

## **Interviews - Defense Mechanisms**

All defense mechanisms: you can distort the **event**, **feelings** about it, **implications** of it (what you need to do, what hole needs to be filled, how it impacts others), and/or **meaning** of it (e.g. what is a father)

### **Example questions - relationship defense mechanisms**

#### **About the relationship**

How'd it start?

Who said I love you first?

Did you ever feel it was forever?

Tell me about a good day when you were together?

What regular activities did you do? (this is setting up for implications)

Did they help you do / learn stuff daily activities? (e.g. how to cook, shopping for clothes, fixing car, etc.)

#### **About the break up**

When was the first time you noticed something was wrong? Tell me about that day.

Did you have a day when you thought you were done with it?

Everybody has a lot of mess in break ups, what was yours like?

What was your best day after the break up like?

What was your worst day?

When was the first romantic relationship after /during the breakup?

How long did it last?

How did it end?

Has anybody you've dated since the break up said you had a problem?

### **Example questions - loss through death / divorce defense mechanisms**

If we're talking about loss of a parent -

I'd start with memories of positive events (I think we talked about this - maybe it was someone else),

were they around a lot? what did you do together?

(parts) - did you have special things in the summer? Hiking, fishing, etc?

Did they coach a sport team?

Did you spend a lot of time with parent and all kids, or did you have an activity, just the two of you?

Tell me about a time they disciplined you?

...

#### **What it's like now**

What's one piece of wisdom you've used recently from your parent?

What was the last time you wished your parent was there? What were you doing? What would you have asked them (or asked them to do)?

Keep in mind, denial and other defense mechanisms - there's the event, the feelings, the implication, and the meaning:

### **Event**

*(process: before, during, after)*

when did you first recognize problems in the marriage / the person was sick / first hear of the accident?

What did you feel?

etc.

*(during)*      What was the funeral day like / the day the person moved out?

*(after)*      What did you do the next week? Did you see friends? Did you play?  
Did you continue your daily routine? What did you do differently (in the week following the loss)

HOPEFULLY, these have got you some background and some rapport. You'll use that to compare with later questions to look for defenses.

Now, for the different aspects:

Feelings -

Many people feel sad or angry after a loss, at different times and in different ways. What was it like for you?

Others feel relief, even happy feelings for all kinds of ways. What was it like for you?

Ask about the last month or so - what feelings have you have had most strongly (for anyone or anything, work, etc.)

*(this may get a projection, or repression...)*

### **Implications -**

*(based on what things the parent did for them, you customize)*

Who do you go to for advice?

Who do you look up to as a role model for adulthood? Being a woman/man?

Who do you...go fishing with / talk to when you're really upset, etc (whatever that person did)

Who does the dishes / shopping / fix the car .... (again, whatever that person did )

*(if you know of the deceased / divorced parent's habits, ask if any are kept up)*

Do you still... wash the car every Sunday, get together at the same place for

Thanksgiving...etc.

Tell me about your idea for your wedding day / graduation day / day of your first child's birth / whatever event you think might be important for them. Can you imagine what part they may have played? (I think the defense occurs when people "just never thought about it")

**Meaning** - this is particularly true for those who say "I didn't know him/her"

Can you think of a friend or someone who has a mother / father that you admire? Tell me about him/her.

What is your ideal of a father / mother?