

HOW TO RECOGNIZE SELF-PROTECTIVE DEFENSES AND THE LIES BEHIND THEM

One of the definitions of the Biblical Greek word for salvation (*sozo*) is the idea of restoration, wholeness, or healthiness. God's salvation is not merely forgiveness of sin so that we get to heaven someday, but a blueprint that includes our maturity and restoration. Becoming emotionally whole and spiritually holy is the journey God desires for each of us as we work out our salvation within the context of our relationships. (Leslie Vernick, The Emotionally Destructive Relationship)

A healthy person will learn how to defend themselves against hurtful and abusive relationships, while allowing healthy and nurturing relationships to develop.

A healthy person uses their defenses to keep them safe from those who would bring harm.

A healthy person knows when it is ok to relax and let their defenses down so they can enjoy open and healthy relationships.

Mature adults are flexible - they are capable of a range of defensive maneuvers ranging from reactive pain avoidance (moving away from a damaging situation) to constructive and adaptive efforts at problem solving (I see that Joan was hurt by what I said. I will apologize for hurting her with my words). They are able to meet their needs through this flexibility - the need to protect themselves, and the need to connect with others.

In contrast, adults who grew up in abusive homes or experienced trauma, often develop self-protective defenses and lack this flexibility. At the time of the abuse or trauma, these defenses were a normal reaction of the body to protect itself. Unfortunately many of these defenses are based on lies. As a person matures if these lies are not dealt with they will be carried over into adulthood and become strongholds in their lives. When the abuse or trauma has been resolved but these lies have not been dealt with the person operates at a level of defensiveness that causes isolation and fear that can influence a person's life. How can we know if these lies are still in their belief systems? What truths can we use to replace these lies?

Sometimes these defenses are easy to recognize but many times they are not. We must take time to get to know the person and the way they relate to themselves and others. This chart provides you with some of the most recognizable actions of a person believing defensive lies.

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SEVEN MAJOR AREAS AFFECTED BY DEFENSIVE LIES

AREA AFFECTED	LIES BELIEVED	TRUTH as found in God's word	SCRIPTURE
SPIRITUAL	A deep sense of being unlovable, unforgivable which leads to feeling alienated from her disappointed and angry ‘god’	A deep sense of ‘belovedness’ The idea of being fully known, fully loved and freely forgiven by her loving Father, God.	Luke 15:11-24 Romans 8:35-39 Ephesians 2:12-13 Ephesians 3:17 James 1:23-25
PERSONAL	A deep sense of being hopelessly flawed, inadequate and worthless Is inclined toward unbiblical shame	Shift the focus to God’s adequacy rather than her own inadequacy	Mark 10:25-27 Romans 3 Ephesians 3:20 Hebrews 7:25
RELATIONAL	Insecure in sense of belonging but has a deep need to earn acceptance and approval from other people	A secure sense of belonging and ultimate acceptance with a growing capacity to tolerate criticism.	Jeremiah 29:11 1 Corinthians 4:3 1 Corinthians 11:12-27
RATIONAL	Many lies about God, self and others	Increasingly truthful reasoning as the mind is continually being renewed by the word of God	Psalm 119:11 Romans 12:2 Phil 4:8 Hebrews 3:1
EMOTIONAL	Sadness, depression, anxiety and anger	Experiences a full range of emotions, usually expressed appropriately	Psalm 4:4 Proverbs 3:1-2 Ephesians 4:26 Romans 12:2
VOLITIONAL	Choices are made to gain and maintain acceptance from other people	Consistently responsible, biblically informed choices with increasing willingness to own them and their consequences	John 12:43 Hebrews 12:2 James 1:5
BEHAVIORAL	An unbalanced focus on relationships with others leads to “neediness” and overwhelming others	Increasingly mature, Christ-like actions, characterized by genuine conviction and compassion	Romans 8:14 Galatians 5:18 James 1:2-4