**Defense Mechanisms**

Creating a Strong Positive Defense With My Thoughts, Feelings, & Choices

1. What is a defense mechanism?

2. **Situation:** How do I respond (act) when I’m...

   - Disrespected
   - Put Down
   - Blamed
   - Caught in the act

   - Threatened
   - Cheated
   - Confronted
   - Told what to do

   - Pushed/Hit
   - Pressured
   - Yelled at
   - Angry

   - Frustrated
   - Wrong
   - Lied to
   - Confused

I will circle the ones that happened to me this week, then write down how I responded and whether my response was positive or negative.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

3. **Thoughts & Feelings:** After any of these situations occur, what are my thoughts and feelings?

4. **Choice:** Who controls the choices I make?

   - How do I protect my feelings?

5. **Four Steps to Create a Strong Positive Defense**

   1. **NOTICE** the warning signs of the attack.
      - Anger  •  Nervous  •  Adrenaline
      - Frustration  •  Fear  •  Pulse racing

   2. **IDENTIFY** my thoughts and feelings.
      - Once identified: A) Check it; B) Reframe it; C) Calm it.
      - What are two areas in my life where I know I will be attacked?
      - How can I practice identifying my thoughts and feelings before the attack hits full on.

   3. **CONTROL** my response: “I will not let anyone else control how I will respond!”
      - How do I know when someone else is trying to control how I respond to a situation?

   4. **CHOOSE** a positive solution.
      - What will I probably gain when I choose a strong “hard” defense mechanism?

   “Easy” “Hard”

   How does this produce more personal strength?

**Defense**

How do I know when I have chosen a strong positive defense mechanism?

“When I am helping, not hurting, myself and others.”

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Thoughts:
____________________________________  ______________________________________  ______________________________________
____________________________________  ______________________________________  ______________________________________
Feelings:
____________________________________  ______________________________________  ______________________________________
____________________________________  ______________________________________  ______________________________________

4. **Choice**: Who controls the choices I make?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

How do I protect my feelings?
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

5. **Defense**: How do I know when I have selected a positive defense mechanism?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

6. **Four Steps to Control My D.M.**

1. **NOTICE** the warning signs of the attack.
Circle any of the warning signs below that I have experienced when I have come under attack.
- Anger  - Nervousness  - Adrenaline
- Frustration  - Fear  - Pulse racing

2. **IDENTIFY** the thoughts and feelings.
Once thoughts are identified: A) Check them; B) Reframe them; C) Calm them.

Think of a time when I was under attack. What was I thinking at that moment?
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

What emotions were produced in me based on those thoughts?
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Were my thoughts and feelings positive or negative? ____________________________
If my thoughts and feelings were negative (*I wanted to hurt myself or someone else*), how could I have reframed my thoughts and feelings into something more positive?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Two areas in my life where I know I will be attacked are:

1. ________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________

How can I practice identifying my thoughts and feelings before the attack hits full on?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

3. **CONTROL** my response: “I will not let anyone else control how I respond!”
How do I know when someone else is trying to control how I respond to a situation?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

4. **CHOOSE** a positive defense mechanism.
What will I probably gain when I choose a Strong/"Hard" defense mechanism?

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

**WEAK THINK: ANGER**
I lift the Anger balloon when I act out to draw attention to myself, like a child throwing a temper tantrum when they don’t get their way; or away from myself in an attempt to conceal a deeper feeling, issue, or problem I have; like a student that curses the teacher to draw attention away from the fact that they can’t read the passage they’ve been asked to read. Attitudes and behaviors associated with this balloon include:

- Being loud – yelling or shouting
- Being disrespectful – Using disrespectful words, labels, tones of voice, sarcasm, or defiance
- Being physical – Shoving, throwing things around, or pushing

Anger is probably the easiest balloon to recognize in another person, because we’ve all been angry before! If I don’t get rid of this balloon, it can lead to the much more dangerous “Gorilla” balloon described later on.

**STRONG THINK: “COMMUNICATE” THE REAL ISSUE**
Since I am able to read this, that means I am no longer a baby who does not possess the ability to communicate my feelings, wants, and needs. Anger is often used to cover up deeper feelings
of fear, pain, or loneliness. Anger may be the problem, but it is seldom the real issue! A strong person with Character & Heart will use words to identify the deeper emotions and real issues in themselves and then deal with them directly, rather than throwing anger around.

