



## Shielding Worksheet

**Shielding** – Shielding is a way the mind may try to protect itself from information or ideas that may at first seem scary, stressful, hurtful, painful or uncomfortable to acknowledge or even think about as true.

Write down some personal examples or quotes of things you may have said. Then, circle which one or two below relied you may have relied upon the most with regard to discussions about substance use/abuse and potential coexisting issues:

### Common Shielding Mechanisms

**1. Avoiding** – Just like it says, avoiding involves efforts to avoid discussion. How may have you done that? Provide a direct quote of something you may have said:

- **Stonewalling** – For example “No way, just shut up and leave me alone” –
- **Intimidating** – Using anger to get people to leave you alone- For example –“the next person who talks about my drinking is getting their teeth knocked out!”
- **Pacifying**– Patronizing, using humor, or just changing the subject – For example -“Yeah yeah yeah, by the way did you see the game last night?”
- **Double-Talking** – Use of lots of words to confuse others or get them to leave you alone – for example – “Oh yeah, drug addiction is a complicated issue, I can see why you are concerned based on society’s ever-changing viewpoint and the effect of the media on the issue....blah...blah...blah...”

**2. Reasoning** – Coming up with reasons and excuses not to change. Come up with some specific examples of your own from your own experience below -

- **Tracing/Theorizing**– Like a scientist or a philosopher, trying to logically explain why things are the way they are which may sound like an intelligent theory – For example “ I drink because I was around it my whole life, so I learned it and inherited the behavior and can’t be expected to stop”
- **Normalizing** – Providing reasons why everything is normal – ‘Everyone I know gets high to relax, so what’ “There’s nothing else to do on the weekends so everyone does it”
- **Excusing/Explaining** – Just like it says – making excuses or providing explanations for one’s current behavior. For example “If you had to deal with my husband, you’d get high all day too”



**3. Shifting** – Engaging in discussion but then making an effort to shift the focus off of oneself onto someone or something else. Try to come up with more specific examples from your experience below:

- **Contrasting**– “Yeah but, so and so is worse than me...”
- **Softening** – “It’s not as bad as you think, I only \_\_\_\_\_” or “It’s just \_\_\_\_\_” “At least I never \_\_\_\_\_”
- **Dealing/Buying Time**– “Sure I’ll quit once school is over” or “I’ll quit once you quit”
- **Holding up the Mirror** – Putting the focus back on who is asking -“Oh yeah, what about you?”

**4. Complications Associated with Coexisting issues** – Issues such as depression and anxiety as well as life issues that increase stress often contribute to a lack of focus and ability to mentally absorb relevant information about ourselves.

- **Clouds** –Like clouds that block our view of the horizon, what distractions, obsessions, worries, stresses and anxieties might be getting in the way of personal growth and change?
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- **Intellectual Bulimia** – Sometimes we take things in but shortly after we lose almost everything we learned because we didn’t allow ourselves time to “digest” information. Is it difficult for you to absorb things even when you at first view them as relevant?



**Once again, simply stated - Shielding is a way to protect yourself when reality may seem uncomfortable or even unacceptable.**

**Consequences** – these serve as “Reality Checks” that help break through our “shields” into awareness.

- Ex – Arrests, Driving While Under the Influence, Child Protective Services, Hangovers, Blackouts, Overdoses, Loss of job, Injuries, Near death experiences, Family and relationship problems, Financial problems, etc.

**Awareness is like a window** – It “opens” and “closes” – If nothing is done and nothing changes after a consequence, the shielding mechanisms may return and then disbelief returns. That is why people continue to abuse substances over and over after multiple negative consequences because the negative consequences can be repeatedly deflected from consciousness using shielding.

What are some consequences of your choices that stand out to you?

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Are there any consequences that have not happened yet but you fear may eventually happen?

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**Protecting or Co-Shielding** – Co-Shielding or Protecting is similar to “enabling” in that it involves another person such as a family member or relationship partner who is shielding someone else from realizing or experiencing a negative consequence or any other uncomfortable reality. Protecting and co-shielding can involve rescuing, caretaking, covering up, excuse making, financing or otherwise supporting or overlooking another person’s negative behaviors (such as substance abuse) and related consequences.



### **Final Discussion and Analysis Questions:**

- 1. What shielding mechanisms stood out to you the most?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Besides drug and alcohol use, what are some other areas in which you could see yourself shielding?** (For example, shielding is common with regard to mental health issues, e.g. “I can’t be depressed” as well as relationship issues, e.g. “I don’t care what all my friends say about my boyfriend abusing me, I know that he is good for me”)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. Who was/is a protector or co-shielder for you? Have you ever protected anyone else from the consequences of their self-destructive behavior?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. What things have served as “wake-up calls” for you in your past or present that have made you start to think differently about your behavior?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4. What are some things that you can do in order to increase your self-awareness and prevent shielding yourself from different perspectives or uncomfortable information in the future?**