

Handout

Defences, what are they?

Hi there! As we have now started including and talking about some of the issues you have been or are experiencing this is a good moment to introduce you briefly to the topic of defences.

We all have them; it is part of who we humans are so it is not as if those of us who have issues like these are singled out. Defences are present to some degree or other and can develop in anyone in a variety of situations so please know that this is not something that only you or people with your challenge experience.

What do we mean by defences?

When a person is faced with a fact that is too difficult for them to accept or cope with the person rejects it instead and may insist that the fact is not true, or make an interpretation of events that are in conflict with the facts and / or other people's observations. This may even be when there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

In other words they seek to defend themselves or, put another, shift the way they understand or experience the situation.

What kinds of facts or events are likely to encourage defences?

Mostly they are facts that uncomfortable for you to think about or remember. This can be information you have been given about you. Maybe a health challenge, a diagnosis or a condition you have become aware of. It may be something you did or said that had an impact on other people in a way that was difficult for them. To avoid having to assimilate or feel the impact of some of these experiences we can defend our own feelings and decisions.

Do defences always occur after something has happened?

No. Often we can begin a process of creating defences in the planning stage of an event. It could be that there is something you want to do that may have some serious impact on you or on those close to you. You may find that you defend this in advance of the event.

Is it always about my impact on other people?

No. Sometimes it can be true that something you want to do will have an impact on you. This impact may be hard and have some challenging consequences for you either in the short or long term; however you may minimise your or deny these consequences as they will apply to yourself.

It is important to remember that the person most likely to suffer in the medium to long term through defences is you!

Do defences come in different forms?

Yes, these are the key 3.

- Accepting facts but avoiding their impact.
- Accepting the details and the facts and agreeing to its impact but avoiding taking any responsibility.
- Rejecting the facts and impact outright.

Why is it important that I get to know about defences now?

- The better equipped you are when tackling an issue like the ones you are looking at now, well, the better.
- Defences can get in the way of recovery so knowing about them now gets you off to a good start.
- Learning about and developing skills to understand and manage yourself wisely and well can only help you develop and live the life you want. We want to start that as soon as we can.
- Becoming aware that you may develop a tendency to use different defences as a way of coping with what is going on with you both on the practical level and in how your feeling is the best way to cope with it. Getting started now gets you there sooner!
- Defences are part of your coping strategies but with consequences that make long term effects ultimately worse than the possible short term relief. Again the sooner you understand and manage them the better for you.
- Understanding and managing your defences will help you stay focussed on the decisions you are making around your Recovery and the impact it is having on both

you and others. This will hopefully mean less uncomfortable experiences for you and your family and friends.

Will you, my coach, bring this topic up in our coaching sessions?

Yes, if I notice it and have your permission to bring it up, however what you do in response will always be up to you.

Will you, my coach, always be able to tell if I am using a defence tactic about something?

No, not always. What we are aiming for though is for you to develop ways to recognise them for yourself so my ability to recognise it is not as valuable or important as your ability to self recognise and manage it.

That's about it. If you have any further questions or wish to talk about this further please tell me at any time in our sessions and we can dig into this topic further.

Author

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