

Defence Mechanisms

Introduction

According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, defence mechanisms are psychological strategies that are brought into play by various entities to cope with reality and to maintain self-image. They are more accurately referred to as ego defence mechanisms and are categorized as occurring when:

- The id impulses are in conflict With each other
- The id impulses conflict with super-ego values and belief
- An external threat is posed to the ego.

According to Myers D. G. (2001), defence mechanism is the ego's protective method of reducing anxiety by unconsciously distorting reality. It can also be defined as the unconscious mental operations that deny or distort reality. A defence mechanism is a strategy that is developed in an effort to reduce the tension that is being experienced at a given time. Concisely speaking, it refers to the things we do to camouflage our feelings and mask our vulnerability, so as to defend ourselves from exposure.

Types and causes of defence mechanism

Causes of defence mechanisms

1. When the ego confronts impulses that threaten to get out of control, or is faced with dangers from the environment resulting anxiety.
2. When realistic methods or strategies are ineffective in reducing anxiety.
3. When frustration or anxiety accumulates and become increasingly difficult to resolve or cope with.

There are two main types of defence mechanisms.

1. **Escape technique.** This represents the direct attack on the source of anxiety or frustration. It enables individuals to escape or avoid situations that arouse anxiety. Examples of this technique include aggression, fantasy, regression and repression.
2. **Compromise technique.** This represents the techniques that individuals employ to be able to cope with situations that generate anxiety. It enables individuals to defend themselves against the frustration and fears. These include projection, sublimation, and reaction formation. They help to create a balance between motives, needs, impulses and defence.

Types of defence mechanisms

The following are some common defence mechanisms.

Repression

This is the blocking from the conscious the feelings, experiences, impulses or memories that arouse anxiety. For example, a child who is sexually or physically traumatized develops phobia for any related experiences. Such a child can choose to suppress such thoughts in order to avoid the feelings brought by the memory,

Regression