

Defense Mechanism Worksheet

Modified from LBCC Dept. of Nursing worksheet for NUR 101

For each situation, identify the defense mechanism being utilized.

1. You are trying to comfort the mother of a child that just passed away in an automobile accident. The mother was driving the car at the time of the crash. While discussing the situation, the mother suddenly exclaims, "Accident, what accident? Don't be silly."
2. Your patient was scheduled to have his IV removed at midnight. Making the rounds at 11:30 PM, you noticed that the patient was asleep, and you removed their IV. A few minutes later, another nurse on your shift ask what happened to the patient's IV. You explain, "He fell asleep and so I thought I might as well remove it since it was only 30 minutes early, thus permitting him to turn freely in his sleep." When the other nurse reminds you of the prescribed procedure you become irritated and remark "For Christ's sake Linda, you'd think you were only following a textbook instead of relying on years of experience."
3. As a nurse who has been at Sunnyvale Hospital for one full year, you are eligible for a salary and position review, but you do not receive them. This weekend your young daughter requested an increase in her allowance. Your immediate reaction was to snap at her and tell her she doesn't need it or deserve it.
4. Four-year-old Billy is admitted to the pediatric ward with pneumonia. The initial interview with his mother indicates that he is potty-trained and able to dress himself. After 24 hours in the hospital, Billy begins wetting the bed, sucking his thumb, and refuses to dress himself.
5. While working alongside a doctor in the emergency room, you briefly question her use of a clamp on a major artery which is not visibly bleeding. The doctor turns to you and says "What are you trying to imply, that Harvard School of Medicine turns out fumbling incompetents?"
6. Your patient is terminally ill with cancer, and her family was told that she wasn't expected to live through the night. Early the next morning, the patient's husband stops by to visit her and peeks his head into the room. Seeing no movement, etc. he surmises "She must be sleeping. I'll come back later in the day."
7. A nurse who always follows the rules, policies, and procedures at work (and encourages others to do so as well), often exceeds the speed limit on the way to and from work.
8. Upon learning that his wife has just miscarried their baby, a young husband goes to the lounge to research instead of staying in his wife's room. When he returns, he reminds his wife that miscarriages are totally normal (1 in 3 women have a miscarriage) and that they will be able to try again soon.

9. A young man had his right leg amputated recently. As the afternoon shift nurse, you notice that he refuses to practice with his artificial leg and/or complete his PT exercises, but sings all the time. You strike up a conversation and find out he had been a dancer before his injury. As you encourage him to do the work of recovery, he explains that he doesn't need to, and says "I'm going to be a professional singer. Would you like to hear the new song I'm working on?"

10. You are a nurse practitioner in the OB-GYN department. Recently, during a routine new patient consult, you discover that the mother is a smoker. You say, "Of course it is your decision, but medical statistics indicate that babies of non-smoking mothers weigh more at birth, and are much healthier in general. Quitting would also be healthier for you as well. Would you like information about our smoking cessation program?" The mother replies, "I smoke less now than I used to, and I only smoke each cigarette half-way down before I put it out. Besides, I know lots of other women who smoked and drank throughout their pregnancy."

11. Upon learning that her young child has leukemia, a young mother appears detached and indifferent. She doesn't want to hold her child, and asks her husband to make all the decisions. Over the next few days she comes to the hospital less and less, claiming that she too busy caring for her other children.

12. A young woman who was recently diagnosed with stage three ovarian cancer has been struggling with depression, and thoughts of suicide. She desperately wanted to become a mother and carry her own child, but that looks unlikely. Recently, she confided to you that she is starting a blog about her experiences and feelings, to help other women going through similar circumstances.

13. You suspect that Jim, a colleague at work, is struggling with addiction issues. Recently the medicine cabinet has been found left open and unlocked a couple of times and the counts have been off. Jim has been especially moody this week. He accused you of taking home the extra K-cups from the break room, and another colleague of stealing the stapler from the nurses work station.

14. A fellow nurse, Kate, constantly complains about your supervisor. Kate states that she is unfair, plays favorites, doesn't give her the shifts she asks for etc. Recently she said, "She makes me so miserable, I feel like I should quit." Yesterday, you walked past the nurse's lounge and saw Kate giving your supervisor flowers and wishing her a happy birthday. You overheard Kate say, "Congrats on another great year. I look forward to learning more from you in the future."

15. An elderly female patient does not agree with her doctors recommendations about her nutritional needs. Consequently, each time you encourage her to eat, she pouts, refuses to eat, and often sticks her tongue out at you.