



TIP SHEET~ Activity for Exploring Your Defence Mechanisms

Gain insight into your defence mechanisms and how they impact your thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

1. Journal Your Reactions:

Keep a journal for a week or two. Whenever you find yourself reacting strongly to a situation, whether positively or negatively, jot down the details of the event, your emotional response, and your immediate thoughts.

2. Identify Patterns:

After some time, review your journal entries. Look for patterns in your reactions. Do you notice consistent emotional or cognitive responses in certain situations?

3. Analyse Your Reactions: For each entry, ask yourself:

- What emotion did I feel?
- Did my reaction seem proportionate to the situation?
- Did I notice any specific thought patterns?
- Did I instinctively want to avoid or suppress certain feelings?

4. Identify Defence Mechanisms:

Based on your analysis, try to identify which defence mechanisms might be at play. Common defence mechanisms include denial, projection, rationalisation and displacement. Be honest with yourself, as this is a personal exploration.

5. Reflect on Origins:

Consider whether these defence mechanisms might be rooted in past experiences, beliefs, or fears. Reflect on how they might have served to protect you in the past.

6. Seek Alternative Responses:

Once you've identified your defence mechanisms, think about healthier ways to respond to these situations. What constructive coping strategies could you use instead?

7. Practice Mindfulness:

As you go about your day, stay mindful of your reactions. When you notice a strong emotional response, pause, and reflect on what defence mechanism might be at play.

8. Gradual Change:

Over time, work on gradually replacing unhealthy defence mechanisms with more adaptive responses. This process takes patience and self-compassion.

Remember, this activity is about self-discovery and growth. It's normal to have defence mechanisms, but becoming aware of them allows you to make conscious choices about how you respond to life's challenges. If you find it challenging to navigate this process on your own, consider seeking guidance from a therapist or counsellor.