

DEFENSE  
*workbook*  
MECHANISMS



# A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

TO THE BRAVE HEART READING THIS

Conflict resolution skills are needed everywhere, with family members, children, parents, friendships and church relationships (yes, even Christian relationships). We all need this awareness to have healthy interactions not only in our personal lives, but in work environments, volunteer organizations, our neighborhoods and with sales people and acquaintances.

My hope for you is that this workbook becomes a powerful tool to help you uncover empowering truths about your defense mechanisms and experience the life-changing power of God's love especially in the midst of crucial conversations.

This workbook provides you with practical wisdom, principles, and tools that you can use to guide you through your most difficult interactions. By helping you understand how your defense mechanisms show up, you'll be equipped to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively—creating space for healing and transformation.

As you work through the material I pray the principles will empower you to create stronger relationships and more peaceful lives.

*Christy Johnson*

BOUNDARIES BREAKTHROUGH COACH



points to ponder



# VIDEO NOTES

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Identifying our defense mechanisms is important so we can learn how to respond instead of \_\_\_\_\_.

76% of people who have been released from prison return to prison within five years because they haven't changed their \_\_\_\_\_.

The same is true in mental prisons.

**A person without self-control is like a city with broken down walls.**

PROVERBS 25:28



points to ponder

## VIDEO NOTES



- Compassion overextended looks like \_\_\_\_\_.
- Honesty overextended can be \_\_\_\_\_ and hurtful.
- Ambition used in excess can cause turn into workaholism and cause us to \_\_\_\_\_ of things that matter.
- Confidence in its extreme form turns into \_\_\_\_\_ and arrogance.
- Resolve is a great quality, but can cause us to be inflexible, rigid and \_\_\_\_\_ if we don't balance it well.
- Being compliant and peaceful is a beautiful quality, but when we over-function in this area we become \_\_\_\_\_ and find our worth in others through people pleasing.
- Influence is a strong character quality, but if not tempered, can turn into \_\_\_\_\_.



# points to ponder

## VIDEO NOTES

One of my clients wrestled deeply with the idea that passivity could actually be sinful. It wasn't until she heard a powerful sermon based on Pilate's actions in Matthew chapter 27 that her perspective began to shift.

In that passage, Pilate knew without a doubt that Jesus was innocent. Yet, instead of standing up for what was right, he gave in to the pressure of the crowd. Even though he had the authority to free Jesus, he chose to remain passive and let others dictate the outcome—a decision that ultimately led to Christ's crucifixion.

Based on these scriptures in the margin and Pilate's actions what do you think about passivity? Is it sinful behavior?

**Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ**

GALATIANS 1:10

**Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe**

PROVERBS 29:25

### Passivity causes us to:

- Give our power away.
- Honor a person or people more than God.
- Misrepresent ourselves and deny our rights.

# OVERCOMING VULNERABILITIES

Overcoming our vulnerabilities and identifying our defense mechanisms is an important part of setting boundaries and resolving conflict. When our defenses are triggered, it hinders our ability to resolve conflict because our emotions take over. Being mindful of our vulnerabilities can help us guard and protect those areas so we can maintain self-control and respond appropriately instead of allowing our emotions to take over.

If we don't recognize where we are vulnerable, however, we won't be able to guard, protect, manage or change those areas. This workbook takes a deep dive into 23 different ways we tend to defend ourselves in crucial conversations or when we feel pressured or threatened. All of us have areas of weakness. **Being weak is not the problem. Not recognizing our weaknesses is what makes us vulnerable.** When we fail to recognize an issue, we are powerless to change it. Thankfully, the opposite is also true:

*When we recognize an issue, we can invite  
God's power to help us change it.*

On the pages that follow, you'll find detailed descriptions of 23 defense mechanisms. As you read the descriptions in this lesson, take special note of the ways you often try to defend yourself in uncomfortable situations. When you recognize unhealthy patterns, you can then make active choices to manage and change the ways you respond to conflict.

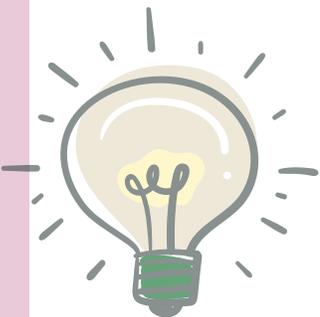


You'll also want to notice the defense mechanisms that your partner resorts to as well as other important people in your life such as parents, siblings, children and close friends. If your goal in conflict resolution is to resolve an issue, it's wise to be mindful of the vulnerabilities others have so that you can be proactive not to trigger any of their defenses. When others get defensive the conflict is often prolonged and we may even sabotage the resolution we are trying to achieve.

When we know where others are vulnerable, in the interest of healthy communication and conflict resolution, we can be more aware and intentional about how we approach difficult conversations and do our best not to trigger any of their defense mechanisms. When we are not aware of others' vulnerabilities, we often end up playing the same conflict dance over and over.

Establishing healthy boundaries requires a change in mindset and along with identifying our defense mechanisms we can make great strides toward improving the way we communicate. Overcoming our vulnerabilities brings powerful insight, not only giving us insight into our own triggers, but it also helps us identify the triggers of those we love so that we can begin to enjoy healthier ways to resolve conflict.

When we know where we are vulnerable, we can take action to protect those areas, grow and heal.



On the following page you'll find a chart. As you read about the various defense mechanisms, come back to this chart to notate how you and important people in your life defend themselves.

