



MENTALFIT Mental health test

* **Online test** that examines both positive and negative influences on your psyche

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HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS

How to talk to depressive people

Do you know how to talk to depressive people? What to tell them and what better not to?

How to talk to and how to treat a suicidal person

And what about someone who talks about suicide or is even ready to commit it? What can save him or her? And what should you in no way say?

What to do when your partner is unfaithful

A lot of couples chance upon infidelity. How to talk about infidelity and what to do when you find your partner (husband, wife) has been unfaithful? What can save the relationship and what finishes it off?

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How Not To Recognize the Truth: Ego-defense Mechanisms

Dr. Mika Ela, www.psychance.com

Ego-defense mechanisms are known and used by probably all of us. For example: We have a chance of getting a very desirable job. We go through an interview, try our best and in the end we are informed that we didn't succeed and someone else got the job. One possible reaction is to have a think and admit our own imperfection. Or we can say to ourselves that, after all, we never wanted the job that much because it's too far or because the boss is an idiot and they didn't offer any special salary either... so that it doesn't matter that it didn't work out. Such a reaction shows use of a defense mechanism.

So as with any system, including the human organism, to work satisfactorily, **the balance of all the system's parts must be ensured.** We make use of a wide spectrum of various mechanisms and (re)actions to keep and restore the balance. Take an example from biology, for instance, maintaining body temperature: Once the temperature is out of tolerated values, our organisms start a number of counteractions (to increase or again reduce the release of heat - goose bumps, capillary contraction, sweating...) the aim of which is to reach the ideal temperature for our bodily functions.



Ego-defense mechanisms have the same purpose - they are to conserve harmony, videlicet on the level of our psyche, precisely the ego. They are specific ways of behaviour and thinking and we use them in cases when our psychological balance is in danger. Ego-defense mechanisms are supposed to protect ourselves, preserve our feelings of self-value in moments of lack of success,

failure, guilt, disgrace and the like. Such experiences invoke inner tension or anxiety and thereby complicate the normal functioning of our personality. Defense mechanisms are, in effect, self-delusions, by the help of which we hinder the learning of some, for us unpleasant, facts.

How self-confidence influences important areas of life

Self-confidence or self-esteem has a huge impact on all important areas of life – relationships and marriage, study and work, health in general, communication with others and last but not least the feeling of satisfaction.

"Weaklings" & "Strongmen": People with low self-confidence

There are two kinds of low self-confident people: so called weaklings and strongmen. Both of them share certain inner insufficiencies but they markedly differ in objective manifestation.

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EGO-DEFENSE MECHANISMS

How not to recognize the truth

Do you know the ways our psyche uses to avoid unpleasant feelings? Review your own, sometimes maybe unconscious manners you seize in situations of failure, shame or insufficiency.

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Up to now, about 40 ego-defense mechanisms have been described. All of them have in common that **they work on an unconscious level** (so we do not realize we are using them) and that **they blur or deny reality in a way**. They were first brought to our attention by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis.

Below you can find a summary of several best known and most often used defense mechanisms:

Denial

Denial is a simple defence, when people **refuse to acknowledge or perceive frustrating facts**; they close their eyes to them. An example: a long-term smoker who believes that he or she can never be taken ill with lung cancer because in his or her family nobody ever had it. Full stop.

Rationalization

Rationalization is a very frequently used defense mechanism. It means that **you explain something unacceptable or uneasy in an unobjectionable way**. So for example child neglect can be put as satisfying the child's natural need for more independence - then I do not pay heed to the child for his or her own good, but in reality I am much more interested in my career or TV serials (but refuse to admit this).

Defence in perception

Defence in perception has been very well documented. It is a **decrease of sensibility toward such information we do not care for**. For example after a failure we are less sensitive toward perceiving words which remind us of the failure. So that we don't have to deal with it, we prevent such unpleasant and discomfort causing thoughts from entering our consciousness.

Reaction formation

Reaction formation means that **our outward behaviour is a direct opposite to the reactions we are trying to repress**. For instance a man who suppresses his strong sexual tendencies becomes a convinced moralist in sex related things.

Displacement

When displacement is being used, **we shift our uneasy emotions to alternative objects** that do not relate to the very causes. For example if your boss annoys you, then at home you tell your kid off for something unsubstantial.

