

DEFENCE MECHANISMS

There are many ways that we have learnt to protect ourselves from the world. In the first instance, many of these ways are valuable and useful because they prevent us from getting hurt and damaged. However, the more that we come to rely on defence mechanisms for protection the more they actually serve to hamper and impede our progress in the world. So much so, that in the end they become self-limiting mechanisms because they prevent us moving forward, taking risks, and experiencing the immense diversity of human life. Listed below are just a few of the many defences we have acquired. Take a look and see which ones apply to you and once you have made a conscious connection with those defences, then make a conscious pledge to move beyond their self-limiting influences by increasing self awareness and by accelerating your positive endeavours. Once the wall of one defence comes down, the walls of others are weakened, making them easier to dismantle.

1. Denial

Those entangled in the web of denial often seek to offer an alternative explanation for what is happening around them. The reluctance to accept responsibility is the fear of being exposed and being found out. Those snared by denial rarely, if at all, accept responsibility because to do so threatens their very existence. This flawed belief helps maintain the denial. Eventually that state of denial becomes habitual. Without detachment and objectivity, the person will not be able to see what h/she is doing to him/herself or indeed others.

2. Justification

This defence mechanism serves to legitimise every course of action taken. People who adopt this defence are rarely wrong. For them, the reason for doing whatever they do is always valid and appropriate. Because they are unable to disassociate themselves from their actions, they rarely see the lessons their experiences come to teach them.

3. Always Being Right

This defence mechanism is fairly easy to spot, except for those adopting this position. These individuals are so busy being right that they are unable to see when they have been wrong. Unfortunately, they associate being wrong with not being good enough or being defective in some way. These individuals are unable to learn from their mistakes because they simply cannot acknowledge that they make mistakes. It is by being caught in this illusion that they continue to spiral down.

4. Always Being Wrong

Many would not identify this as a defence mechanism, yet it is one of the most sophisticated and often manipulative defences. Those under the spell of this defence nearly always take up the position of being wrong. Because these individuals find it hard to accept criticism from others, they need to prevent that by 'getting there first'. Adopting this position nearly always ensures the support and sympathy of others, which makes their difficulties and challenges easier to bear. However, the price paid for this manipulation and victimhood is costly, as it leads to greater disempowerment.

5. Pretence

For many, one of the most natural defences to adopt is hiding behind a mask to enhance the way the world perceives them. Such individuals are caught up in the mistaken belief that by appearing to be someone or something they are not, they are more likely to be accepted, appreciated, respected and valued. Although they may often get away with this duplicity, the truth of the matter is, the more we pretend the more we lose ourselves and thus it becomes harder to discover the truth about who we really are. It is because of this habit that we are denied real happiness and peace of mind.

6. Meeting Everyone's Needs

This is another of the sophisticated defences which, on face value, appears to be simply kindness, generosity and understanding, and of course it may be all of these. However, in many instances, those who relentlessly take care of others, usually at the expense of themselves, are more often than not on the run. Those on the run in this way are usually afraid of what they will find. Somewhere within has been constructed the mistaken belief that 'there is something wrong with them' and that eventually they will be found out. So, if they remain sufficiently busy meeting the needs of everyone other than themselves, then hopefully the truth will never be discovered. Another significant reason this defence is adopted by many is because if the person were to discover what really needs to be addressed within themselves, their subliminal fear is that they would never be able to meet the challenge, so why court failure?

7. Fabrication

Fabrication, which equally could be called lying, is largely about the creation of realities that have little substance. Some of what is said may exist and the individual may embellish the details in order that some truth can be found in what they say, but much of what is said is a construct of the imagination. Conversely the fabrication may not exist at all and therefore contain no truth whatsoever. In this instance, the fabrication simply highlights the chronic nature of the individual's desires, needs and hopes. It also underlines the vacuum inside. Those who defend themselves in this way, like so many of the defences, engage in such practice (largely sub-consciously) in the belief that it will bring greater acceptance and inclusion. They feel unable to stand on their own two feet and so create a reality larger than their personality on which they can stand.

8. Moodiness

On first analysis, this way of defending oneself would not appear to be a defence at all and yet what it does is both repel and attract. On some occasions the person's moodiness acts as a barrier, preventing others from approaching them, or asking for something, thus enabling the individual to remain uninvolved or to withdraw from situations which create fear or inadequacy. At other times moodiness attracts attention, giving rise to concern, interest, even love, and in this way the individual is able to have some of their needs met.

From this brief summary it is clear that defence mechanisms not only act as deterrents but in some circumstances are a way of getting our emotional/psychological/spiritual needs met. They can defend us from hurt and pain as well as draw to us that which is missing in our lives. Surely there must be a better way?