



# LEVELS OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS

operates unconsciously (intrapsychic)

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## PRIMITIVE

### ACTING OUT

– Entails a strong display of emotions/behavior otherwise known as “temper tantrums.”  
USES: Hide underlying feelings or ideas.

### BLOCKING

Inhibits thinking temporarily. May include affects & impulses. Can resemble repression, except that some tension is felt.  
USES: Avoid uncomfortable knowledge, affect, & thoughts.

### FANTASY

Retreats autistically into imaginary life.  
USES: Avoid intimacy, facing uncomfortable or unacceptable feelings, & obtain gratification.

### IDENTIFICATION

Overly identifying with love object. Adoption of qualities or symptom of one about whom feels guilty. Identifies with aggressor.  
USES: To defend against anxiety or pain, real or threatened.

### INTROJECTION

– The process of taking in, “swallowing”, or emulating the values & standards of others. Obliterates distinction between subject and object.  
USES: Avoids painful awareness of separateness or threat of loss.

### PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

– Expresses aggression indirectly through failures, procrastination, making side comments or insults, etc.

### PROJECTION

– Attributing our own unacceptable thoughts, feelings, desires, behaviors & motives to others.  
USES: Mechanism for self-deception.

### REGRESSION

– Reverting to a less mature form of behavior.  
USES: Cope with extreme stress and/or to cling to immature & inappropriate behaviors.

### SOMATIZATION

– Transforming negative feelings towards others into negative feelings towards self in a manner of pain, illness, & anxiety.