

DEFENSE MECHANISM

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By:

Student Development and Counselling Department



DEFENSE MECHANISM

Unconscious psychological mechanism that is used to reduce anxiety produced by unacceptable or potentially harmful stimuli.



3. To allow us to navigate painful experience and channel our energy in a productive way.

1. To protect ourselves from anxiety and guilty feeling due to the sense of being threatened.

2. To help prevent unpleasant feelings (i.e., anxiety) and feel better.

REASONS



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

A term created by Dr. Dan Siegel which is used to understand brain and body reaction towards stress and trauma.

1. FIGHT

Response used when you feel you're in danger, but you believe you can overpower the threat. Your brain signals your body to instantly prepare you for the physical demands of fighting.

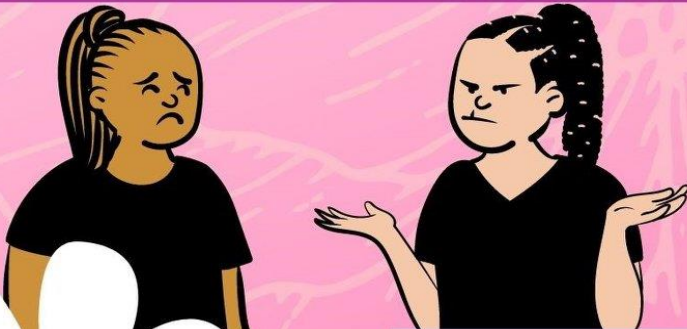


2. FLIGHT

Response taken by overcoming danger by running away. Your brain signals your body for flight. In this situation running away (escapism) is the best option.

3. FREEZE

Response taken when you feel neither running nor fighting is the best choice, this response makes you feel stuck.

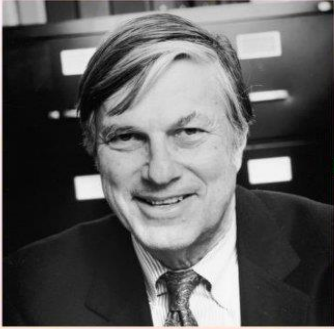


4. FAWN

Focus on appeasing people when the above three responses aren't helpful.



GEORGE VAILLANT & DEFENSE MECHANISM



George Vaillant is an American psychiatrist who is famous for his extensive work on defense mechanism. He explained about the concept of defense mechanism into four levels such as Pathological, Immature, Neurotic and Mature.

SCENARIO

Bob is a 19-years-old student studying in XYZ University. Let's see a few scenarios which he uses defence mechanism to handle situation that he encounters with in his life.



LEVEL 1: PATHOLOGICAL DEFENSES

1. Projection

Attributing their own unacceptable feelings, thoughts and motives to another person.

Scenario: Bob cheated on his girlfriend but he put the blame on her.

2. Denial

Refuse to acknowledge or experience the reality with the intention to protect self from dealing with unpleasant consequences and painful feeling.

Scenario: Bob was having temper issue which resulted in arguments but he refused to acknowledge his issue.

3. Distortion

Changing external reality to meet internal needs.

Scenario: Bob wanted his relationship to work, so he overlook his partner's toxic traits.

4. Splitting

Dividing beliefs, actions, people or objects into either good or bad.

Scenario: Bob thinks of himself as either a very successful or a complete failure person.



LEVEL 2: IMMATURE DEFENSES

1. Acting out

Directly expressing an unconscious impulse but not realising emotion is driving that behaviour.

Scenario: Bob storms out from the room during an argument instead of recognising his emotion and respond effectively.

2. Fantasizing

Retreating into fantasy to resolve inner or outer conflict.

Scenario: Bob imagines himself receiving an excellent result for his exam instead of putting effort to his studies.



3. Passive aggression

Indirectly or passively expressing aggression towards others.

Scenario: Bob avoids direct communication with his friend who makes him feel anxious and insecure.



4. Somatisation

Transforming negative feelings into other negative feelings which resulted in self-pain, illness and anxiety.

