

COMMON DEFENSE MECHANISMS

1. **Denial:** We might respond in denial when it feels safer to not accept reality or facts to better deal with the emotional impact of painful feelings or events.
2. **Repression:** Instead of facing unsavory thoughts, painful memories, or irrational beliefs, it might feel safer to hide them away in hopes they may be forgotten or erased entirely from the overall experience. However, the memories don't disappear, they get held in and influence behaviors that can impact future. You just may not realize the intensity of that impact.
3. **Projection:** This is when some thoughts or feelings about another person make you uncomfortable. When we project, we're super imposing them onto the other person. You may dislike your co-worker, but rather than accepting that, you might to tell yourself they dislike you.
4. **Displacement:** Directing strong emotions and frustrations toward a person or object that doesn't feel threatening. This allows you to satisfy an impulse to react, but you don't risk significant consequences. A good example is displaying anger towards your child or spouse because you had a bad day at work. Neither are the target of your strong emotions, but reacting to them is likely less problematic than reacting to your boss.
5. **Regression:** Some people who feel threatened or anxious may unconsciously "escape" to an earlier stage of development. If they experience trauma or loss, they may suddenly act as if they're younger again. Adults who are struggling to cope with events or behaviors may overeat, chain smoke, chew on pencils or pens, or even avoid everyday activities because they feel overwhelming.
6. **Rationalization:** Some people may attempt to explain undesirable behaviors with their own set of "facts." This allows you to feel comfortable with the choice you made and excuse ill behavior, even if you know on another level it's not right. For example, a person turned down for a date might rationalize the situation by saying they didn't want to go out with them anyway.
7. **Sublimation:** This type of defense mechanism is considered a positive strategy because strong emotions or feelings are redirected into an object or activity that is appropriate and safe. For example, instead of lashing out at your husband, you choose to channel your frustration into kickboxing or exercise. You could also funnel or redirect the feelings into creative pursuits like; music, art, or poetry.
8. **Reaction formation:** People utilizing this defense mechanism recognize how they feel, but they choose to behave in the opposite manner of their instincts. For example, a person may feel they should not express negative emotions like anger or frustration but instead, react in an overly positive way. This also breeds suppression of authentic emotion and feelings which, can create overall confusion and second-guessing or lack of self-trust.
9. **Compartmentalization:** This psychological defense mechanism works to separate aspects of your life into independent sectors as a way to protect many elements of it. This allows you to avoid mental discomfort and anxiety caused by a person's having conflicting values, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, etc. within themselves. For example, a manager can share his nurturing and sensitive qualities at home, but blocks-off or compartmentalizes those traits at work and comes off as hard-nosed tough guy at work.
10. **Intellectualization:** When you're hit with a trying situation, you may choose to remove all emotion from your responses and instead focus on only the facts. You may see this strategy in use when a person who is let go from a job chooses to spend their days creating spreadsheets of job opportunities and leads.