

Defense Mechanisms

Defense mechanisms protect us from being consciously aware of a thought or feeling which we cannot tolerate. The defense only allows the unconscious thought or feeling to be expressed indirectly in a disguised form. Let's say you are angry with a teacher because he is very critical of you. Here's how the various defenses might hide and/or transform that anger:

Denial: You completely reject the thought or feeling.
"I'm not angry with him!"

Suppression: You are vaguely aware of the thought or feeling, but try to hide it.
"I'm going to try to be nice to him."

Reaction Formation: You turn the feeling into its opposite.
"I think he's really great!"

Projection: You think someone else has your thought or feeling.
"That teacher hates me." "That student hates the teacher."

Displacement: You redirect your feelings to another target.
"I hate that secretary."

Rationalization: You come up with various explanations to justify the situation (while denying your feelings).
"He's so critical because he's trying to help us do our best."

Undoing: You try to reverse or undo your feeling by DOING something that indicates the opposite feeling. It may be an "apology" for the feeling you find unacceptable within yourself.
"I think I'll give that teacher an apple."

Isolation of affect: You "think" the feeling but don't really feel it.
"I guess I'm angry with him, sort of."

Regression: You revert to an old, usually immature behavior to ventilate your feeling.
"Let's shoot spitballs at people!"

Sublimation: You redirect the feeling into a socially productive activity.
"I'm going to write a poem about anger."

** Defenses may hide any of a variety of thoughts or feelings: anger, fear, sadness, depression, greed, envy, competitiveness, love, passion, admiration, criticalness, dependency, selfishness, grandiosity, helplessness.

Defense Mechanisms

- A. **Rationalization** - the providing of socially acceptable reasons for one's inappropriate behavior
- B. **Denial** - refusing to recognize some anxiety-provoking event or piece of information
- C. **Repression** - the banishment of threatening thoughts, feelings, and memories into the unconscious mind
- D. **Projection** - the attribution of one's undesirable feelings to others
- E. **Reaction Formation** - the tendency to act in a manner opposite to one's true feelings
- F. **Displacement** - the expression of feelings toward a person/thing less threatening than the true target of those feelings
- G. **Sublimation** - the expression of sexual or aggressive impulses through indirect, socially acceptable outlets
- H. **Regression** - relieving anxiety by showing immature behaviors that have relieved anxiety in the past

D.M.	Fill in the letter of the appropriate defense mechanism for each example.
	Judy, who has always been aggressive & competitive, becomes the captain of her soccer team
	Chad teases and annoys his kid brother Nathan after he himself is bullied and picked on by his older brother.
	Diane (who probably has secret desires for Sam) accuses Sam of being in love with her.
	Despite overwhelming evidence & a murder conviction, Jay's mother refused to believe her son could kill someone.
	After the birth of his baby brother, five-year old Larry began wetting his pants again.
	Even as a child Leo engaged in risky, impulsive behavior. Now he has become a famous race car driver.
	Jessica, who had many extramarital affairs, suspects her husband Dan may be cheating on her.
	Wendy was embarrassed because she somehow kept forgetting her dental appointments.
	Roger, a major league pitcher, often hits the next batter with a pitch after someone has hit a homerun on him.
	While her husband is serving overseas, Danielle writes several successful and quite steamy (sexy) romance novels.
	After being scolded for being too rough with her baby sister, Debby dismembered her her favorite doll.
	Although John received F's on his Psych tests and didn't turn in 8 of the 10 assignments, he believes he will pass.
	A young boy will sometimes be the meanest towards the girl he is most attracted to.
	Soldiers tortured in concentration camps during wartime sometimes had amnesia for their experiences afterwards.
	The mother of an unwanted and "inconvenient" child spends lots of money buying that child things.
	The habitual drinker insists he hates the taste of alcohol and drinks with friends "just to be sociable."
	Anne, who likes to have others do things for her, is quick to criticize other people for being dependent and lazy.
	Sheila was not invited to the dance, but says she had too much homework to do & wouldn't go even if asked.
	Roger justifies his shoplifting by saying that everyone shoplifts.
	Jesse says he hates his girlfriend's best friend Ali, but he has been having some pretty hot dreams about her.