

Immature Defenses	Description	Example 1	Example 2	Misc
Repression	Hides thoughts and feelings from consciousness, leading to forgetting and denial.	Jeremy cannot recall any abuse from his violent alcoholic father from the ages of 10-14. Despite having excellent recall of other events during this time period.	After getting fired from his job, John was so anxious about paying rent that he completely forgot about paying his other bills.	Repressed material is not subject to voluntary recall
Denial	Protecting one's self from unpleasant reality by refusing to perceive it.	Edwin has a long history of schizophrenia. He voluntarily presents to the psychiatric emergency department complaining of disturbing auditory hallucinations. When asked if he is on any medications for schizophrenia, Edwin gets frustrated and says "I don't need medications, I might hear voices but I don't have schizophrenia because I am not 'crazy' like those other people".	Samantha presents to her PCP's office to discuss a rash on her breast. On exam, she has a massive tumor with surface necrosis on her left breast. (Samantha does not acknowledge the obvious deformity, simply describes it as a "rash")	"Missing the obvious"
Displacement	Emotions, ideas, or wishes are transferred from their original object and directed to a more acceptable substitute	Dr. P is a surgical resident who is angry with her attending, she chastises and humiliates her medical students calling them "difficult and helpless".	Travis is afraid of his mom's new boyfriend since they moved in together. When asked what's wrong he states that he is fearful of his new science teacher.	Feelings towards object X are repressed, and the affect is linked to a new object Y
Reaction formation	Directing overt behavior and attitude in precisely the opposite direction of one's underlying, unacceptable impulses.	Ludwig has homosexual thoughts which are against his religion, so he bullies and mocks an openly homosexual classmate	Mrs. Wilson is overprotective of her infant son in an effort to protect herself from her rage at his inability to sleep through the night.	The original affect was never consciously experienced - it becomes the opposite before it becomes conscious and thus doesn't have to be undone.
Projection	One protects oneself by perceiving unacceptable thoughts, feelings, and fantasies as originating outside of the self.	When Gilly found out her husband was having an affair, she did not become angry. Instead, she became paranoid that he was sharing inappropriate photographs of her over the internet.	A patient screams at his therapist, "I AM NOT ANGRY! YOU'RE ANGRY!" as the therapist sits quietly and nods her head.	In projection, a person experiences an emotion as coming from a different person who has no awareness of this emotion.
Rationalization	Thinking up logical, socially approved reasons for our past, present, or proposed behavior	Pedro was fired from job due to budget cuts. He tells his girlfriend that he was happy to be let go because for the last few months parking has become a nightmare and the cafeteria was too expensive.	An office worker who is embezzling money from his firm explains his behavior by thinking, "they won't even miss the money and I need it more than they do!"	
Intellectualization	The use of scientific or abstract thinking as a means of avoiding affectively painful realities or thoughts	A medical student tells her boyfriend that she has a rare form of cervical cancer. She goes on to explain the epidemiology of said cancer and the newest advances in immunotherapy.	Unable to process the anxiety associated with finding a new counselor, Javier reads up on psychotherapy and begins their first conversation by discussing the neurobiological theories behind psychodynamic psychotherapy.	
Isolation	Separating emotional components from a thought, resulting in repression of either the emotion or idea.	Mr. Silva's coworkers were shocked when he arrived to work the day after his son died in a car accident. They asked if he would like to go home and Mr. Silva informed them that he was fine and would like to finish his grant proposal.	A resident returns to her medical school's main auditorium to give a lecture on the Match process. Out of no where she experiences feelings of panic and anxiety without recognizing the cognitive component of the memory.	
Splitting	Is a defense in which one preserves good feelings and avoids bad feelings by separating them into different people.	Ben's father was an abusive alcoholic who would often criticize his shortcomings. Nevertheless, Ben idealizes his father and vilifies his mother for demanding full custody during their divorce. As an adult, Ben is unable to see women as having any good qualities seeking out a heterosexual relationship.	Mr. W tells the medical student that the covering attending, Dr. O, is incredibly rude and yelled at them for staying in bed until noon. He then goes on to explain that Dr. Z is a great doctor who would never do that because they know he is not a morning person.	These people have no capacity to see an object as both good AND bad. There is only either/or. Strong association with Borderline Personality Disorder.
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Suppression	A deliberate conscious effort to control and conceal disturbing thoughts, feelings, or acts.	A mother who learns that her sister was rushed to the hospital is able to stay calm and call a friend to look after her child before leaving for the hospital and bursting into tears.	Mr. N was worried about his mother's breast cancer diagnosis, but he was able to put this out of his mind while enjoying time with his friends.	Unlike repression, suppression involves a conscious decision to put a thought or affect out of one's mind
Sublimation	Diverting basic drives or impulses into socially appropriate channels	A bullied student channels his frustration into running and eventually breaks the state record for the 3200 meter run.	Jeremy has become increasingly unsatisfied with his job at the bank due to a new manager, instead of yelling at the manager he has been writing poetry to calm his thoughts.	An uncomfortable thought or affect goes straight from unconscious to consciousness in a useful form without having to be transformed.
Humor	Seeing the comic side of situations as a means of diffusing negative affects such as anxiety	A medical student jokes about how he no longer has 6-pack abs, but instead has a keg as a way to relieve his insecurity and anxiety.	Daisy complains that her husband is unable to talk seriously about anything regarding their relationship and makes jokes of everything.	Humor can be more adaptive and a conscious mechanism (example 1). It can also be less adaptive and subconscious (example 2).
Altruism	Taking a negative experience and turning it into a socially positive one	A wealthy drug dealer takes some of his money and donates it to a local community center	Rather than caring for herself, Karen spends all of her time caring for wounded animals.	Altruism can be more conscious and adaptive (example 1) or less adaptive (example 2)