Quiz Defence Mechanisms

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Ego Defence Mechanisms

Ego Defense Mechanisms
We stated earlier that the ego's job was to satisfy the id's impulses, not offend the moralistic character of the superego, while still taking into consideration the reality of the situation. We also stated that this was not an easy job. Think of the id as the 'devil on your shoulder' and the superego as the 'angel of your shoulder.' We don't want either one to get too strong so we talk to both of them, hear their perspective and then make a decision. This decision is the ego talking, the one looking for that healthy balance.

Before we can talk more about this, we need to understand what drives the id, ego, and superego. According to Freud, we only have two drives; sex and aggression. In other words, everything we do is motivated by one of these two drives.
Ego Defence Mechanisms

Id = devil on your shoulder
Superego = angel on your shoulder
Ego = manager.
Guess the defence Mech?

Examples:

- Slamming a door instead of hitting as person, yelling at your spouse after an argument with your boss.
- Student with low grade shouts at little sister.
Displacement

Def:

taking out impulses on a less threatening target

Examples:

- slamming a door instead of hitting as person, yelling at your spouse after an argument with your boss.

- Student with low grade shouts at little sister.
Guess the defence Mech?

Example:

focusing on the
details of a funeral
as opposed to the
sadness and grief

• After being told the
  patient has a cancer,
  he studies physiology
  and treatment without
  experiencing any emotion
Intellectualization

Def: avoiding unacceptable emotions by focusing on the intellectual aspects.

Example: focusing on the details of a funeral as opposed to the sadness and grief.

• After being told the patient has a cancer, he studies physiology and treatment without experiencing any emotion.
Guess the defence Mech?

Example: when losing an argument, you state "You're just Stupid;"

- Man who is quite critical of others thinks that people are joking about his appearance
Projection

Def:
attributing/placing unacceptable impulses in yourself onto someone else

Example:
when losing an argument, you state "You're just Stupid;"

• Man who is quite critical of others thinks that people are joking about his appearance
Rationalization

Def: supplying a logical or rational reason as opposed to the real reason

Examples:
- stating that you were fired because you didn't kiss up to the boss, when the real reason was your poor performance.
- A man cheats on his income tax return and tells himself everyone else does it.
Reaction Formation

Def:

taking the opposite belief because the true belief causes anxiety

having a bias against a particular race or culture and then embracing that race or culture to the extreme

• A woman who dislikes her mother in law is always very nice to her
Regression

Def:

returning to a previous stage of development

sitting in a corner and crying after hearing bad news; throwing a temper tantrum when you don't get your way
Repression

Def:
pulling into the unconscious

Examples:
forgetting sexual abuse from your childhood due to the trauma and anxiety

• Unconsciously keeping unacceptable feelings out of awareness

• Examples:
A man is jealous of a good friend's success but is unaware of his feelings
Def:
acting out unacceptable impulses in a socially acceptable way

Example:
sublimating your aggressive impulses toward a career as a boxer; becoming a surgeon because of your desire to cut; lifting weights to release 'pent up' energy
Suppression

- Def: pushing into the unconscious
- trying to forget something that causes you anxiety

- Def: Consciously keeping unacceptable feelings and thoughts out of awareness

- Example:
  - Student during exams keeps distressful thoughts out to finish test
Denial

denial

arguing against an anxiety provoking stimuli by stating it doesn't exist

denying that your physician's diagnosis of cancer is correct and seeking a second opinion

- Manager tells employee he may have to fire him. On the way home he shops for a new car
Vaillant's categorization of defense mechanisms
Level 1 Pathological

The mechanisms on this level, when predominating, almost always are severely pathological. These four defenses, in conjunction, permit one to effectively rearrange external experiences to eliminate the need to cope with reality. The pathological users of these mechanisms frequently appear irrational or insane to others. These are the "psychotic" defenses, common in overt psychosis. However, they are found in dreams and throughout childhood as well.
Level 1 Pathological

- Severely pathological
- Frequent appear irrational/ insane to others
- Psychotic defences/ commen in overt psychosis
- Found in dreams and throughout childhood
Level 1 Pathological

**Delusional Projection**: Grossly frank delusions about external reality, usually of a persecutory nature.

**Denial**: Refusal to accept external reality because it is too threatening; arguing against an anxiety-provoking stimulus by stating it doesn't exist; resolution of emotional conflict and reduction of anxiety by refusing to perceive or consciously acknowledge the more unpleasant aspects of external reality.

