

# Recognizing our defensive reactions

When our emotional significance within a group, our likeability, or our competence are challenged, we react defensively. Our defensive reactions exist to protect us from ourselves. They can also impair our ability to respond in a productive way. How do you react when your significance, competency or likeability are challenged? Check all that apply. <sup>1</sup>

<b>Physical responses</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> tight stomach <input type="checkbox"/> fast breathing/heartbeat <input type="checkbox"/> suddenly tired or sleepy <input type="checkbox"/> inappropriate laughter or giggling <input type="checkbox"/> addictive behaviour (alcohol, drugs, shopping, food/"eating my feelings") <input type="checkbox"/> skin temperature change (cold/clammy; hot/sweaty) <input type="checkbox"/> becoming physically immobile or shaking
<b>Communication responses</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking offence/denial/attacking <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting to be right ("No question about it") <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting the last word/flooding with information to prove point <input type="checkbox"/> Endless explaining/rationalising <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal into silence <input type="checkbox"/> use of sarcasm <input type="checkbox"/> Being highly critical (making fun of others, belittling ideas) <input type="checkbox"/> Blaming and/or cynicism <input type="checkbox"/> Selective deafness <input type="checkbox"/> "I'm aware of that, leave me alone!" (defence of awareness) <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking too fast or too loudly <input type="checkbox"/> dominating the conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching or preaching
<b>Emotional responses</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Obsessive thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional rigidity (If I feel it, it must be true) <input type="checkbox"/> Jumping to conclusions <input type="checkbox"/> Mind reading <input type="checkbox"/> Magnifying or minimising everything <input type="checkbox"/> All or nothing thinking (inability to compromise) <input type="checkbox"/> Personalising everything <input type="checkbox"/> Being too nice <input type="checkbox"/> Playing "Poor me."

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Radical Collaboration: Five Essential Skills to Overcome Defensiveness and Build Successful Relationships*, Tamm & Luyet, (2004), Collins.