Defense Mechanisms

When our needs can’t be met
WE ALL USE THEM

Some Common Mental Mechanisms

• Repression - most common, unconsciously pushes away intolerable ideas/impulses. (Not going to the doctor)

• Suppression - person is aware of the intolerable feelings, deliberately refuses to acknowledge them. (not telling spouse about diagnosis)

Projection

• A person unconsciously attributes their unacceptable feelings to others.

• Ex. An aide dislikes a particular patient. This is unacceptable to her so she says the patient doesn’t like her.
Denial

• Feelings that are intolerable are unconsciously disowned.

• One of the most commonly used defenses against the stress of diagnosis and illness.

Reaction Formation

• A person behaves in a manner that is the exact opposite of their real feelings.

• Ex. A resident dislikes a certain nurse aide, however she is overly friendly to that aide.

Displacement

• Unconsciously substituting a person for another and behaving as if it were the original person.

• The administrator yells at the DON, who then chews out the team leader, who climbs on the staff nurse’s back, who becomes crabby with her patient.
**Conversion**

- Substituting acceptable physical symptoms for unacceptable emotions.

  • Example - The student has a final and is nervous of failing so they may develop diarrhea.

**Regression**

- Reverting to childish behavior when there weren’t so many responsibilities.

  • Example - A patient makes childish demands and becomes dependent on the nurse for care that they could do for themselves.

**Identification**

- Unconsciously an individual behaves like another person whom they hold as ideal.

  • Example - The adolescent hero worship stage.
Rationalization

- Unconsciously to develop good socially acceptable reasons to explain your behavior.
- A student drops out of school because the teachers are boring.

Substitution or Compensation

- Excelling in one area to make up for feelings of failure in another.
- Example - A student wanted to become a famous doctor, but settles for nursing instead.

Sublimation

- Consciously unacceptable urges are channeled into socially accepted ways.
- Example - A angry housewife does push-ups to work off her temper.
Remember Mental Mechanisms help us to:

• 1. Handle our anxieties.
• 2. Feel better about ourselves.
• 3. Keep us from facing reality.
• Help the symptoms, not the problem.
• Useful if used in moderation.
• **Which ones do you use?????????**