## DEFENSE MECHANISM SUMMARY



Place check marks by the defense mechanisms that you, your partner and other significant people in your life tend to use. You might want to use notations like A for always, S for sometimes and O for occasionally.

	Myself	My partner	Significant Others
Intellectualization			
Minimizing			
Projection			
Repression			
Displacement			
Reaction Formation			
Rationalization			
Undoing			
Maximizing/Catastrophizing			
Compartmentalization			
Blaming			
Overspiritualizing			
Dramatization			
Filtering			
Escapism			
People Pleasing			
Polarized Thinking			
Overgeneralization			
Mind Reading			
Shoulds			
Emotional Reasoning			
Passivity			
Aggression			



## 1. INTELLECTUALIZATION



Intellectualization is a defense mechanism that involves analyzing or reasoning about events, thoughts, or emotions in a detached, rational, and logical manner, often at the expense of experiencing the underlying feelings. It involves using intellect or rationality to distance ourselves from uncomfortable emotions in order to avoid dealing with them directly.

For example, if we've experienced a traumatic event, we may focus on analyzing the event and its causes in a detached manner rather than processing and experiencing the emotions that come with it.

Intellectualization can be helpful in some situations, such as problem-solving or decision-making, but when overused, it can lead to emotional detachment, avoidance, and a lack of empathy. It is often seen in people with personality disorders, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



For example, let's say that Tammy just discovered her husband lost a large portion of their savings. She was oblivious to his gambling addiction.

She might begin to research gambling addiction and treatment options, and start creating a detailed budget plan to pay off the debts her husband has accumulated.

Rather than confronting her own feelings of betrayal, anger, and sadness, she distances herself from the situation by focusing solely on the practical steps that need to be taken to fix the problem.

Another example would be someone who just lost a loved one. They might immediately assume the responsibility to contact the funeral home or take care of other important tasks in order to avoid their feelings.





## 2. MINIMIZING



Minimizing is a defense mechanism that involves downplaying the significance or severity of a situation or your emotions in response to it. This can be done consciously or unconsciously, and it serves as a way to reduce anxiety and protect yourself from painful or uncomfortable emotions.

For example, if you've been through a difficult breakup, you might minimize the impact of the relationship by saying things like, "It wasn't really that serious" or "I'm better off without him anyway." By doing this, you're attempting to reduce the emotional pain of the breakup and avoid confronting the full impact of the loss.

Minimizing can be a way of coping with stress and difficult situations, but it can also be a maladaptive defense mechanism if it prevents you from dealing with your emotions in a healthy way or addressing the underlying issues causing the stress. It can lead to denying your true feelings, avoiding responsibility, and damaging relationships.

## 3. PROJECTION



Projection involves attributing your own unacceptable or unwanted thoughts, feelings, or impulses to another person in order to avoid taking responsibility for your own actions and emotions. This can be done consciously or unconsciously, and it serves as a way to reduce anxiety and protect yourself from confronting uncomfortable or unacceptable aspects of your character or behavior. Here are a few examples:

- Someone who is cheating on their partner may project their own guilt onto their partner by accusing them of being unfaithful in order to avoid their own guilt.
- A person who has commitment issues may project their own fear of commitment onto their partner by accusing them of not being committed to the relationship.
- A person who struggles with insecurity may project their own insecurity onto their partner by accusing them of being uninterested or distant.
- A person who struggles with anger management may project their own anger onto their partner by accusing them of being angry or hostile. By doing this, they are attempting to avoid taking responsibility for their own emotions and protect themselves from the discomfort it brings.



## 4. REPRESSION



Repression is a defense mechanism that involves unconsciously pushing unwanted or unacceptable thoughts, feelings, or memories out of awareness and into the unconscious mind. Repression is often used as a way to cope with trauma or other situations that would otherwise be overwhelming to the conscious mind.

For example, a person who has experienced a traumatic event, may repress the memory as a way to cope with the emotional pain and trauma associated with it. The person may have difficulty remembering the event or may have a sense of disconnectedness from it.

Repression can also occur with feelings or impulses that are considered socially unacceptable or inappropriate. For example, a person who has what they consider taboo sexual desires may repress those desires to avoid experiencing shame or guilt associated with them.

Repression is a normal and often necessary defense mechanism in certain situations, but when overused, it can lead to problems such as emotional numbing, anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues. It can also make it difficult for a person to fully process and heal from past traumas or emotional experiences.

Repression can also occur in marital conflict as a defense mechanism used to push unwanted or unacceptable thoughts or emotions out of awareness and into the unconscious mind. For example:

- A person who is unhappy in their marriage may repress their feelings of dissatisfaction as a way to cope with the emotional pain of contemplating separation or divorce. They may push these feelings away to avoid confronting the discomfort and the potential consequences associated with them.
- A person who has unresolved anger towards their spouse may repress their anger as a way to avoid conflict or maintain the peace. They may push these feelings away and avoid expressing them, which can lead to emotional distancing and resentment over time.
- A person who has betrayed their spouse may repress feelings of guilt and shame associated with their actions as a way to avoid facing the consequences or the emotional pain of their betrayal. This can lead to ongoing issues of trust and communication in the relationship.



## 5. DISPLACEMENT

Displacement is a defense mechanism that involves redirecting or transferring your emotional or behavioral reactions from one person or situation to another that is less threatening or more acceptable.

