

# Defense Mechanism

Dr. Faris Alsaraireh

- Personality defines as: a person's unique and relatively stable behavior patterns; the consistency of who you are, have been, and will become.



## Personality Structure according to Freud

- **Id:** Operates according to the **pleasure principle**
  - Primitive and unconscious, hidden from view
  - Contains basic drives (the infant is a total Id).
- **Ego:** Operates according to the **reality principle**
  - Mediates the conflict between id and superego.
- **Superego:** Consists of moral ideals and conscience.

# Freud's Topographical Models of Personality

Freud classified all mental contents and operations into three categories: the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious.

- The conscious includes all memories that remain within an individual's awareness. Examples include telephone numbers, birthdays of self and significant others, dates of special holidays, and what one had for lunch today. The conscious mind is thought to be under the control of the ego, the rational and logical structure of the personality.

- The preconscious includes all memories that may have been forgotten or are not in present awareness but, with attention, can readily be recalled into consciousness. Examples include telephone numbers or addresses once known but little used and feelings associated with significant life events that may have occurred at some time in the past.

The preconscious enhances awareness by helping to suppress unpleasant or nonessential memories from consciousness. It is thought to be partially under the control of the superego, which helps to suppress unacceptable thoughts and behaviours.

The unconscious: includes all memories that one is unable to bring to conscious awareness. It is the largest of the three topographical levels. Unconscious material consists of unpleasant or nonessential memories that have been repressed and can be retrieved only through therapy, hypnosis, and with certain substances that alter the awareness and have the capacity to restructure repressed memories.

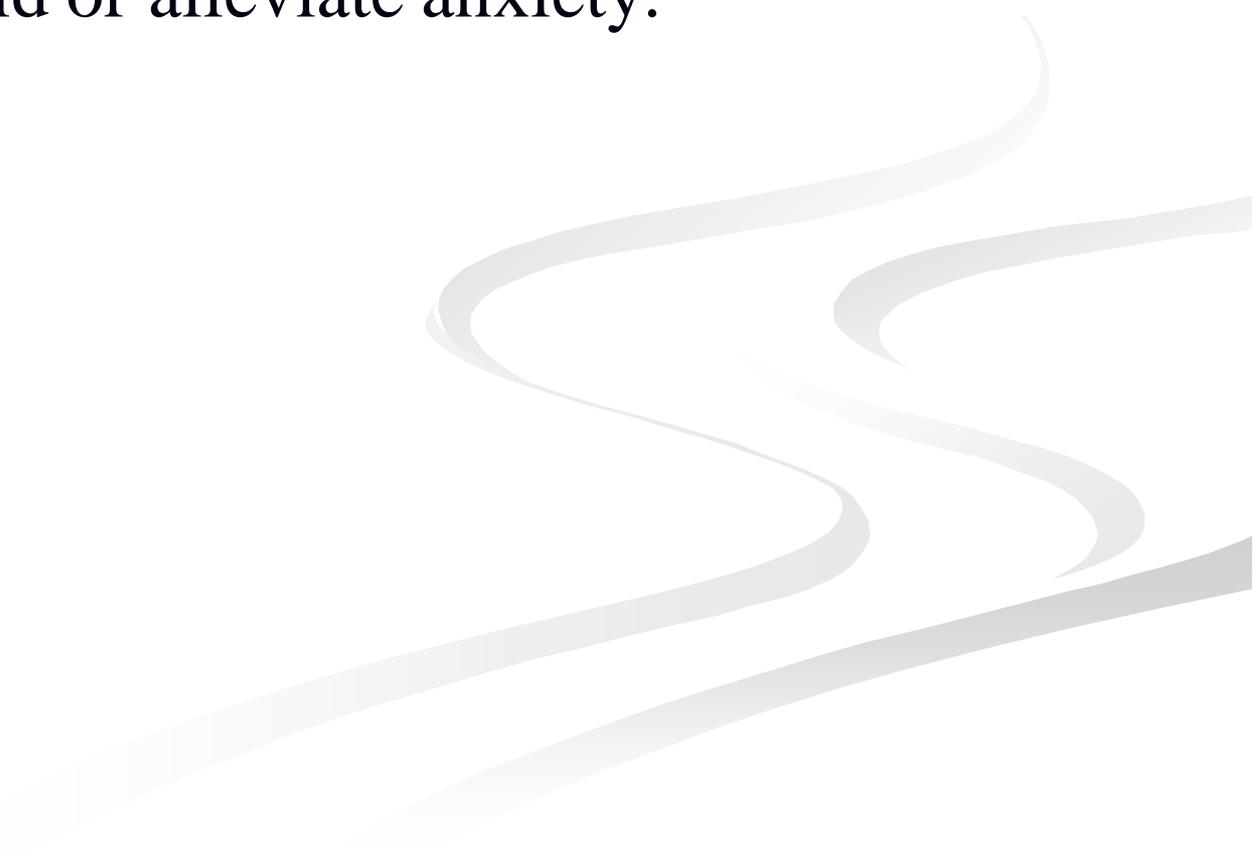
Unconscious material may also emerge in dreams and in seemingly incomprehensible behaviour.

