

Station Number

AFFIX CANDIDATE  
LABEL HERE

CANDIDATE No:.....

### Instructions for Candidates

#### Scenario

Jennifer Jones is a 33-year-old single woman with a history of interpersonal difficulties. She has frequently presented to psychiatric services with low mood or anxiety symptoms following a relationship breakdown.

#### Instructions

Assess her psychological defence mechanisms. Do not take a history of depressive or anxiety symptoms.

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO HAND YOUR IDENTITY LABEL TO THE  
EXAMINER**

Station Number

AFFIX CANDIDATE  
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Mental State Examination: Defence Mechanisms

CANDIDATE No:.....

### Instructions for Patients

**Answer questions based on the following scenario.**

**Do not volunteer information unless asked.**

This station tests the candidate's ability to ask about psychological defence mechanisms.

You are Jennifer Jones, a 33-year-old single woman.

#### Key Attributes

You are generally relaxed and willing to answer questions. It takes you a short while to be able to think abstractly when answering the candidate's questions, but when you realise that they are often about past situations or hypothetical scenarios, you engage fully with the candidate.

#### Key Dialogue

- You find it difficult to prepare yourself for problems that arise. You don't really plan for ways of coping with predictable problems. Even if you are aware that you will feel low, you don't seem to cope better.
- You don't have any special talents that help you cope with problems in life. You can't ignore 'danger' but you wish that you could.
- You have always felt that you get a raw deal from life. You think that people mistreat you, but you don't know why.
- You think that unpleasant events affect you greatly. You can't ignore them and you get very anxious worrying about them.
- Sometimes you are able to hide your emotions, but most people would say that you become quite emotional about stressful situations. You rarely feel nothing in such situations.
- You can't laugh at yourself. You find that you can sometimes laugh at situations that others find themselves in, but can't do it yourself.
- When you are stressed, you don't act impulsively. You have become aggressive in the past when you feel hurt, but wouldn't say that it is a common reaction.

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Mental State Examination: Defence Mechanisms

CANDIDATE No:.....

### Instructions for Examiners

***REMEMBER TO ASK THE STUDENT FOR THEIR IDENTITY LABEL AND  
AFFIX IT TO THE TOP OF THE MARK SHEET.***

This is quite a difficult station in which the candidate is required to assess the 'defence style' of a patient with probable personality difficulties.

The station tests the following areas:

- 1) Knowledge of psychological/ psychodynamic defence mechanisms
- 2) Ability to make judgements about such mechanisms from a short interview

The candidate has not been asked to assess symptoms of anxiety or depression. Neither are they required to assess symptoms of personality disorder. Rather, they are required to ask the patient relatively abstract questions about coping styles.

Station Number

Examiner's Name:

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AFFIX CANDIDATE  
LABEL HERE

CANDIDATE No:.....

Mental State Examination: Defence Mechanisms

**Marking Sheet**

*Please circle the appropriate mark for each criterion. The standard expected is that of a psychiatric Senior House Officer.*

Criterion	Performed competently	Performed, but not fully competent	Not performed		
<b>Approach to the patient – Rapport, empathy, and style</b>	3	1 ½	0		
<b>Mature Defence Styles (one point for each, up to a maximum of 4 points):</b>					
• Anticipation	1	½	0		
• Humour	1	½	0		
• Sublimation	1	½	0		
• Suppression	1	½	0		
<b>Neurotic Defence Styles (one point for each, up to a maximum of 4 points):</b>					
• Altruism	1	½	0		
• Idealization	1	½	0		
• Reaction formation	1	½	0		
• Undoing	1	½	0		
<b>Immature Defence Styles (one point for each, up to a maximum of 5 points):</b>					
• Acting out	1	½	0		
• Denial	1	½	0		
• Displacement	1	½	0		
• Dissociation	1	½	0		
• Isolation	1	½	0		
• Passive aggression	1	½	0		
• Projection	1	½	0		
• Somatization	1	½	0		
• Splitting	1	½	0		
<b>Overall Approach to Task</b>	4	3	2	1	0
Score (Max 20)	<input style="width: 100%; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/>				

<b>Overall Grading of station</b>	<b>Clear Pass</b>	<b>Borderline</b>	<b>Clear Fail</b>
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## Trickcyclists' Tip Sheet

### Notes

The Defence Style Questionnaire (DSQ) consists of 72 statements on a nine-point scale (from completely disagree to completely agree) assessing possible conscious derivatives of 20 defences (Bond, 1986). Based on the 88-item original, it has been revised by Andrews *et al.* (1989) to be congruous with the definitions of defence mechanisms in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R)* by the American Psychiatric Association (1987). These defence styles were combined into three clusters:

- 1) Mature defence style cluster
  - a) Anticipation
  - b) Humour
  - c) Sublimation
  - d) Suppression
- 2) Neurotic defence style cluster
  - a) Altruism
  - b) Idealization
  - c) Reaction formation
  - d) Undoing
- 3) Immature defence style cluster
  - a) Acting out
  - b) Autistic fantasy
  - c) Denial
  - d) Devaluation
  - e) Displacement
  - f) Dissociation
  - g) Isolation
  - h) Passive aggression
  - i) Projection
  - j) Somatization
  - k) Splitting

### Example questions

#### *Acting out*

Do you ever act impulsively when something is bothering you?

Do you get openly aggressive when you feel hurt?

#### *Humour*

Are you able to laugh at yourself pretty easily?

Can you usually see the funny side of an otherwise painful predicament?

#### *Anticipation*

When you have to face a difficult situation do you try to imagine what it will be like and plan ways to cope with it?

If you can predict that you're going to be sad ahead of time, are you able to cope better?

### *Isolation*

Do people ever tell you that you don't show your feelings?

Do you ever find that you don't feel anything when the situation would seem to warrant strong emotions?

### *Denial*

Do people say that you tend to ignore unpleasant facts as if they didn't exist?

Would it be true to say that you fear nothing?

### *Dissociation*

Do you have special talents that allow you to go through life with no problems?

Do you tend to ignore danger as if you were Superman?

### *Projection*

Would you say that you are sure that you get a raw deal from life?

Do you feel that people tend to mistreat you?

## References

Andrews, G., Pollock, C. and Stewart, G. (1989) The determination of defense style by questionnaire. *Archives of General Psychiatry* **46**, 455–460

Bond, M. D. (1986) An empirical study of defense styles. In *Empirical Studies of Ego Mechanisms of Defense*, Vaillant, G. E. ed., pp. 1–29. American Psychiatric Press, Washington, DC.

Bond T, Gardiner S, Christian J, Sigal J. (1989) Empirical study of self-rated defense styles. *Archives of General Psychiatry* **40**, 333-338.