Defense Mechanism Examples

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01. Soldiers exposed to traumatic experiences in concentration camps during wartime sometimes had amnesia and were unable to recall any part of their ordeal.

02. Paul, an aggressive child, had problems in elementary school as he would frequently fight with other children. Paul found when he entered high school that he could channel this hostility into sports such as football.

03. The young wife, after a bitter conflict with her husband, gives up the marriage as a failure and returns to the home of her parents. She again takes on the role of a dependent child who expects unlimited love and indulgences.

04. The habitual drinker may insist that he really doesn't care much for the taste of alcohol but feels that he is obliged to drink with his friends "just to be sociable."

05. A boy will sometimes react against the strong sexual attraction that he feels toward girls by becoming a confirmed "woman hater."

06. Mrs. Brown often accuses other women of talking too much and spreading rumors. It is rather obvious to those who know her that she is revealing her own inclinations in the area.

07. A six-year old child, who gave up bed wetting at the age of three, moves with his parents to a new neighborhood. During the stressful period of adjusting to his new home, he again wets the bed for several nights.

08. Students who are thwarted in their attempts to make a good showing on the athletic field may make up for this by working for top grades in class.

09. The high school teacher was criticized by the principal for having a disruptive class. When the teacher got home that night, he argued with his wife and kicked the dog.

10. The individual who actually likes to have others do things for him may be quick to criticize other people for being dependent and lazy.

11. It's common for children between the ages of three and ten to conjure up imaginary companions who have stable characteristics and rather predictable behaviors.

12. Robert would like to model himself after his favorite uncle, a respected chemical engineer. Robert plans to attend his uncle's college and become a chemical engineer in the future.

13. Even a top baseball player will sometimes strike out on an easy pitch. When this happens, his next action may be to throw his bat or kick the water cooler with all his might.

14. A student forgot that his dreaded final exam in geometry was scheduled for Friday. This seemed unusual as the date of the exam had been marked on his calendar for several weeks.
15. It is possible that smokers have graduated from earlier stages of thumb sucking and pencil chewing, neither of which would be acceptable behavior in adult society. Smoking is considered by some as a "socially acceptable" outlet for the oral need.

16. When Ann was being rushed by a college sorority, she discovered that some of her dresses were no longer stylish. She noticed what the most popular girls were wearing and bought similar clothes so she would fit in better.

17. After John was rejected by the admissions office at Yale, he claimed that he wouldn't enjoy attending such a large school anyway. Besides, he might receive higher grades at a smaller local college.

18. Mary has secretly disliked her mother since she was a young child. As these feelings arouse anxiety, Mary usually tells friends that she loves her mother very much.

19. Dick failed to complete medical school and was unable to reach his original goal of becoming a doctor. He did become, however, the best medical technician in his laboratory, and now feels satisfied.

20. The majority group of a culture may blame all the various ills of society on a small minority group. This is a process termed "scape goating" and is a factor in racial and religious prejudice.

21. When normal social contact with women is frustrated, soldiers hang pictures of pin up girls in their barracks. These pictures are symbolic of the dreams and wishful thinking engaged in by soldiers.

22. Teresa is not one of the most popular girls in her class but this doesn't bother her too much. She finds solace by dreaming how she will someday be a famous movie star loved by millions.

23. Tom Baker, a small town politician, is sure that he looks and talks in a way similar to that of Abraham Lincoln. Tom spends many evening reading novels and biographies about the life of Lincoln.

24. Mr. Martin carried around a letter in his coat pocket for weeks. The note which he somehow neglected to mail was an invitation to his mother-in-law to visit the family for several months.

25. Adults who were sexually molested during childhood often report that all the details of the painful episode have been forgotten.

26. One psychological theory holds that the desire for sexual gratification, if frustrated or blocked, may eventually find expression in painting or the writing of poetry.

27. James Riley has suffered heavy financial losses recently while playing the stock market. Upon trading his big luxury car for an old small car Jim informed his associates that he bought the cheaper car to do his part in the battle against air pollution.

28. The girl who was not invited to the school dance told her friends that she would not have attended if asked. She said that her teachers had assigned more homework than usual and that she was simply too busy for any unimportant social functions.

29. Sally is only four years old but she tries to look and act exactly like her mother. Last week, Sally went into her mother's bedroom and decorated herself with lipstick, face cream, and mascara.
30. Roger is a heavy drinker but had managed to keep this behavior a secret from his friends. He is sure that most people actually drink as much as he does and is constantly saying everyone else drinks more than him.

31. When a new baby arrives in the family, the older child will sometimes cry more than usually and be more insistent about receiving caresses from the parents.

32. A number of psychologists believe that social crusaders who advocate various forms of social control may in reality be struggling with their own unconscious desires.

33. Mike is always trying to impress his pals with how strong and independent he has become. However, when Mike has social or emotional problems, he still wants his dad to figure out a solution.

34. The women with a strong sexual drive may feel that most other women exhibit flirtatious behavior or wear revealing clothes.

35. Louise used to feel socially inadequate because of her rather plain physical appearance. She was able to overcome her lack of beauty to some degree by developing a poised and friendly manner.

36. Mrs. James can't understand why her husband has been so grumpy and irritable for the past week. It certainly isn't her fault that he didn't receive the anticipated promotion at the factory.

37. Tory is apt to become annoyed when he recalls his earlier conviction as a Peeping Tom. Tory has left his sordid past behind and now is a busy photographer for Playboy magazine.

38. Margaret is convinced that she received a "C" in her chemistry class instead of an "A" because of widespread cheating by all of her fellow students. She is sure she must be as capable in the chemistry course and in her other subjects.

39. Parents might be reassured to know that children who pull wings off of flies and jab pins in the dog may eventually find their niche in the areas of dentistry or surgery.

40. The mother of an unwanted child may feel guilty about not welcoming her child. As a result, she may try to prove her love by becoming overindulgent and overprotective of the child.

41. David Walters recently lost his executive position in a large corporation. Rather than seek a new job, David finds comforts and escape through drinking, as alcohol helps him with the details of being fired.

42. Reformers may conduct campaigns against pornographic literature in order to fight their own erotic interest in such material. They campaign to convince others of their own purity and goodness.

43. Linda Smith wanted to become a missionary, but she married after high school and was never able to obtain the necessary training. Despite her disappointment, Linda contributes generously to the missions.

44. It is typical for the person who is most difficult to convince in an argument to say that everyone else is stubborn.

45. Retired people who have been active and busy all their lives are apt to develop new hobbies and skills so that they can keep occupied in their later years.
46. Bob says he "could care less" that the coach scrubbed him from the high school football team. "The coach won't feel so smart when next year I'm drafted to play professional ball for the New York Jets."

47. Billy always teases and annoys his younger brother after he himself is disciplined by his parents.

48. Mary is very jealous of the new baby in her house. In fact, she is positive that the child is not really her brother but really some monster from another planet.

49. Joan has discovered an amazing coincidence in relation to her attendance at school. Every time a test in Spanish is scheduled, she oversleeps and arrives at school too late for class.

50. Teen-age girls are sometimes prone to admire the actresses of stage and screen. The result may be that the girls will attempt to dress and act exactly like the stars they emulate.