For example, if you are angry at your partner but feel powerless to express your anger towards him because you fear his reaction, you may instead vent your frustration on your children, who are less threatening or more accessible targets. In this way, you're able to discharge your emotions and reduce your anxiety without risking the negative consequences of expressing your anger towards your hostile partner.

Here are a few other examples:

- A spouse who is feeling stressed or overwhelmed at work may come home and take out their frustrations on their partner or children, yelling at them or picking fights over trivial issues.
- A partner who is feeling guilty about something they've done may try to alleviate their guilt by buying their partner expensive gifts or being overly attentive and affectionate, rather than addressing the root cause of their guilt and taking steps to make amends.
- A spouse who is feeling jealous or insecure about their partner's relationships with others may accuse their partner of flirting or cheating, or may become overly possessive or controlling, rather than addressing their own feelings of insecurity and working on building trust and communication in the relationship.

Displacement can also occur with positive emotions. For example, a person who is attracted to someone who is unavailable may redirect their romantic feelings towards a more accessible person who is less threatening or more socially acceptable.



### **Displacement:**

transferring emotions to a person or object that is less threatening than who or what initially aroused the emotions.



## 6. REACTION FORMATION

Reaction formation is a psychological defense mechanism that involves behaving in a way that is opposite to way someone really feels, thinks or desires in order to protect themselves from anxiety or social disapproval.

For example, someone who has strong feelings of anger or hostility towards a certain group of people might go out of their way to express a facade of affection and kindness towards them in public, in order to appear tolerant or open-minded and avoid the negative consequences of expressing their true feelings.

Similarly, someone who experiences sexual desires that they consider to be unacceptable or shameful might express disgust or disapproval towards others who engage in similar behaviors.

Reaction formation can be conscious or unconscious, and it is often motivated by a desire to avoid anxiety or guilt. It is thought to be a common defense mechanism, particularly in situations where expressing your true feelings might be socially unacceptable or emotionally risky.

In romantic relationships, reaction formation can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, and lack of trust. For example, a person who wants to break up with their partner and is trying to hide their true feelings may express exaggerated displays of affection or admiration that are not genuine, leading their partner to feel confused or mistrustful of their intentions. At its core, people who use reaction formation as a defense mechanism behave in a manner that is opposite of how they really feel.

**Converting  
unwanted or  
dangerous  
thoughts,  
feelings or  
impulses into  
their opposites.**

REACTION  
FORMATION





## 7. RATIONALIZATION

Rationalization is a psychological defense mechanism that involves making excuses or justifications for your thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. The aim of rationalization is to provide a plausible explanation for actions or decisions that may be seen as unacceptable or inappropriate, in order to reduce anxiety, guilt, or shame.

People who use rationalization may unconsciously create alternative explanations or justifications that allow them to avoid facing unpleasant truths about themselves. For example, someone who gets fired from their job might rationalize the situation by blaming external factors such as management issues, favoritism in the work force or the lack of communication, rather than acknowledging their own lack of job performance.

Rationalization can be used in a variety of situations, including interpersonal conflicts, decision-making, and moral judgments. While it can be an effective way to reduce discomfort and preserve self-esteem in the short-term, relying on rationalization as a primary coping strategy can also limit self-awareness and hinder personal growth over the long-term.

Rationalization is a common defense mechanism for women involved in abusive relationships. They may not be aware that they are rationalizing their abuser's behavior. They may think thoughts like:

I know he has a bad temper and often he gets angry and sometimes even violent, but it's only because he loves me so much and he just can't control his emotions. Besides, he always apologizes afterward and promises to change. I just need to be more patient and understanding with him. It's not like he hits me all the time or anything, and he's always so sweet and loving when he's not angry. Maybe it's my fault for provoking him sometimes. I just need to be a better wife or girlfriend and not upset him so much.

When women rationalize abusive behavior by attributing it to the man's love for her and his inability to control his emotions, she minimizes the severity of the abuse by comparing it to more extreme forms of violence. In addition, she blames herself for provoking him. By using these justifications, she fails to recognize the reality of the abuse and the harm it's causing her, which can prevent her from seeking help or leaving the relationship.



## 8. UNDOING

Undoing is a psychological defense mechanism that involves trying to undo or reverse a negative behavior or thought by engaging in a positive or opposite behavior or thought. The aim of undoing is to reduce feelings of guilt, shame, or anxiety that arise from the negative behavior or thought.

For example, someone who experiences a thought about harming someone else might engage in an act of kindness or generosity towards that person as a way of undoing the negative thought. Similarly, someone who feels guilty about cheating on a test might try to compensate by studying harder for the next exam or helping a friend with their homework.

Undoing is often used in situations where a person feels that they have violated their own moral standards or social norms. While undoing can be an effective way of reducing negative emotions, it may also be a way of avoiding responsibility for the original behavior or thought. Additionally, constantly engaging in undoing can be exhausting and may not address the underlying issues that led to the negative behavior or thought in the first place.

**Undoing is the attempt to counteract damaging behavior or thoughts by doing something to balance it out.**





## 9. MAXIMIZING/CATASTROPHIZING

Maximizing and catastrophizing are cognitive distortions that involve exaggerating the positive and negative aspects of a situation and focusing on the best case and worst-case scenarios.

Maximizing involves focusing on the positives of a situation while catastrophizing involves exaggerating the negatives. For example, someone who is maximizing might think, "This relationship is perfect for me. He is everything I could ever want," while someone who is catastrophizing might think, "If I don't make this relationship work, I'll never get married."

