



SHIELDING

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

PROTECTING or Co-shielding is similar to “enabling” in that it involves another person such as a relationship partner, family member or colleague who is shielding **someone from realizing or experiencing negative consequences** or any other uncomfortable reality. It involves supporting by rescuing, caretaking, covering up, excuse making, financing or otherwise overlooking a person’s negative behaviours (such as substance abuse) and related consequences.

AWARENESS is like a window that “opens” and “closes” – people continue to abuse substances over and over after multiple negative consequences, because if nothing is done and nothing changes after a negative consequence, it is simply deflected from consciousness using shielding mechanisms.

CONSEQUENCES serve as “Reality Checks” that **help break through our “shields” into awareness**. These are Arrests, Driving under the influence, Child Protection Services, Hangovers, Blackouts, Overdoses, Loss of job, Injuries, Near death experiences, Family and relationship problems, Financial problems, etc.

COMMON SHIELDING MECHANISMS

1. AVOIDING involves efforts to avoid discussion:

- Stonewalling or **resisting** – For example “No way, just leave me alone”

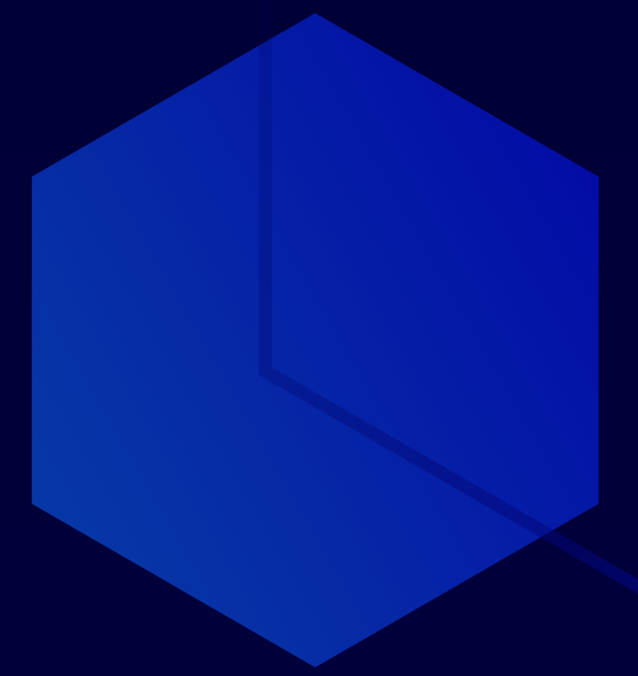
- **Intimidating**: Using anger to get people to leave you alone. For example: “the next person who talks about my drinking is getting their teeth knocked out!”

- In a Peace-making manner, you simply **change the subject**. For example: “Yeah, yeah, yeah, by the way did you see the game last night?”

- Double-talking: **Using a lot of words to confuse people** to 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 or coming up with reasons and excuses not to change.

- **Theorizing**: Like a scientist or a philosopher, trying to logically explain why things are the way they are. For example: “I drink because alcohol was a part of my life to this day. I learned to drink and inherited the behaviour that goes with it. Therefore, I can NOT be expected to stop using alcohol.”



- **Normalizing**: Providing reasons why everything is normal – ‘Everyone I know gets high to relax, so what’ “There’s nothing else to do on weekends, so everyone does it.”

- **Excuses** or providing explanations for one’s current behaviour. For example “If you had to deal with my husband, you would get high too.”

3. SHIFTING which means 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**. For example: “Yeah but, so and so is worse than me...”

- **Softening**. For example: “It is not as bad as you think, I only _____” or “It is just _____” “At least I never _____”

- **Buying Time**. For example: “Sure I will quit once school is over” or “I will quit, once you quit”

- **Holding up the Mirror** or putting the focus back on who is asking. For example: “Oh yeah, what about you?”

4. COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CO-EXISTING ISSUES

Issues such as depression and anxiety as well as life issues that increase stress often contribute to a lack of focus and a lack of the ability to mentally absorb relevant information about ourselves.

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

Reference:
www.takingtheescalator.com

Should you require interventions in this regard, you are welcome to contact Social Work Services at 079 880 5966/012 393 5472.