**Distortion**: A gross reshaping of external reality to meet internal needs.
Level 1 Pathological

**Splitting**: A primitive defense. Negative and positive impulses are split off and unintegrated. Fundamental example: An individual views other people as either innately good or innately evil, rather than a whole continuous being.

**Extreme projection**: The blatant denial of a moral or psychological deficiency, which is perceived as a deficiency in another individual or group.
Level 1 Pathological

Severely pathological
• Frequent appear irrational/ insane to others
• Psychotic defences/ commen in overt psychosis
• Found in dreams and throughout childhood
These mechanisms are often present in adults and more commonly present in adolescents. These mechanisms lessen distress and anxiety provoked by threatening people or by uncomfortable reality. People who excessively use such defenses are seen as socially undesirable in that they are immature, difficult to deal with and seriously out of touch with reality. These are the so-called "immature" defenses and overuse almost always leads to serious problems in a person's ability to cope effectively. These defenses are often seen in severe depression and personality disorders. In adolescence, the occurrence of all of these defenses is normal.
Level 2 - Immature

Most often in adults
Often in severe depression & Personality disorders
In adolescence, all can be normal
Socially undesirable
II- Immature defences

**Acting out**: Direct expression of an unconscious wish or impulse in action, without conscious awareness of the emotion that drives that expressive behavior.

**Fantasy**: Tendency to retreat into fantasy in order to resolve inner and outer conflicts.

**Idealization**: Unconsciously choosing to perceive another individual as having more positive qualities than he or she may actually have.

**Passive aggression**: Aggression towards others expressed indirectly or passively such as using procrastination.

**Somatization**: The transformation of negative feelings towards others into negative feelings toward self, pain, illness, and anxiety.
II- Immature defences

**Projection:** Projection is a primitive form of paranoia. Projection also reduces anxiety by allowing the expression of the undesirable impulses or desires without becoming consciously aware of them; attributing one's own unacknowledged unacceptable/unwanted thoughts and emotions to another; includes severe prejudice, severe jealousy, hypervigilance to external danger, and "injustice collecting". It is shifting one's unacceptable thoughts, feelings and impulses within oneself onto someone else, such that those same thoughts, feelings, beliefs and motivations are perceived as being possessed by the other.

**Projective identification:** The object of projection invokes in that person precisely the thoughts, feelings or behaviors projected.
These mechanisms are considered neurotic, but fairly common in adults. Such defenses have short-term advantages in coping, but can often cause long-term problems in relationships, work and in enjoying life when used as one's primary style of coping with the world.
Level 3 - Neurotic

• Ρεαχτιον φόρματιον: Converting unconscious wishes or impulses that are perceived to be dangerous into their opposites; behavior that is completely the opposite of what one really wants or feels; taking the opposite belief because the true belief causes anxiety. This defense can work effectively for coping in the short term, but will eventually break down.

• Ρεγρεσσιον: Temporary reversion of the ego to an earlier stage of development rather than handling unacceptable impulses in a more adult way.

• Ρεπρεσσιον: The process of attempting to repel desires towards pleasurable instincts, caused by a threat of suffering if the desire is satisfied; the desire is moved to the unconscious in the attempt to prevent it from entering consciousness seemingly unexplainable naivety, memory lapse or lack of awareness of one's own situation and condition; the emotion is conscious, but the idea behind it is absent.

• Υνδοινγ: A person tries to 'undo' an unhealthy, destructive or otherwise threatening thought by engaging in contrary behavior.

• Rationalization (making excuses)

• Withdrawal: Withdrawal is a more severe form of defense. It entails removing oneself from events, stimuli, interactions, etc… that could remind one of painful thoughts and feelings.
Level 3 - Neurotic

• **Δισπλαχεµεντ**: Defense mechanism that shifts sexual or aggressive impulses to a more acceptable or less threatening target; redirecting emotion to a safer outlet; separation of emotion from its real object and redirection of the intense emotion toward someone or something that is less offensive or threatening in order to avoid dealing directly with what is frightening or threatening. For example, a mother may yell at her child because she is angry with her husband.

• **Δισσοχιατιον**: Temporary drastic modification of one's personal identity or character to avoid emotional distress; separation or postponement of a feeling that normally would accompany a situation or thought.

• **Ηψποχονδριασισ**: An excessive preoccupation or worry about having a serious illness.