- Sigmund Freud (1961) identified the ego as the reality component of the personality that governs problem solving and rational thinking.
- As the level of anxiety increases, the strength of the ego is tested, and energy is mobilized to confront the threat.
- Freud (1953) identified a number of defense mechanisms employed by the ego in the face of threat to biological or psychological integrity.

## ■ **Definition of defense mechanism**

- Defense mechanism are mental activities used at the unconscious level to protect the ego against anxiety and conflict situation.
- **Some of these ego defense mechanisms are more adaptive than others are, but all are used either consciously or unconsciously as protective devices for the ego in an effort to relieve mild to moderate anxiety.**
- **They become maladaptive when an individual uses them to such a degree that there is interference with the ability to deal with reality, with interpersonal relations, or with occupational**

# Functions of Defense Mechanisms

- 1- Facilitates the resolution of emotional conflict.
  - 2- To provide relief from stress.
  - 3-To cushion emotional pain.
  - 4-To avoid or alleviate anxiety.
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**TABLE 1 – 1 Ego Defense Mechanisms**

<b>Defense Mechanism</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Defense Mechanism</b>	<b>Example</b>
<i>Compensation</i> Covering up a real or perceived weakness by emphasizing a trait one considers more desirable	A physically handicapped boy is unable to participate in football, so he compensates by becoming a great scholar.	<i>Projection</i> Attributing feelings or impulses unacceptable to one's self to another person.	Sue feels a strong sexual attraction to her track coach and tells her friend, "He's coming on to me!"
<i>Denial</i> Refusing to acknowledge the existence of a real situation or the feelings associated with it	A woman drinks excess alcohol every day and cannot stop, failing to acknowledge that she has a problem.	<i>Rationalization</i> Attempting to make excuses or formulate logical reasons to justify unacceptable feelings or behaviors	John tells the rehab nurse, "I drink because it's the only way I can deal with my bad marriage and my worse job."
<i>Displacement</i> The transfer of feelings from one target to another that is considered less threatening or that is neutral	A client is angry at his doctor, does not express it, but becomes verbally abusive with the nurse.	<i>Reaction Formation</i> Preventing unacceptable or undesirable thoughts or behaviors from being expressed by exaggerating opposite thoughts or types of behaviors	Jane hates nursing. She attended nursing school to please her parents. During career day, she speaks to prospective students about the excellence of nursing as a career.

### *Identification*

An attempt to increase self-worth by acquiring certain attributes and characteristics of an individual one admires

A teenaged boy who required lengthy rehabilitation after an accident decides to become a physical therapist as a result of his experiences.

### *Intellectualization*

An attempt to avoid expressing actual emotions associated with a stressful situation by using the intellectual processes of logic, reasoning, and analysis

Susan's husband is being transferred with his job to a city far away from her parents. She hides anxiety by explaining to her parents the advantages associated with the move.

### *Regression*

Responding to stress by retreating to an earlier level of development and the comfort measures associated with that level of functioning

When 2-year-old Jay is hospitalized for tonsillitis he will drink only from a bottle, although his mother states he has been drinking from a cup for 6 months.

### *Repression*

Involuntarily blocking unpleasant feelings and experiences from one's awareness

An accident victim can remember nothing about the accident.

### *Introjection*

Integrating the beliefs and values of another individual into one's own ego structure

Children integrate their parents' value system into the process of conscience formation. A child says to friend, "Don't cheat. It's wrong."

### *Sublimation*

Rechanneling of drives or impulses that are personally or socially unacceptable into activities that are constructive

A mother whose son was killed by a drunk driver channels her anger and energy into being the president of the local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers.

### *Isolation*

Separating a thought or memory from the feeling tone or emotion associated with it

Without showing any emotion, a young woman describes being attacked and raped.

### *Suppression*

The voluntary blocking of unpleasant feelings and experiences from one's awareness

Scarlett O'Hara says, "I don't want to think about that now. I'll think about that tomorrow."

