

## Defense Mechanisms

1. **Repression** is the withdrawal from consciousness of an unwanted idea, affect, or desire by pushing it down, or repressing it, into the unconscious part of the mind. An example may be found in a case of hysterical amnesia, in which the victim has performed or witnessed some disturbing act and then completely forgotten the act itself and the circumstances surrounding it.
2. **Reaction formation** is the fixation in consciousness of an idea, affect, or desire that is opposite to a feared unconscious impulse. A mother who bears an unwanted child, for example, may react to her feelings of guilt for not wanting the child by becoming extremely solicitous and overprotective to convince both the child and herself that she is a good mother.
3. **Projection** is a form of defense in which unwanted feelings are displaced onto another person, where they then appear as a threat from the external world. A common form of projection occurs when an individual, threatened by his own angry feelings, accuses another of harboring hostile thoughts.
4. **Regression** is a return to earlier stages of development and abandoned forms of gratification belonging to them, prompted by dangers or conflicts arising at one of the later stages. A young wife, for example, might retreat to the security of her parents' home after her first quarrel with her husband.
5. **Sublimation** is the diversion or deflection of instinctual drives, usually sexual ones, into non-instinctual channels. Psychoanalytic theory holds that the energy invested in sexual impulses can be shifted to the pursuit of more acceptable and even socially valuable achievements, such as artistic or scientific endeavors.
6. **Denial** is the conscious refusal to perceive that painful facts exist. In denying latent feelings of homosexuality or hostility, or mental defects in one's child, an individual can escape intolerable thoughts, feelings, or events.
7. **Rationalization** is the substitution of a safe and reasonable explanation for the true (but threatening) cause of behavior.
8. **Displacement or Transference** is the redirection of an impulse (usually aggression) onto a powerless substitute target. The target can be a person or an object that can serve as a symbolic substitute.
9. **Identification** is an ego defense mechanism through which an individual, in varying degree, makes himself or herself like someone else; he identifies with another person by unconsciously assuming traits such as thoughts, goals, behaviors, mannerisms, emotions and behavior
10. **Intellectualization** is the overemphasis on thinking when confronted with an unacceptable impulse, situation, or behavior without employing any emotions whatsoever to help mediate and place the thoughts into an emotional, human context. Rather than deal with the painful associated emotions, a person might employ intellectualization to distance themselves from the impulse, event or behavior.