The combination of maximizing and catastrophizing can create a cycle of anxiety and self-doubt that can be difficult to break. People who engage in this type of thinking may have a tendency to set unrealistic expectations for themselves and others, leading to disappointment and frustration when those expectations are not met. This can lead to excessive worry and negative self-talk, as well as difficulty making decisions and taking action.

Therapy and self-help techniques such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and positive self-talk can be effective in helping people identify and challenge these types of cognitive distortions, replacing them with more realistic and balanced thinking patterns. By learning to recognize and manage maximizing/catastrophizing, individuals can reduce their anxiety and improve their decision-making skills.

The diagram consists of two overlapping pink shapes. The top-left shape is a triangle pointing right, containing a photograph of a smiling woman looking out over a city skyline. The bottom-right shape is a triangle pointing left, containing a photograph of a woman looking distressed with her hand to her forehead. Text boxes with pink borders and white text are placed over each photograph.

**Maximizing:**  
exaggerating the positive factors of a situation, ignoring reality and blindly imagining a best case scenerio.

**Catastrophizing:**  
exaggerating the facts of a situation and becoming hopeless and fearful of the outcome.



## 10. COMPARTMENTALIZATION

While compartmentalization can be a helpful coping mechanism in certain situations, it can also be problematic if it leads to avoidance or denial of important issues. For example, if you use compartmentalization to avoid dealing with emotional problems in your personal life, you may find that those problems eventually spill over into other areas of their life.



Compartmentalization is a psychological defense mechanism that involves separating conflicting thoughts, emotions, or behaviors into different compartments or categories, and not allowing them to interact with one another. This allows a person to deal with different aspects of their life separately, without letting them overlap or influence each other.

Here are a few examples:

- Someone who is having marital problems may compartmentalize their emotions and not let them affect their performance at work.
- A politician who has a personal scandal may compartmentalize their private life from their public persona and continue to act professionally in their role as a public figure.
- Someone who is cheating on their partner might compartmentalize their behavior by keeping their affairs separate from their relationship and convincing themselves that the two do not intersect.
- Someone who has a stressful job might compartmentalize their work life from their personal life, so that they can relax and enjoy time with friends and family without thinking about work-related stressors.



## 11. BLAMING

Blaming is a defense mechanism that people use to avoid feelings of guilt or shame for their own actions or mistakes. By blaming others, they can shift the focus away from themselves and onto someone else.

For example, if someone is late for work and is confronted by their boss, they might blame traffic or their spouse for not waking them up on time, rather than taking responsibility for oversleeping or poor time management.

Blaming can also be used as a way of controlling or manipulating others. In a relationship, one partner might blame the other for problems in the relationship as a way of deflecting criticism or avoiding responsibility for their own behavior.

Blaming is harmful to relationships and often leads to resentment and a breakdown in communication.





## 12. OVERSPIRITUALIZING

Over-spiritualizing is a cognitive distortion that involves attributing supernatural or spiritual causes to normal events or circumstances. People who over-spiritualize frequently believe that situations in life are a divine manifestation or that every coincidence is a sign from God.

Someone who over-spiritualizes might believe that every difficult situation in life is a test of faith or a sign of spiritual growth, rather than recognizing the practical challenges and obstacles that need to be addressed in order to overcome the situation. This can lead to a lack of action and problem-solving, as well as a tendency to dismiss or deny the difficulties that need to be addressed. While spirituality can be a source of comfort and strength during difficult times, it's important to also take practical steps to address the challenges and overcome them.

Here are a few more examples:

- Someone who over-spiritualizes may believe that their car broke down because the God is trying to tell them something, rather than acknowledging that the car is simply old and in need of repair.
- When their credit card is declined, instead of admitting their personal responsibility to make timely payments, someone who over-spiritualizes may claim that God didn't want them to buy groceries at that store.
- A person who over-spiritualizes may believe that every illness or health condition is an attack from the enemy, rather than a natural consequence of their unhealthy lifestyle choices.
- A person who over-spiritualizes may believe that their success and favor in life or lack thereof is due solely to the strength of their relationship with God rather than recognizing the influence of external factors such as education, character, hard work, and support from others.



Our spiritual life is important, but over-spiritualizing leads to a distorted view of reality and a lack of personal responsibility for the circumstances of life.



## 13. DRAMATIZATION

Dramatization is a psychological defense mechanism where a person presents or communicates in an overly dramatic or exaggerated manner in order to gain attention or sympathy from others. Creating drama or conflict in order to draw attention to themselves is common in order to avoid dealing with underlying issues.

Someone who uses dramatization may exaggerate their emotions or reactions to a situation in order to elicit sympathy or attention from others. They may also create drama in their personal or professional relationships in order to avoid dealing with underlying issues, such as communication problems or emotional challenges.



## 14. FILTERING



Filtering is a cognitive distortion that involves selectively focusing on negative or unpleasant aspects of a situation while ignoring positive or neutral aspects. In other words, it's like seeing the world through a "filter" that only allows certain types of information to pass through.

For example, someone who uses filtering may receive a lot of compliments on their work but focus only on the one critical comment, leading them to feel discouraged or inadequate. They may also selectively focus on negative news stories while ignoring positive ones, leading them to have a negative outlook on the world.

