

Defense Mechanism Checklist

Level #1 Defense Mechanisms

_____ **Anticipation** – Experiences emotional reactions in advance. Anticipates consequences and considers realistic alternatives.

_____ **Affiliation** – Able to turn to others for help/support. Able to share problems without making someone else responsible.

_____ **Altruism** – Dedication to meeting needs of others even when faced with a stressing event.

_____ **Humor** – Emphasizes the amusing/ironic aspects of current stressing events.

_____ **Self-assertion** – Non-coercive/non-manipulative expression of feelings and thoughts.

_____ **Self-observation** – Able to reflect on own thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behavior and respond appropriately.

_____ **Sublimation** – Channels potentially maladaptive feelings/impulses into socially acceptable behavior.

_____ **Suppression** – Able to intentionally avoid thinking about disturbing problems, wishes, feelings or experiences.

Level #2 Defense Mechanisms

_____ **Displacement** – Transfers feelings and/or responses from an appropriate object to a less threatening object.

_____ **Dissociation** – Breakdown in usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, perception of self or the environment. May involve sensory/motor behaviors (e.g. events and emotions are no longer *associated*).

_____ **Intellectualization** – Excessive use of abstract thinking or intellectual reasoning to minimize emotional discomfort.

_____ **Isolation of Affect** – Separation of ideas from feelings originally associated with them. Only cognitive elements remain.

_____ **Reaction Formation** – Substitution of “real” behaviors and thoughts with those that are not from the client’s reality.

_____ **Repression** – Expelling of disturbing wishes, thoughts, or experiences from consciousness. Emotions may remain.

_____ **Undoing** – Words or behaviors designed to negate/make amends symbolically for unacceptable thoughts, feelings, or actions.

Level #3 Defense Mechanisms

_____ **Devaluation** – Attributes grossly exaggerated negative qualities to self or others.

_____ **Idealization** – Attributes grossly exaggerated positive qualities others.

_____ **Omnipotence** – Projection of the image that one possesses special powers or abilities. Superior to others.

Level #4 Defense Mechanisms

_____ **Denial** – Refusing to acknowledge some painful aspect of external reality or subjective experience that would be apparent to others.

_____ **Projection** – Individual falsely attributes to another person their own unacceptable feelings, impulses, or thoughts.

_____ **Rationalization** – Conceals the true motivations for thoughts, actions, or feelings through the elaboration of reassuring or self-serving but incorrect explanations.

Level #5 Defense Mechanisms

_____ **Autistic Fantasy** – Excessive daydreaming as a substitute for human relationships, more effective action, or problem solving.

_____ **Projective Identification** – Projection of feelings, impulses, or thoughts onto another. Eventually, those feelings, impulses or thoughts are fulfilled in the party upon whom they have been projected.

_____ **Splitting** – Compartmentalizing opposite affects. Not able to see good and bad in something at the same time.

Level #6 Defense Mechanisms

_____ **Acting Out** – Physical action taken in response to internal reflections or feelings. Acted out behavior is a direct response to the internal affective cues.

_____ **Apathetic Withdrawal** – Withdrawal from any attempts to deal with internal or external stressing events of emotional states. The person gives up.

_____ **Help Rejecting Complaining** – Making repeated requests for help. When help is offered, it is rejected.

_____ **Passive Aggression** – Indirect and unassertive aggression toward others. Overt and visible compliance masks covert resistance, resentment and hostility.

Level #7 Defense Mechanisms

_____ **Delusional Projection** – Projection with the added component of belief that the event or situation being projected is part of objective reality when in fact it is not.

_____ **Psychotic Denial** – Denial with the added component of belief that the event or situation being denied can be verified to be false (e.g. denies wife has died and continues to hear/see her).

_____ **Psychotic Distortion** – Internal efforts to reshape the external world with hallucinations and delusions. Creation of a new reality.