Scenario: Bob is going through his breakup and somaticises his grief through insomnia and severe fatigue.





LEVEL 3: NEUROTIC DEFENSES

1. Displacement

Channels emotion towards someone or something that is less threatening than the actual person.

Scenario: Whenever argument happens between Bob's parents, his mother tends to punish him to release anger that she holds on his father.

2. Reaction formation

An individual may go beyond to deny and behaves in the opposite way to which he or she thinks or feels.

Scenario: Bob is angry with his groupmates for not doing the assignment and wanted to complain but he completes the assignment on their behalf.

3. Repression

Unknowingly place unpleasant memory and thoughts in the unconscious realm, which is not accessed by the conscious mind.

Scenario: Bob couldn't able to recall unpleasant events that he experienced during childhood but as an adult, he is experiencing difficulty to form a stable relationship with others.



4. Regression

Reverting back to immature behaviour in handling issues by showing childish behaviour due to fixation on Freud's psychosexual stage.

Scenario: Bob throws tantrum when things didn't work according to his way.



LEVEL 3: NEUROTIC DEFENSES (CON'T)

5. Undoing

Taking back an unconscious behaviour or thought that was unacceptable or hurtful.

Scenario: Bob unintentionally insulted his friend, so he spends his time by complimenting and doing things for his friend.

6. Withdrawal

Removing oneself from events and interactions that could remind of painful thoughts and feelings.

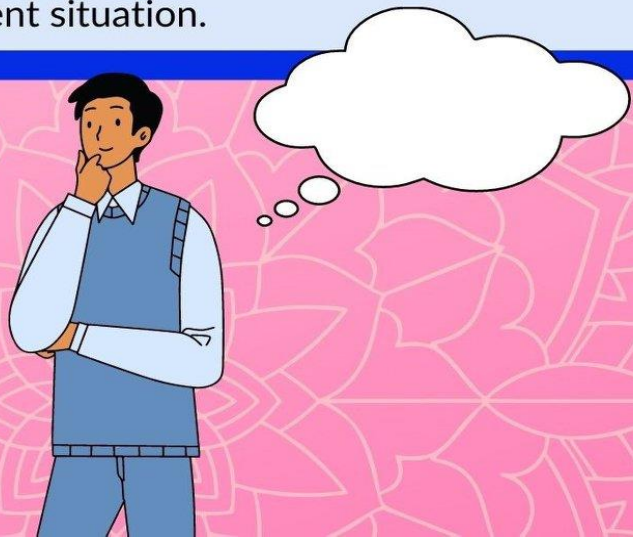
Scenario: Bob was feeling depressed, so he protects himself by staying in his room all day.



7. Disassociation

Temporary drastic changes of one's personal character to avoid emotional distress.

Scenario: Bob often daydream and zone out due to disconnected feeling from his present situation.





LEVEL 4: MATURE DEFENSES

1. Sublimation

Occurs when an individual manages to displace his/her unacceptable emotions into constructive and socially acceptable behaviours rather than destructive behaviours.

Scenario: Bob joined boxing class to express his anger through boxing.

2. Thought suppression

Conscious decision to delay paying attention to an emotion in order to cope with the present situation.

Scenario: Bob intentionally suppress his feelings of dislike towards his lecturer so he can behave well around him.



3. Altruism

Constructive service to others that brings personal satisfaction to avoid provoking situations.

Scenario: Bob uses kind words to avoid further arguments when he deals with his friend.





LEVEL 4: MATURE DEFENSES (CON'T)

4. Anticipation

Realistic planning for future discomfort.

Scenario: Bob prepares himself with possible ways to handle his possibility of failing his exam before checking on his result.



5. Humour

Overtly expressing one's unpleasant feelings through humour.

Scenario: Bob was called a bad name, so he started to refer himself with that name to diffuse the teasing.



6. Identification

Adopting another person's behaviour or characteristic unconsciously.

Scenario: When Bob started his internship, he adopts attitudes of his colleagues to be accepted by them.



Thank You