Filtering can be a way of reinforcing negative beliefs or emotions, as it reinforces the idea that the world is a negative or hostile place. It can also lead to distorted perceptions of reality and feelings of anxiety or depression.

### Hint:

To counteract filtering, it can be helpful to practice gratitude and intentionally focus on positive aspects of situations. It can also be helpful to challenge negative thoughts and beliefs by looking for evidence that contradicts them.



## 15. ESCAPISM

Escapism is all about over-indulgence and the absence of moderation. People who use escapism as a defense mechanism use various forms of entertainment or activities as a means of escaping from problems or avoiding unpleasant or stressful aspects of the real world.

Through various forms of entertainment and other obsessive distractions, the goal is to avoid responsibilities or challenges by indulging in activities that provide temporary pleasure or diversion from reality.

Escapism can be healthy in moderation, providing a brief respite from stress and allowing the opportunity to recharge energy and creativity. However, excessive escapism can be detrimental to mental health, leading to social isolation, procrastination, and neglect of important obligations.

### Common forms of escapism:

- Substance abuse: (drugs, alcohol, or other substances)
- Daydreaming
- Extreme sports
- Social media
- Travel
- Looking for a relationship
- Reading or watching movies
- Artistic expression: Engaging in creative activities such as painting, drawing, writing, decorating or playing music can be a form of escapism that allows individuals to express themselves and disconnect from their problems.
- Shopping
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Online gaming
- Binge-watching TV shows





## 16. PEOPLE PLEASING

People pleasing is a behavioral tendency in which someone goes out of their way to meet the needs and expectations of others, often at the expense of their own well-being and personal boundaries. People pleasers may constantly seek validation and approval from others and may feel anxious or guilty if they do not meet the expectations of those around them.

People pleasing can manifest in various ways, such as saying "yes" to every request, avoiding confrontation or conflict, sacrificing personal time or resources, and suppressing your own opinions or desires to avoid disappointing others. While people pleasing may be driven by a desire to be liked or to avoid conflict, it can lead to negative consequences such as burnout, resentment, and a loss of self-identity.



### Hint:

It's important to set healthy boundaries and prioritize one's own needs and values, even if it means disappointing others at times. This can involve learning to say "no" when necessary, expressing your opinions and feelings, and taking time for self-care and personal growth. Being true to yourself and respecting your own needs and values is key to building healthy relationships and achieving personal fulfillment.



## 17. POLARIZED THINKING

Polarized thinking, also known as black-and-white thinking or all-or-nothing thinking, is a cognitive distortion in which an individual sees things as either one extreme or the other, without any shades of gray or middle ground. This type of thinking can lead to rigid and inflexible beliefs, an inability to see multiple perspectives, and difficulties in problem-solving and decision-making.

Individuals who engage in polarized thinking tend to view situations as either completely positive or completely negative. They may also struggle with accepting feedback or criticism, as they may view it as an attack on their character rather than as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

Polarized thinking leads to unrealistic expectations, strained relationships, and a lack of appreciation for the complexity and differences of the world around us. It can also lead to negative self-talk, as individuals may view themselves as either completely successful or complete failures, with no in-between.



**Polarized thinking  
destroys constructive  
conversations with a  
mindset that says  
everything is either:**

**right or wrong  
good or bad  
always or never  
black or white  
all or nothing**



## 18. OVERGENERALIZATION

Overgeneralization is a cognitive distortion where people make sweeping and extreme conclusions based on a single event or a few isolated instances. It involves taking one negative experience or aspect of a situation and applying it to all similar situations, people, or things.

For example, someone who has a negative experience with a particular type of food may overgeneralize and assume that all food from that cuisine is bad. Or someone who experiences a rejection in a romantic relationship may overgeneralize and assume that they will never find love or that all romantic relationships will end in failure.

If a person who overgeneralizes fails at one task, they may believe that they are a failure in all areas of their life, or if they are turned down for one job, they may overgeneralize and believe that they are not a suitable candidate for any position in that field.

Overgeneralization can lead to negative self-talk and a lack of confidence, as it leads to the belief that you are unsuccessful or inherently flawed. It can also lead to unrealistic expectations of others, as you may tend to judge people based on limited experiences and assume that all people will act in the same way.

### Common Examples of Overgeneralization

**All men are the same.** When you've been hurt by a man in the past, you may assume that all men are untrustworthy or unfaithful, and may be reluctant to trust or commit to any man in the future.

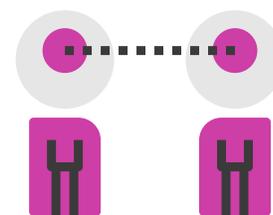
**You always do that.** This is a common phrase used in arguments that overgeneralizes a specific behavior to the entire relationship. For example, if one partner forgets to do the dishes one night, the other partner may say, "You always forget to do the dishes," which suggests that the behavior is a constant and unchanging aspect of their relationship.

**I never get what I want.** This is a statement that overgeneralizes a single negative experience to the entire relationship. For example, if one partner wants to go out for dinner but the other partner wants to stay in, the partner who wanted to go out may say, "I never get what I want," which implies that their partner never considers their desires or compromises in the relationship.



## 19. MIND READING

Mind reading is a cognitive distortion in which you assume that you know what another person is thinking or feeling, without any evidence or confirmation. It involves making assumptions about others' thoughts, motivations, and intentions based on limited or no information.



