

Defense Mechanism Test

The Defense Mechanism Test (DMT) is a perceptual personality test, assessing the interaction between an individual's awareness of stress and his/her psychological DEFENSE, and how this may influence the ability to perceive reality in critical situations.

DEFENSE mechanisms form a kind of psychological protection against threat or stress, a protection which is necessary in order to cope with or endure difficult situations, and of which we are, for the most part, completely unaware. Under great stress, or in a critical situation, DEFENSE mechanisms function as the 'shock absorber' of the mind.

However, too great an amount of DEFENSE, or a DEFENSE setup of a certain kind, may be a serious disadvantage, since it will prevent us from getting a correct perception of reality and thereby guide us to the wrong decisions, possibly with catastrophic results.

Studies have shown that in many accidents where operator error was the main cause, the operator - quite unconsciously - 'refused' to perceive or recognize the threat in time.

Certain patterns of DEFENSE mechanisms are dangerous when occurring under stress or in a critical situation. Also, too great an amount of DEFENSE will consume so much psychological energy that the capacity for rational behavior and decision-making is severely diminished.

The DMT was invented by Professor Ulf Kragh of Lund University, Sweden, and has been developed, validated and quantified within the Swedish Air Force

by Dr. Thomas Neuman. In several scientific studies the DMT has proved highly accurate in predicting performance and accident-proneness under stress.

The DEFENSE Mechanism Test is built on the theory that presentation of pictures at extremely short exposure times (milliseconds) will reveal subconscious personality factors.

The viewer may rearrange the contents of the picture, and since this distortion originates from the viewers (subconscious) personality, it reveals the kind and amount of DEFENSE mechanism in action. The DMT consists of pictures shown in a 'perceptoscope' an apparatus specially designed for showing pictures at extremely short exposure times. After every exposure, the test subject is instructed to describe what he has seen.

After coding and quantifying the test, the psychologist makes a careful analytic evaluation and over-all assessment of the results, also using indicators drawn from other sources of information. It should be mentioned that although the DMT is designed to provoke subconscious DEFENSE mechanisms, it is generally not conceived as unpleasant or disturbing by the test subject. Instead, the DMT is a humane way of retrieving important psychological data. Over the past two decades, it has been successfully used in assessing pilots (both military and civil), paratroopers, divers, car drivers, as well as in the managerial sector. The DMT is also in extensive use for clinical, psychiatric purposes.