

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Denial - The most well-known defense mechanism. If we deny a problem exists, we do not need to give it our attention or take responsibility for it. Protecting oneself from unpleasant aspects of life by refusing to perceive, acknowledge, or face them.

Rationalization - Trying to prove one's actions "made sense" or were justified; making excuses.

Intellectualization - Hiding one's feelings about something painful behind thoughts; keeping opposing attitudes apart by using logic-tight comparisons.

Displacement - Misdirecting pent-up feelings toward something or someone that is less threatening than that which actually triggered the feeling response.

Projection - Attempting to put our responsibility on somebody else, i.e. *blaming*. It helps reduce our guilt, but it abdicates personal responsibility. Projecting promotes the status quo, since nobody accepts responsibility or attempts to change anything.

Reaction Formation - Adopting actions and beliefs, to an exaggerated degree that are directly opposite to those previously accepted.

Undoing - Trying to superficially repair or make up for an action without dealing with the complex effects of that deed, "magical thinking."

Withdrawal - Becoming emotionally uninvolved by pulling back and being passive.

Introjection - Adopting someone else's values and standards without exploring whether or not they actually fit oneself; "shoulds" or "ought to's."

Fantasy - Trying to handle problems or frustrations through daydreaming or imaginary solutions.

Repression - Unconsciously blocking out painful thoughts.

Identification - Trying to feel more important by associating oneself with someone or something that is highly valued.

Acting Out – Repeatedly doing actions to keep from being uptight without weighing the possible results of those actions.

Compensation - Hiding a weakness by stressing too strongly the desirable strength. Overindulging in one area to make up for frustration in another.

Regression - Under stress, re-adopting actions done at a less mature stage of development.

Ignoring - We admit a situation or pattern exists but avoid facing any changes. *Procrastination* is often associated with ignoring.