



LEVELS OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS

operates unconsciously (intrapsychic)

4

NARCISSISTIC

DENIAL

– Negation of sensory data, obvious external aspects of reality by pretending it is false or does not exist.

USES: To avoid awareness of pain aspect of reality, experience, feelings, etc.

DISTORTION

– Reshapes external reality to suit inner needs. Includes beliefs, delusions, hallucinations, etc.

USES: To sustain feelings of superiority & entitlement.

PRIMITIVE IDEALIZATION

– Endows either “all good, omnipotent” or “all bad.” May inflate external objects & exaggerate positive qualities about self or others.

USES: Maintain feelings of superiority, uniqueness, specialness, etc.

PROJECTION

– Perceives & reacts to inner negative qualities as though outside the self.

USES: Dispel or discharge painful feelings.

PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

– Deposits unwanted aspects into another person so projector feels at one with object. Recipient modifies projections & projector recovers them.

USES: Allows individual to distance & make self understood by exerting pressure on another to experience similar feelings .

SPLITTING

– Divides external objects into “all good” & “all bad.” Abruptly shifts from one extreme to another. Individual experiences sudden & complete reversals of feeling. Self-concept may oscillate.

USES: “Soothes” & avoids negative feelings about oneself.