

# THE EGO DEFENSE MECHANISMS

These distortions help us avoid accepting evidence that challenges our self-image as a good and worthy person or that challenge our strongly held stereotypes. Perhaps they act to reduce anxiety, but because they are distortions, they are not helpful in the longer term.

1. *Denial*: arguing against an anxiety-provoking stimulus by stating it doesn't exist. Refusing to perceive the more unpleasant aspects of external reality.
2. *Displacement*: taking out impulses on a less threatening target. The mind redirects emotion from a 'dangerous' object to a 'safe' object.
3. *Intellectualization*: avoiding unacceptable emotions by focusing on their intellectual aspects. Concentrating on the intellectual components of the situation to distance yourself from the anxiety-provoking emotions associated with these situations.
4. *Projection*: moving unacceptable impulses in yourself onto someone else. Attributing to others your own unacceptable or unwanted thoughts or emotions.
5. *Rationalization*: supplying a logical or rational reason as opposed to the real reason. Constructing a logical justification for a decision that was originally arrived at through a different mental process.
6. *Reaction formation*: taking the opposite belief because the true belief causes anxiety.
7. *Regression*: returning to a previous stage of development. Reverting to an earlier stage of development in the face of unacceptable impulses.

8. *Repression*: pulling thoughts into the unconscious and preventing painful or dangerous thoughts from entering consciousness.
9. *Sublimation*: acting out unacceptable impulses in a socially acceptable way.
10. *Humor*: Refocusing attention on the somewhat comical side of the situation to relieve negative tension; like comic relief.