For example, you might assume that your friend is angry with you because they didn't respond to your message, even though they were simply busy or away from their phone. This type of thinking can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, as the assumptions may not accurately reflect the other person's thoughts or feelings.

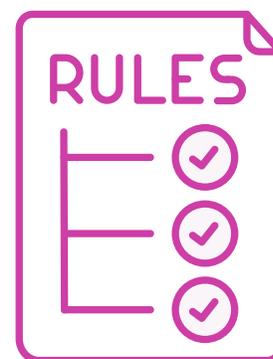
Mind reading can also lead to anxiety and self-doubt, as you may make negative assumptions about what others think of you or their abilities. It can also prevent you from effectively communicating with others and seeking clarification or feedback.

## 20. SHOULD

"Shoulds" are a cognitive distortion that cause you to set rigid and unrealistic expectations for yourselves and others, based on your own beliefs about how things "should" be. "Shoulds" often involve self-criticism, a sense of obligation, and an inflexible approach to problem-solving.

For example, you might tell yourself that you "should" always put others' needs before your own, or that you "should" never make mistakes. These types of beliefs can create pressure and anxiety, as they set up unrealistic expectations that can be difficult or impossible to meet.

"Shoulds" can also be imposed on others, leading to a lack of empathy and understanding of other people's perspectives and experiences. For example, you might believe that your partner "should" always agree with them or that their friend "should" be more considerate of their feelings.





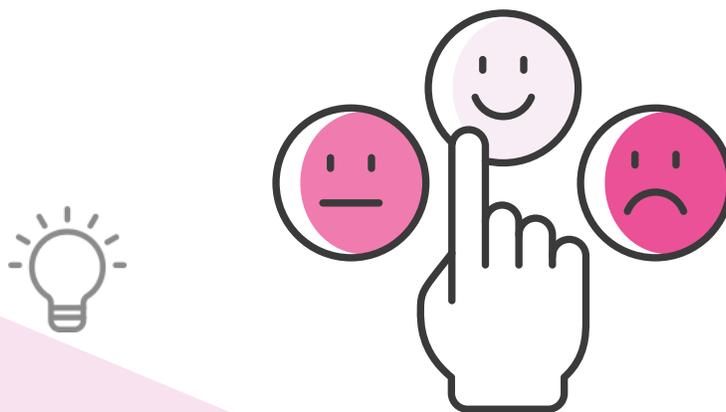
## 21. EMOTIONAL REASONING

Emotional reasoning is a cognitive distortion where you use your emotions as evidence for the truth of a particular belief or idea, without considering whether the emotion is based on accurate information. It involves assuming that because something feels true, it must be true, regardless of the evidence.

For example, you might be anxious about a situation and conclude that the situation must be dangerous, even if there is no real evidence to support this belief. On the other hand, you might feel happy in a particular situation and assume that it must be good for you, even if there are potential negative consequences that are being overlooked.

While it's important to pay attention to how you feel and use discernment in making decisions, if you make choices based solely on your emotions, rather than objective evidence or rational thinking, your decisions will likely be out of balance.

In addition, emotional reasoning can lead to negative thinking patterns and behaviors. It can also lead to misunderstandings and conflicts with others, as you may assume that others share your emotions or beliefs without considering alternative perspectives.



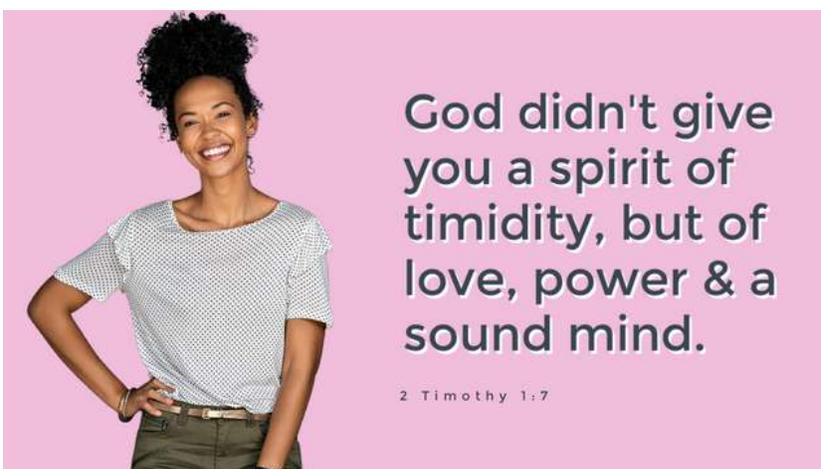


## 22. PASSIVITY

Passivity is a tendency to avoid taking action or making decisions, often due to a lack of motivation, confidence, or assertiveness. Passive individuals may be hesitant to express their opinions or needs, may struggle to set boundaries, and may avoid conflict or difficult situations.

Passivity produces many negative consequences such as missed opportunities, unmet needs, and a sense of powerlessness. Passive individuals may feel that they have little control over their lives and may struggle to assert themselves in relationships or professional settings.

Passivity can be the result of various factors, including low self-esteem, fear of rejection or failure, and a lack of assertiveness skills.



### Tips to restore your confidence:

Passivity can be addressed through self-reflection, assertiveness training, and the development of a growth mindset.

If you struggle with passivity, you can start by identifying your goals and values and developing a plan to achieve them. This may involve setting small, achievable goals and gradually increasing the level of difficulty as confidence and motivation improves.

