

The Spiritual Warrior: Life Without Armor– By Stephen Grinstead

Identifying Your Old Armor Exercise

The very first thing to realize is that most of us, at some point in our lives develop protective armor. Psychologically these are known as coping tools or defense mechanisms—because at the time we believed we needed them in order to cope with situations that seemed very overwhelming to face without them.. Take this moment and suspend any judgments you may have about your armor. In this initial step take an honest look at how you learned to put it on and why you needed it.

Some Typical Types of Armor

Below are five of the most common types of armor or defenses people create over a lifetime, often during childhood. Others occur when we experience overwhelming situations where we may believe our safety is being threatened or even our lives are in danger. We will be going much deeper into these in the *Second Step of the Spiritual Warrior Roadmap—Understanding the Power of Your Story*.

1. Seeing the situation as less threatening than it really is. Each of these defenses comes with some mistaken beliefs – for this one you might tell yourself it’s not that big of a deal, we can just ignore it and hope it goes away.

Rate how big a problem this coping tool has been in your life using a 0 to 10 scale with **1 being barely a problem** and **10 being a really big problem**

Select Your Level: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Not wanting to think or talk about a situation is a coping tool some of us develop; especially if we don’t know how to handle it. When we get pressured by someone to look or talk about the situation we may use avoidance tactics. For example: It will go away if I get people to focus on something else; or It will go away if I create some trauma or drama (a crisis) to take the focus off of us and our problems; or we can even indulge in playing dumb or pretending it’s not really a problem and come up with all types of reasons why.

Rate how big a problem this coping tool has been in your life using a 0 to 10 scale with **1 being barely a problem** and **10 being a really big problem**

Select Your Level: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Another popular defense is justifying or creating reasons why it isn’t a problem. The mistaken belief might be that there shouldn’t be negative consequences because we have a good reason for our behaviors.

Rate how big a problem this coping tool has been in your life using a 0 to 10 scale with **1 being barely a problem** and **10 being a really big problem**

Select Your Level: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Sometimes when a situation is so overwhelming or traumatic we will disengage from the situation and repress our feelings about it – we convince ourselves that it didn’t even happen. Some people call this honest dishonesty. A mistaken belief that might surface is if it didn’t happen I don’t have to deal with it.

Rate how big a problem this coping tool has been in your life using a 0 to 10 scale with **1 being barely a problem** and **10 being a really big problem**

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Select Your Level: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. One of the most damaging defenses is blaming someone or something else. This is not about assigning accountability. What makes this a problem defense is when we have a serious problem and convince ourselves we don't need to manage it because it's someone else's fault. The problem is, even if another person or situation is responsible no one is going to fix it for us—we end up victimizing ourselves.

Rate how big a problem this coping tool has been in your life using a 0 to 10 scale with **1 being barely a problem** and **10 being a really big problem**

Select Your Level: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Using The Power Of Story

Now it's time to pick one of the five defenses and think back to a time in your life when this pattern was first used. This is the power of story. Many people may find it difficult to remember the first time. It that's true for you then think back to a time when this armor served you well. Then see if you can think of a time when it hurt you or kept you trapped more than it helped you.

1. Which defense did you pick? _____

2. Why did you pick this one? _____

3. Now create your own name or title for this armor. It should be a word or very short phrase that has emotional punch and when you see or hear it you will know this is yours. **Name Your Armor:**

4. Create a story of when you used this defense. It's important to visualize it and really describe it in as much detail as you can. Some people find it helpful to start with how old they were; who else was around; what they were doing; how they were thinking or feeling; how the armor helped them or how it hurt them.

Tell Your Story: _____

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Self-Defeating Behaviors Checklist

Below are some of the common habits that we may develop as a way to cope with situations that trigger our armor reaction. Not all of these may apply to you or maybe not in the words listed below. Take the time to read through these and then in the following section you will have a chance to identify, personalize, and manage three of your self-defeating patterns of behavior that you need to manage in order to enjoy your life as a *Spiritual Warrior*.

- **Procrastinating:** I put off dealing with a painful or challenging situation by finding excuses or reasons for not doing it now.
- **Distracting Myself:** I get too busy with other things to pay attention to managing the situation.
- **Saying “It’s Not That Important”:** I convince myself that other things are more important than effectively managing this situation.
- **Thinking I’m Cured:** I convince myself that because I’m OK now and don’t have a current problem there is no need to learn how to manage challenging situations more effectively.
- **Playing Dumb:** Even though a big part of me knows what I need to do to manage this situation more effectively, I let myself get confused and convince myself that I can’t understand what I’m supposed to do.
- **Getting Overwhelmed:** I feel scared and start to panic. I use my fear as an excuse for not learning how to manage the situation more effectively.
- **Playing Helpless:** I pretend to be too weak and helpless to manage the situation more effectively.
- **Wanting The Quick Fix:** I want a guarantee that I can quickly and easily learn to manage the situation more effectively or I won’t even try.
- **Mismanaging:** I try to manage the situation by using old self-defeating behaviors that makes things worse by using one or more of the following:
 - Reacting without thinking it through
 - Trying to handle it by myself without asking for help
 - Feeling helpless and expecting others to do it for me
 - Constantly changing my mind and not sticking to a plan

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- Detaching from the situation so it doesn't bother me
- Getting scared and using my fear as an excuse

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Personalizing And Managing Your Self-Defeating Behaviors

1. What are the three self-defeating behaviors that lead you to experiencing negative consequences? You can use the self-defeating behaviors above as a starting point, but it is important for you to write the descriptions in your own words.

A. Self-defeating Behavior #1:

• How could you behave that would stop you from using your self-defeating coping tools this situation?

B. Self-defeating Behavior #2:

• How could you behave that would stop you from using your self-defeating coping tools this situation?

C. Self-defeating Behavior #3:

• How could you behave that would stop you from using your self-defeating coping tools this situation?

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2. When you use your self-defeating behaviors ...

A. How do other people react to you in a way that increases your risk of using your self-defeating behaviors in this situation?

B. How could other people react to you in a way that would help you to stay away from using your self-defeating behaviors in this situation?

C. How can you invite other people help you in a way that would support you moving forward in your *Spiritual Warrior Journey*?

Tying It All Together

This is your opportunity to look at all you just accomplished and make a commitment to completing the remaining six steps in The Spiritual Warrior Roadmap. Please answer a few simple questions and then make the commitment to move onward and upward.

1. What is the most important thing you learned about yourself and your story by completing this *Identifying Your Armor Exercise*?

2. What are you willing to commit to doing different as a result of what you learned?

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3. What could get in your way and how can you overcome any obstacles?

4. Who can you pick to be your accountability partner and how can this person help you be successful.
