will have full control over our defense mechanisms.

3. The 4 Steps to Control Defense Mechanisms

Have a poster with a shield divided into four sections. On each of the four sections, write:
1. Situation 2. Feeling 3. Choice
4. Defense



Step 1: Notice

Question:

How do you respond in pressure situations?

Discussion:

The first step in controlling defense mechanisms is to notice the pressure situation. We know we are in a pressure

situation when we feel angry, frustrated, or nervous. Much like a knight that prepares for battle will put on his armor ahead of time, being prepared is being in control. Pay attention to your feelings so you can be prepared to put up a positive defense. Think of times you get angry, frustrated, and upset, and make a battle plan. "Instead of hitting my brother

back when he hits me, I will..."

Pay attention to when you are starting to feel angry or upset. Don't wait until you are ready to explode. You can refer back to the hypothetical situations you used before, or have students list times they might get angry or frustrated.

Step 2: Feeling

Question:

How do you protect your feelings? Are your defense mechanisms helping or hurting you?

Write:

Identify it, calm it, express it, control it under the word "Feeling" on your chart.

Discussion:

Explain to students that it is important to identify feelings as soon as possible because

feelings can quickly intensify. Emotions can be like fire. They can quickly get out of control and cause serious damage if not calmed or expressed in a controlled way.

A spark turns into a flame, a flame into an explosion, an explosion into an inferno. Irritation can turn into frustration. Frustration can turn into anger, anger can turn into rage. To prevent our feelings from getting out of control, we need to extinguish them while they are still a little spark.

Positive ways to express our feelings include writing a letter to the person, exercising or doing something physical that doesn't hurt yourself or others, drawing a picture, writing a poem, listening to music, etc.

Explain that you understand how difficult it is to control our feelings and actions, especially when others are trying to hurt you emotionally and physically. Although it is difficult to control how we feel inside, we can control how we respond outwardly.

NOTE:

Teaching Tip: Use a story here (one of your own or of someone that you know) that illustrates a situation where someone had to control their defense mechanisms.

Remind students that controlling our outward response requires a lot of practice and effort using what motivates us, goals, dreams, and respect for ourselves and those we care about.

Step 3: Choice

Question:

Who chooses your defense mechanism?

Discussion:

Only we can choose our own defense mechanism. People can affect our feelings, and sometimes will try to do all they can to influence our choices.

Because life is not fair, it is easy to blame others for our actions, especially if we don't have control over our defense mechanisms.

Examples might include, "She hit me first," or "They yelled at me so I had to yell back."

Tell students you are going to tell them one of the biggest and easiest mistakes people make in life: letting others' negative defense mechanisms control how they act. Too often we mirror back to others their negative defenses. If they yell, we yell. If they hit, we hit back. If they put us down, we put them down. The reality is, these actions take our control away and lead us to crash. The goal in these situations needs

to be to not give control to the person lashing out.

Point out that, yes, it can be very difficult not to lash out back, and it takes a lot of time, practice, and effort. But learning this is worth the effort because it will give us tremendous control over our lives. If students understand this step, they understand something that many people don't get or don't have the strength or desire to apply. Applying this step will give them a major advantage in life.

NOTE:

Let your students know that people who try to take control of their defense mechanism will take responsibility for their actions. No one chooses positive defense mechanisms all the time; the important thing is trying to control them so you can gain more freedom and self-respect.

The prison population is full of people who will tell you that someone hurt them and so they had to hurt back. Although they may have thought that retaliation would give them back respect, in the long run, it didn't.

Step 4: Defense

Question:

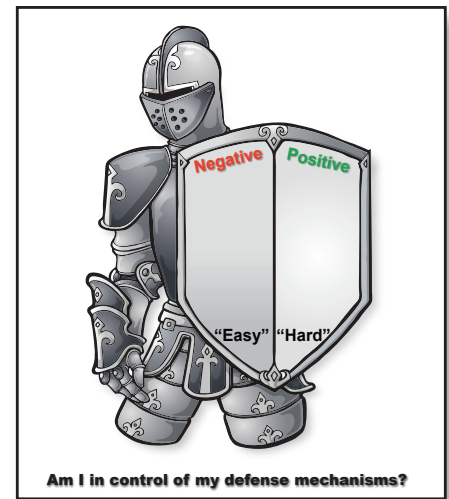
How do you know when you have chosen a positive defense mechanism? (Not hurting self or others)

Discussion:

You choose between a positive

or negative defense mechanism.

Like a snowball rolling down a mountain gaining more and more snow and growing and growing, we gain a little more self-respect each time we make the choice to use a positive defense mechanism.



4. Conclusion

Questions:

- What would motivate you to do the tougher thing and select a positive defense mechanism? (Wanting to

achieve your passion, purpose, interest; wanting to live up to your positive label; and wanting to gain opportunity, freedom, and self-respect.)

- Why do people sometimes yell, hit, or put down? (It is

usually the easiest defense; it gets attention, it gets revenge, but it will likely lead to the loop and a crash.)

Remember, there is never an excuse to hurt others.

5. Review Lesson

overview lesson.



Vocabulary

For the review lesson, have students define the vocabulary words listed in the introductory page of this manual in their WhyTry Journals. This will help increase understanding of the analogy and give you an opportunity to assess comprehension and retention from the

Visual analogy

In their WhyTry Journals, students have a copy of the visual analogy. Have students use this to do a review/walk-through of the analogy. Have them make notes, answer questions, or use a personal example to explain the concept.

6. Reflection Question

Until the next WhyTry class, ask students to consider the Defense Mechanisms reflection question:

Am I in control of my defense mechanisms?