It can also involve practicing assertiveness skills, such as speaking up for yourself and setting boundaries, and seeking out support from others, such as friends, family, or a therapist or life coach. By developing a more active approach to life, you can increase your sense of control and agency and improve your overall well-being.



## 23. AGGRESSION

Aggression is a defense mechanism some use to protect themselves when they feel threatened or perceive a threat to their physical, emotional, or psychological well-being. Aggression is used as a way of defending against feelings of vulnerability, fear, or anxiety.

Aggression is intended to harm or injure another person and can take many different forms, including physical violence, sexual abuse, hitting or pushing, verbal abuse, and even non-verbal aggression such as gestures or facial expressions. Aggression can be the result of various factors, including frustration, anger, fear, or a desire for power or control.

For example, if someone feels threatened by another person they might respond with aggression as a means of defending themselves. This could involve using verbal or physical aggression to intimidate the other person or establish dominance over them. Similarly, a person who feels insecure or uncertain in a particular situation may respond with aggression as a way of asserting themselves or protecting their interests.

Aggressive behavior as a defense mechanism can be a maladaptive coping strategy, as it can escalate conflict and create negative consequences all involved. However, in some cases, it can be a necessary means of protection.



**Aggression is not the problem. It merely provides evidence of a deeper soul issue.**





# DEPEND RATHER THAN DEFEND

Look over the Defense Mechanism Summary chart and select the top three defense mechanisms that you tend to use.

Record any lies you've believed that have caused you to defend yourself.

Finally, consider how you might depend on God in conflict resolution rather than defend yourself.



1

lies

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● \_\_\_\_\_

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HOW I CAN DEPEND ON GOD RATHER THAN DEFEND MYSELF

Blank area for reflection

2

lies

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HOW I CAN DEPEND ON GOD RATHER THAN DEFEND MYSELF

Blank area for reflection

3

lies

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HOW I CAN DEPEND ON GOD RATHER THAN DEFEND MYSELF

Blank area for reflection



# YOUR PARTNER'S TOP THREE

Look over the Defense Mechanism Summary chart and select the top three defense mechanisms that your partner uses.

Record any lies you think he might believe that cause him to defend himself.

Finally, consider any additional insight you have about how you might depend on God in conflict rather than defend yourself.



1

lies

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HOW I CAN DEPEND ON GOD  
RATHER THAN DEFEND MYSELF

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2

lies

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HOW I CAN DEPEND ON GOD  
RATHER THAN DEFEND MYSELF

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3

lies

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HOW I CAN DEPEND ON GOD  
RATHER THAN DEFEND MYSELF

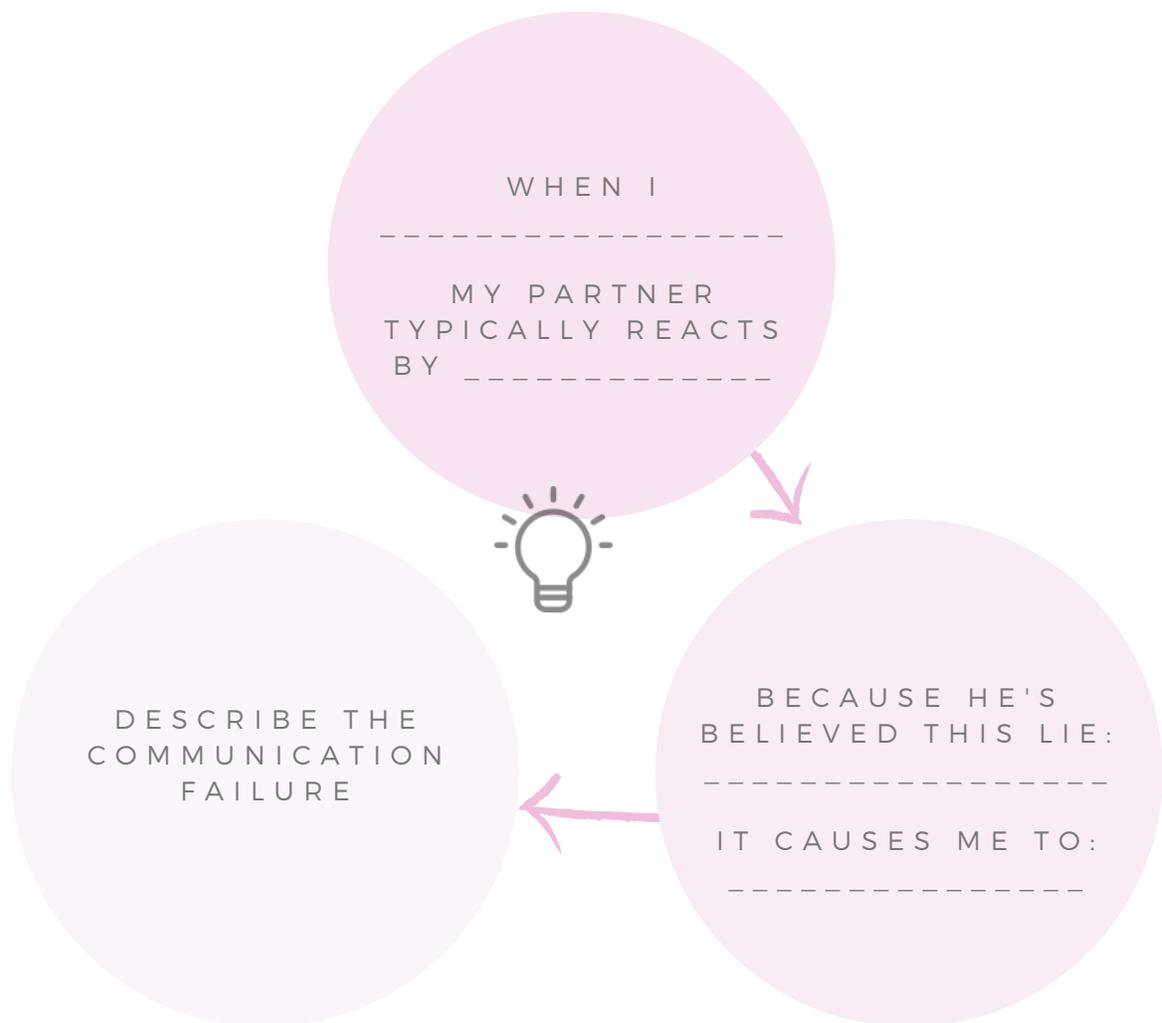
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# EXTRA CREDIT

