



**SEVEN DAYS
TO**

intense

**INTERNAL
CONFLICT**



DAY FIVE: DEFENCE MECHANISMS

Remember that exercise that looked at what your character and their love interest's beliefs about the world were? This is IMPORTANT. Because their beliefs are what drive their behavior.

These beliefs are probably subconscious.

To protect themselves, your character and their love interest have probably built up some **defence mechanisms** along the way. This stops them from getting hurt again.

Here are some examples of **defence mechanisms**:

- **Humor.** Maybe your character makes a joke anytime something serious happens, or plays the fool to deflect attention.
- **Fantasy.** Rather than deal with the difficulties of real-life, perhaps your character checks out by concocting elaborate hair-brained schemes that could never ever work. Or perhaps they daydream and drift off somewhere else...
- **Addiction.** Work, sex, drugs, alcohol, food...anything that can numb the pain temporarily.
- **Acting out.** Dramaholic? Tantrum thrower? High-maintenance on steroids?
- **Projection.** This is not about them – it's about the other person. *They* are non-committal/avoidant/upset etc
- **Social comparison.** Your character is not a jock/cheerleader/smart enough/pretty enough/tall enough/fast enough/cute enough/ etc etc etc
- **Reaction formation.** When your character is so anti-marriage that it's all they talk about, have formed care groups about, pound the streets with placards to protest about, that you begin to realise it might be because they actually want to get married themselves...but they don't want to admit that to themselves.
- **Intellectualisation.** There is a rational, logical explanation for everything, so instead of feeling their way through life, they think their way through.

As the love interest gets closer to your character, they're going to display more of their defence mechanism behavior. Why? Because they don't want to get hurt again.

EXERCISES

Activity 1: Defend yourself

What is your **character's** defence mechanism?

Activity 2: Emotional armour

Ever since <the poo hit the fan>, your **character** has donned a suit of armour.

- What does the armour smell like?

- What does the armour taste like?

- What does the armour feel like?

- What does the armour look like?

- What does the armour sound like?

- What's the chink — the weak spot — in that armour?

Activity 3: What is your **love interest's** defence mechanism?

Activity 4: Emotional armour

Ever since <the poo hit the fan>, your **love interest** has donned a suit of armour.

- What does the armour smell like?

- What does the armour taste like?

- What does the armour feel like?

- What does the armour look like?

- What does the armour sound like?

- What's the chink — the weak spot — in that armour?

Activity 5: Show don't tell

Write a scene in which you show the **character** displaying their defence mechanism in front of their **love interest**.

