



LEVELS OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS

operates unconsciously (intrapsychic)

3

NEUROTIC

CONTROLLING

– Over-management or regulation of external environment.
USES: To avoid anxiety.

DISPLACEMENT

– Redirecting of some emotion from a real source to a substitute (person or object) when the original object or person is inaccessible.
USES: To minimize uncomfortable feelings or anxiety.

DISSOCIATION

– Separating personal identity, character from conscious-self. Includes distractive, impulsive, drug highs, religious joy, etc.
USES: Avoid emotional distress, conflict between contrasting beliefs or emotions, severe pain from trauma or negative experiences.

EXTERNALIZATION

– The projection of the person's own internal characteristics, particularly one's own impulses, moods, conflicts, attitudes, etc., onto the outside world.
USES: As a way to avoid uncomfortable feelings of self-loathing, self-conflict, etc.

REPRESSION

– Expels or withholds painful thoughts & feelings into conscious awareness although symbolic behavior may be present.
USES: Avoidance of painful emotions & cognitive burden.

INTELLECTUALIZATION

Avoids affective expression, experience, & relationships. Focus on attentiveness to external reality, while ignoring internal reality.
USES: Avoidance of feelings.

RATIONALIZATION

Attempts to justify behavior by imputing logical motives to it.
USES: "Softens" the blows from negative emotions, ability to continue desired, but unwanted behaviors.

REACTION FORMATION

Transforms an unacceptable impulse into its opposite.
USES: Avoidance of anxiety resulting from recognizing certain dimensions, characteristics, or traits in themselves.