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Seeing the communication breakdown in black and white can help you use wisdom to make better choices.



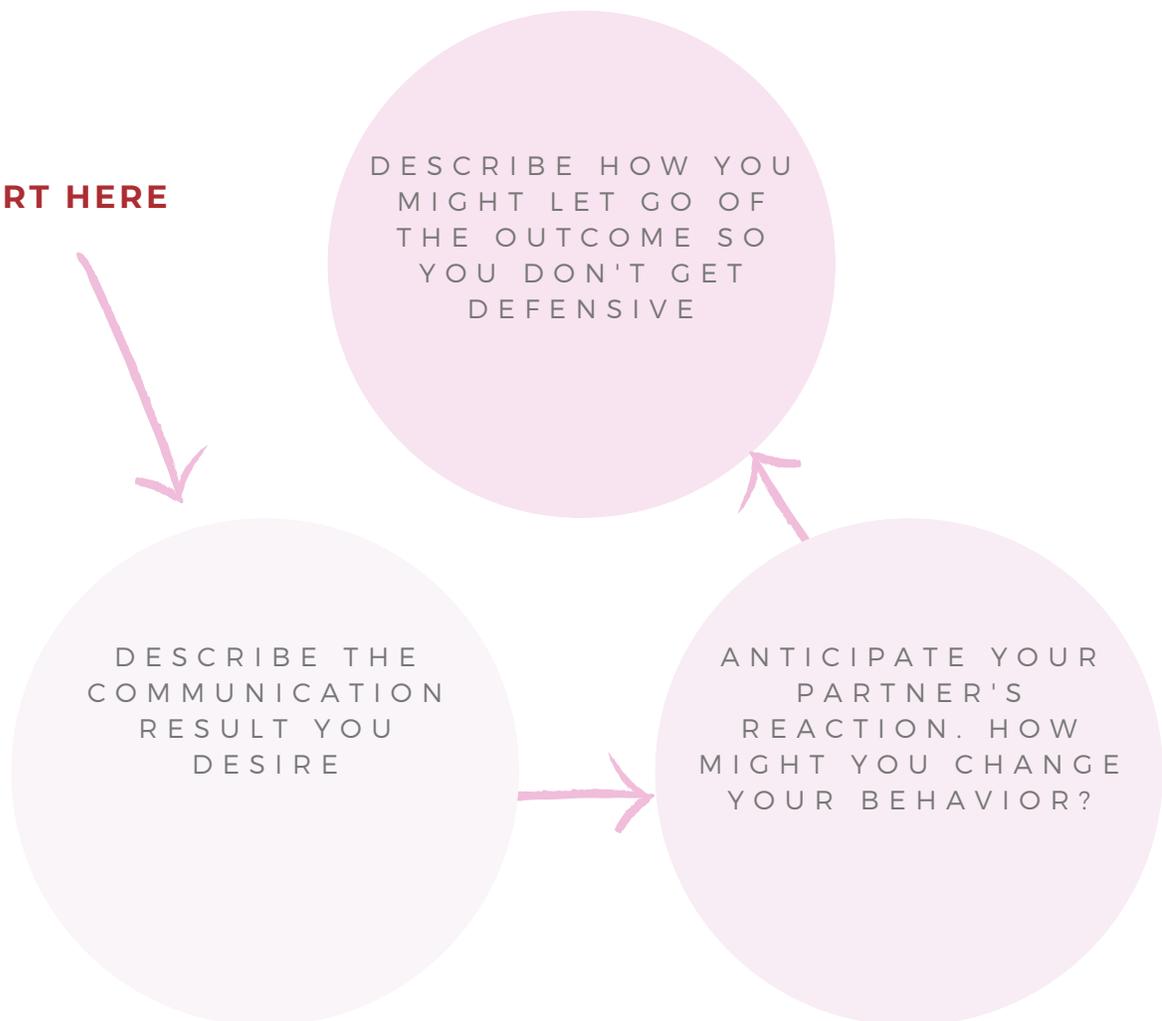


# BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

STRATEGIZING FOR A BETTER OUTCOME

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Healthy conflict resolution uses wisdom to consider the outcome you desire. Begin with the end in mind. In area C describe the outcome you desire. In area B, consider how you might change your behavior so that you don't trigger your partner's defense mechanisms.

**START HERE**



# Conflict Resolution