WEAK THINK: THE GORILLA
When a gorilla’s territory has been invaded, they follow their primitive instincts and let the invader know they’re angry by making loud noises, pounding on their chest, breaking branches, and throwing leaves and dirt in the air. If this does not make the invader go away, the gorilla will attack directly. At this point someone – whether the invader or the gorilla – is inevitably going to get hurt. When it comes to human beings, such behavior is choice driven! Even though habits may have ingrained this reaction very deeply into a person’s personality and character, it nevertheless remains a choice. Everyone eventually leaves the Gorilla alone in his/her own little piece of the jungle, or the gorilla gets killed. I lift the Gorilla balloon when:

• I make or carry out threats and ultimatums.
• I intentionally try to frighten, scare, or intimidate another person.
• I take deliberate measures to physically harm myself or others.

NOTE: The difference between the Anger balloon and the Gorilla balloon is that Anger is generalized energy spread out in no particular direction, whereas with the Gorilla, the anger is specifically targeting self or others. When the Gorilla shows up, it’s personal!
STRONG THINK: EVERYONE HAS VALUE
A strong person with Character & Heart recognizes that everyone – including him/herself - has value because of who they are, not because of their successes or failures. I can choose to see my own and other’s value and recognize that we all are worthy of feeling safe from harm. Violence toward anyone or anything is never the answer. Learning to control our thoughts, feelings and actions is what separates us from the animal kingdom!

How often do I find myself lifting the GORILLA balloon?

☐ Very Often  ☐ Often  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Not Much

A time I did the right thing and found VALUE in others was when:
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

When and where do I need to do more of this?
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________

WEAK THINK: RETALIATION
I am walking through the desert when suddenly I hear a rattle and feel a sudden burst of pain on my ankle. I've just been bitten by a rattlesnake! I know the snake’s venom has already begun to move into my bloodstream. I believe, “The snake deserves to die!” but the absolute worst thing to do would be to grab a stick and begin chasing the snake around for vengeance and Retaliation’s sake! This response is only going to kill ME that much sooner as I increase my pulse and heart rate and push the snake’s venom through my body all the more! I lift the Retaliation balloon when:

• I seek revenge and personal payback for things that hurt me or others I care about.

It’s my choice to decide that two wrongs don’t make things right or feed into an endless pattern of injury to self and others! I can choose to be a better person than the one who caused the harm to begin with.

STRONG THINK: FORGIVENESS
Forgiving someone else has nothing to do with benefiting the other person! Repeat -- it’s not about them, it’s about ME! I can harbor the bitter poison of Retaliation against someone else for...
years; finally track them down, but have a change of heart at the last moment and offer, “I forgive you.” The person might then look at me with a blank expression and say, “Forgive me for what?” as they have no recollection of ever doing anything wrong – even though their words or actions have produced a negative impact in me all that time. A strong person with Character & Heart understands that Forgiveness is about becoming a healthier, happier person.

ACTIVITY: Some of the things I learned during the Defense Mechanisms class activities were:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

SPOT SOMEONE ELSE: Teach one of the activities I learned in class to someone else. Who did I teach?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

GAME PLAN ACTIVITY
To control a Defense Mechanism, I need to Identify it, Calm it, and Express it Controlled.

What is my plan to “Identify it” when I am about to use a Defense Mechanism?

__________________________________________________________________

How often do I find myself lifting the RETALIATION balloon?

☐ Very Often  ☐ Often  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Not Much

A time I did the right thing and found FORGIVENESS in others was when:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

When and where do I need to do more of this?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
What is my plan to “Calm it” when I am about to use a Defense Mechanism?
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

What is my plan to “Express it Controlled” when I am about to use a Defense Mechanism?
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

OBSERVATION ACTIVITY
Three Defense Mechanisms that I observed in my friends, family, or co-workers this week were:
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

PERSONAL REFLECTION
An area in my life where I justify losing control is:
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

MOTIVATION QUESTION
What battle in my past am I grateful for today because I am stronger?
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

ACTION STEP
I will identify a battle in my life, apply these four steps within the next six days, and be ready to report back.
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________