### *Undoing*

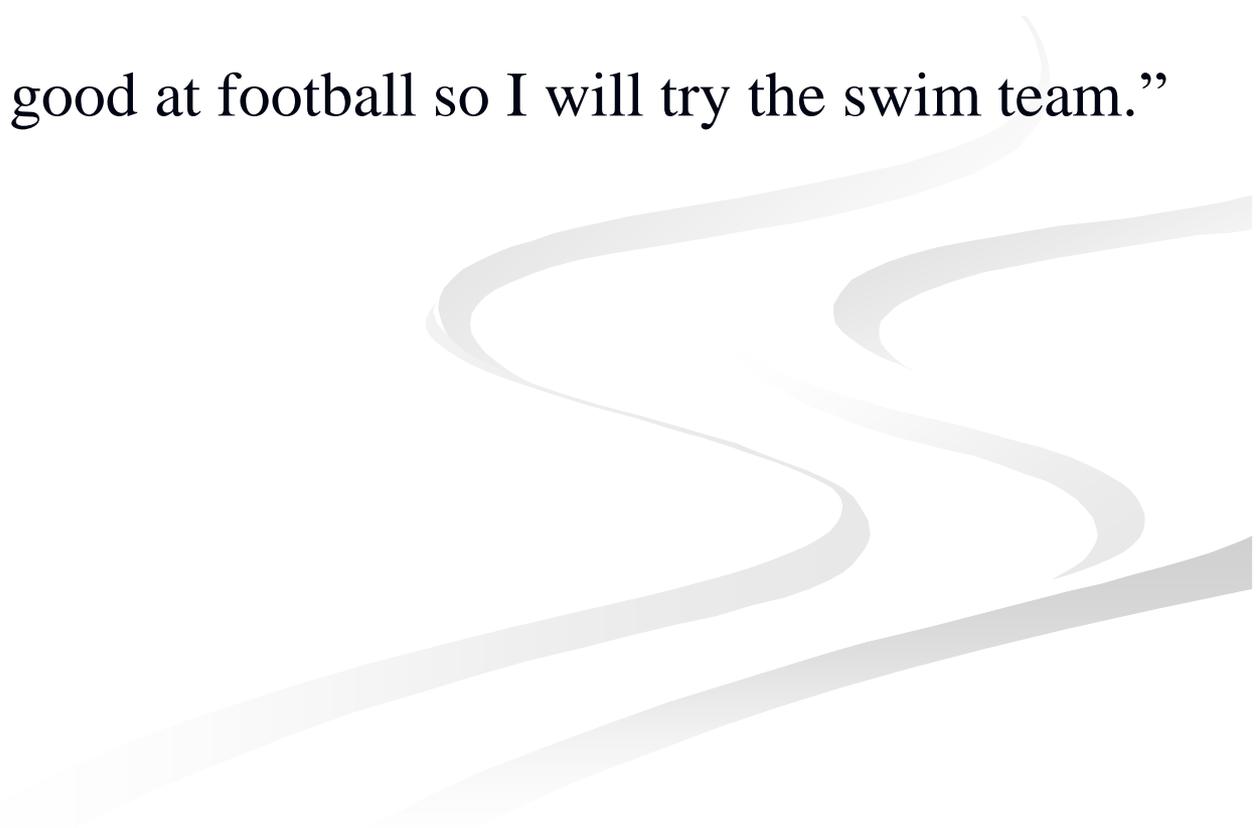
Symbolically negating or canceling out an experience that one finds intolerable

Joe is nervous about his new job and yells at his wife. On his way home he stops and buys her some flowers.

**Substitution:** The replacement of consciously unacceptable emotions, drives, attitudes, or needs by those that are more acceptable.

Example 1-a student nurse in a degree program who feels unable to master the clinical competence decided to become a respiratory technician.

Example 2:“I am not good at football so I will try the swim team.”

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**Conversion** : the transferring of a mental conflict into physical symptoms to release tension or anxiety.

Example 1: a man develops paralysis of his lower extremities after he find out that his wife has a terminal cancer.

Example 2: a student develops paralysis of right arm when she faced difficult exam.

**Fantasy:** imagined events or mental images (daydreaming) to express unconscious conflicts, gratify unconscious wishes, or prepare for anticipated events.

Example: I love animals so much, so even if I fail

Biology I can still be a veterinarian.



## Important facts should be remembered:

Ego defenses are not necessarily unhealthy as you can see by the examples above.

In fact,

- 1-The lack of these defenses or the inability to use them effectively can often lead to problems in life.
- 2- Employ the defenses at the wrong time leads to deviation from mental health.
- 3- Overuse defenses, which can be equally destructive.