• **Ιντελλεχτυατιον**: A form of isolation; concentrating on the intellectual components of a situation so as to distance oneself from the associated anxiety-provoking emotions; separation of emotion from ideas; thinking about wishes in formal, affectively bland terms and not acting on them; avoiding unacceptable emotions by focusing on the intellectual aspects (e.g. isolation, rationalization, ritual, undoing, compensation, magical thinking).

• **Ισολατιον**: Separation of feelings from ideas and events, for example, describing a murder with graphic details with no emotional response.

: Where a person convinces him or herself that no wrong was done and that all is or was all right through faulty and false reasoning. An indicator of this defense mechanism can be seen socially as the formulation of convenient excuses - making excuses.
Level 4 Mature

These are commonly found among emotionally healthy adults and are considered mature, even though many have their origins in an immature stage of development. They have been adapted through the years in order to optimize success in life and relationships.

The use of these defenses enhances pleasure and feelings of control. These defenses help us integrate conflicting emotions and thoughts, while still remaining effective.

Those who use these mechanisms are usually considered virtuous.
Level 4 Mature

Altruism: Constructive service to others that brings pleasure and personal satisfaction.

Anticipation: Realistic planning for future discomfort.

Humor: Overt expression of ideas and feelings (especially those that are unpleasant to focus on or too terrible to talk about) that gives pleasure to others. The thoughts retain a portion of their innate distress, but they are "skirted round" by witticism.

Identification: The unconscious modeling of one's self upon another person's character and behavior.
**Introjection**: Identifying with some idea or object so deeply that it becomes a part of that person.

**Sublimation**: Transformation of negative emotions or instincts into positive actions, behavior, or emotion.

**Thought suppression**: The conscious process of pushing thoughts into the preconscious; the conscious decision to delay paying attention to an emotion or need in order to cope with the present reality; making it possible to later access uncomfortable or distressing emotions while accepting them.
Freud Psyche Structures

- **Id**: a selfish, primitive, childish, pleasure-oriented part of the personality with no ability to delay gratification.

- **Superego**: internalized societal and parental standards of "good" and "bad", "right" and "wrong" behavior.

- **Ego**: the moderator between the id and superego which seeks compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as our "sense of time and place",
Primary and Secondary Processes

- Primary and secondary processes

In the ego, there are two ongoing processes. First there is the unconscious primary process, where the thoughts are not organized in a coherent way, the feelings can shift, contradictions are not in conflict or are just not perceived that way, and condensations arise. There is no logic and no time line. Lust is important for this process. By contrast, there is the conscious secondary process, where strong boundaries are set and thoughts must be organized in a coherent way. Most
The reality principle

Id impulses are not appropriate in civilized society, so society presses us to modify the pleasure principle in favor of the reality principle; that is, the requirements of the external world.
The superego forms as the child grows and learns parental and social standards. The superego consists of two structures: the conscience, which stores information about what is "bad" and what has been punished and the ego ideal, which stores information about what is "good" and what one "should" do or be.
When anxiety becomes too overwhelming, it is then the place of the ego to employ defense mechanisms to protect the individual. Feelings of guilt, embarrassment and shame often accompany the feeling of anxiety. In the first definitive book on defense mechanisms, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1936),[6] Anna Freud introduced the concept of signal anxiety; she stated that it was "not directly a conflicted instinctual tension but a signal occurring in the ego of an anticipated instinctual tension". The signaling function of anxiety is thus seen as a crucial one and biologically adapted to warn the organism of danger or a threat to its equilibrium. The anxiety is felt as an increase in bodily or mental tension and the signal that the organism receives in this way allows it the possibility of taking defensive action towards the perceived danger. Defense mechanisms work by distorting the id impulses into acceptable forms, or by unconscious or conscious blockage of these impulses.
Ego's use of defense mechanism
Borderline Personality Disorder

Defense mechanisms

The value of characterizing defense mechanisms specific to BPD has been demonstrated in empirical studies and is relevant clinically. Patients with BPD have been shown to use the defenses of splitting and acting out more than non-BPD patients, and the defenses of suppression, sublimation, and humor less than, non-BPD patients (Bond et al., 1994). In another study, hypochondriasis, projection, acting out, and undoing were found to discriminate patients with BPD from patients with other PDs (Zanarini et al., 1990). In clinical practice the understanding of defenses enables the therapist to maintain mental closeness with the patient and allows a broader understanding of the underlying anxieties driving the patient. Through, splitting and projective identification, idealization, denial, omnipotence, and devaluation, the world in BPO is split into good and bad, black and white, friend or foe.