

Mechanisms Overview

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Used by persons to:

- Adjust to change
- Defend or protect self or others
- Cope with stress
- Maintain idealized self-image
- Satisfy needs

In response to or to reduce:

- Stress
- Threat
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Disappointment

Mechanisms are:

- Constructive in the short term
 - Reduce stress and tension
 - "Buy time"
- Destructive in the long term
 - Make sense to the person using them but look foolish to others
 - Self deception
 - Used subconsciously
 - Distort reality
 - Difficulty being honest with ourselves
 - Alter perception
 - All well when it is not
 - All dire when it is not
 - Maintain idealized image
 - Of self
 - Of others
 - Become entrenched behavior patterns

Mechanisms Listed

Denial - pretending that things are not there or have not happened or pretending that things are there that are not.

Rationalization - transfer guilt or responsibility; Justify actions, make excuses

Projection - projecting feelings on another person (angry so blame others for being angry) and then judging them for the projected attitude. When we see our faults in others it makes us angry because we are so disappointed in ourselves. It is easier to judge the projected feeling in another than to own it and judge ourselves. Always teaching/preaching about a particular sin.
Romans 2:1

Delusional projection occurs when we feel threatened and then project our threatened feelings on an unsuspecting rival (Saul and David). Girl suspects her friend of trying to steal her boyfriend and projects feelings of insecurity on the friend. Her projection onto her friend can then be rationalized as self protection, devaluing others in order to elevate self, covering insecurities or inadequacies by depreciating others in order to make self look acceptable.

Sarcasm - suppressed hostility toward self or others, constantly making derogatory or critical comments directed toward self or others to express inner angst

Displacement - directing emotions and actions toward something or someone else rather than the person to whom you wish to express emotions or actions.

Aggression - angry at boss, come home and kick cat off of the porch or be harsh with the children when you really are angry with the boss; Affection, Animosity, Anxiety, Anger.

Regression - returning to earlier place perceived as nonthreatening. Reverting to less mature behavior to avoid reality or to secure pity or to find security in less threatening job or position.

Repression - subconscious forgetting, unwanted or unpleasant feelings not allowed into conscious thought

Suppression - conscious forgetting, procrastination, refusal to deal with issue at hand, fear of confrontation

Fantasy - reshaping external reality to conform to idealizations – can be delusional, hearing voices, hallucinations. Constructing an inner world to escape the unpleasant “real” world that does not measure up to dreams and wishes and expectations. Requires a distortion of reality.

Daydreaming. Can produce “multiple personalities” or compartmentalization of the heart where person can escape into one of several areas of unrealistic thinking.

Idealization - attempting to locate (but never finding) the perfect: spouse, church, physician, food, home, etc.

Identity - identifying with role model or mentor, can be useful – follow example of Godly persons. Can be harmful – when blind, lock-step behavior occurs or when a poor role model is chosen - negative peer pressure, or cult or gang activity.

Reaction formation - Saying the opposite of what is really in the heart. Bragging about a “wonderful husband” when, in fact, he is a scoundrel.

Compensation - Making up for inadequacies by excelling in other areas. Frail child becoming good at art since they cannot play sports.

Over Compensation - providing over much attention to make up for lack of real loving relationship. Classic illustration is divorced parent buying toys and gifts for child instead of staying in the marriage and actually being a parent on a daily basis.

Passive Resistance - passive/aggressive behavior – refusal to cooperate, creating distance from authority figures, stubbornness masking bad attitude, pouting, sulking, getting even, plotting ways to quietly make problems, undermining authority, non-confrontational

Procrastination - refusal to see the need to deal promptly with situations. Putting off. Pretending the issue is not important.

Insulation - adopting a barrier to buffer unpleasant experiences or to prevent people from getting too close. Intellect, humor, wit, appearance (strong silent type, “tough guy” or “pretty girl”) over dressing, titles, (“Dr. Kraybill” - “Please, please, it’s Don”)

Self righteousness thinking (better than thou) - constantly depreciating other’s behavior in order to conceal or to prevent thinking about and dealing with one’s own spiritual shortcomings.

Sour Grapes - mind changes its perception so that its belief is consistent with the situation

Sweet Lemon - pretending to like the things you have even though you wish that you had better things. Saying your husband or boss is the best even though he treats you unkindly. Telling people that you like your old lawn mower when you wish you could have a new one.

Intellectualization - people who really know can speak in simple terms. Those who do not know have to use "big" words. May cover inferiority feelings or lack of preparation. Can detach self from painful reality instead of thinking accurately about self and abilities and training

Acting Out - allowing feelings to surface and be expressed physically: crying, hitting, biting, yelling, misbehaving in physical ways.

Isolation - hiding or being alone when stressed, allows compartmentalization of life so unacceptable, painful or sinful thoughts can be kept in control and not allowed into the conscious. Person may appear pious but be hiding sin or pain in part of the heart. Remove self from possible anxiety producing situation. Introversion. Thinking of relationship as threatening.

Sublimation - redirecting unacceptable feelings or energies into acceptable areas – man with bad marriage drives himself in his work and becomes successful businessman. (Does not mean that every successful person is sublimating.)

Somatization - physical (body) symptoms to cover unwanted feelings – Spiritual issues become emotional issues become physical issues.

How to deal with mechanisms

Recognize that they are being used

Discover what they are hiding

Bible Responses

- Jeremiah 17:9-10
- Psalm 19:14
- Psalm 139:23-24
- Proverbs 4:23
- Proverbs 14:15
- Proverbs 21:2
- Proverbs 23:7
- Matthew 12:34
- Hebrews 4:12