Intellectualization

There are two ways how intellectualization is explained: A) It means

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you express some painful feelings by cold, impersonal and intellectual language. For instance you are to say sorry for having said something embarrassing and you put it as "I judge that another way of communication could have been chosen". B) It means you concentrate your intellectual interests in areas of repressed wishes. For example a man who represses his pedophilic tendencies becomes a scientist who intensively studies this area.

Projection

Projection is used very frequently; it is ascribing one's own unacceptable features, thoughts or feeling to other people. For example you interpret your aversion to somebody so that he or she does not like you.

Compensation

Compensation is a way of mastering an insufficiency, when people strive for something with extreme efforts. For instance a not very smart student wants to excel in a sport or becomes a tough Streetfighter. As an example of hypercompensation let's take Demosthenes, who, having a speech defect, decided to become a great speaker. He achieved that by long-term practice and by special methods - he tried to shout down the sea surf, put little stones in his mouth and articulated that way etc.

Identification

If identification is being used, a person boosts his or her prestige by the help of imitating someone else who possesses a high reputation, his or her conduct, values and attitudes, thereby the imitating person appropriates as though part of the other one's successes. An example can be a beginning singer who imitates the gestures, locution and fashion of a star.

Escape to fantasy

Escape to fantasy shows in day dreaming - imaginative experiencing of something unattainable. For instance an unsuccessful writer dreams how he or she holds briefings and comes short of giving signatures. Quite common are fantasies with sexual and great success topics.

Regression

Regression can be recognized if a person in a frustrating situation acts in an immature and outworn manner. It is a sort of return in time to such type of behaviour which belongs to a former developmental phase. For example an adult acts like a child - in an extreme discussion he or she starts raving, crying or banging a door.

Fixation

Fixation means sticking to a certain way of reaction, although its ineffectiveness has been proved repeatedly. One refuses to admit having made a mistake and by repeating the same methods he or she

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wants to manifest that the original solution was right. People, for example, choose the same types of partners although the former relationships ended in separation for the same reasons.

Repression

Repression is **removing the troublesome intentions or thoughts out of consciousness** so that they do not cause anxiety. For instance someone forgets the name of a person who questionably hurt him or her.

Escape

Escape represents an endeavour to fall back from the situations in which anxiety is felt. For example a person who tried to contact other people in vain, draws off and isolates himself or herself from the surroundings.

Resignation

Resignation and apathy comprises **interrupting of contact with the surroundings and excluding emotional participation**. Typically, a child, who has never been praised for his or her school results, does their necessary school duties without any interest.

Aggression

Aggression is **assaulting the sources of frustration**, it is an endeavour to gain one's point by the help of violence. For example a person who has been ridiculed for a long time provokes a fight.

Self-accusation

Self-accusation is an inwardly directed aggression - aggression against his or her own person. **Such people accuse and humiliate themselves, by which means they attract the attention of other people, and at the same time they punish themselves** this way and thereby they cope with their feeling of guilt. It is also prevention so other people don't do it (humiliating and punishing). For example a person says all the time that he or she is very bad and mean and do not deserve to have any friends, which attracts other people's attention, sympathy and consolation.

Super-conformity

Super-conformity is one of the possible reactions in situations of failure. An individual **starts to perform his or her duties at 200% in order to avoid another failure** and frustration. For example an employee, who was reprimanded for being late for work, begins to come much, much earlier.

The ego-defense mechanisms, described here so far, belong to **pathological or neurotic defense mechanisms**. But there are a few **mature and healthy ones** - for instance **humour, altruism, thought suppression, sublimation** (transferring unacceptable tendencies into

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credible work or area, e.g. it is supposed that dentists sublimate their aggression into their, helpful and respected, work) or anticipation (preparing for possible adverse development).

Ego-defense mechanisms (we are talking about the neurotic and pathological ones) are often effective, but in principle their use is the **deceiving** of ourselves. They are fine as **buffers** - they can help us overcome the initial impact of uneasy emotions; but after this phase we should cope with the situation in a mature and full-value manner. The less we use the ego-defense mechanisms, the stronger our identity is. And vice versa, those whose self-concept is unstable, need psychological crutches very badly so their flimsy self has something to lean on. As we advance on our way of self-knowing and cognition in general, the need to use ego-defense mechanisms goes down gradually.

In conclusion - try to guess which defense mechanism that we dealt with corresponds with the example at the very beginning.

The correct answer is (backwards):
noitazilanoitar

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