**Psychology 1A. Milligan, PhD. Defense Mechanisms:**

**Denial, Displacement, Emotional Insulation (aka Psychological Numbing), Identification, Intellectualization, Projection, Rationalization, Regression, Repression, Reaction Formation, Sublimation**

**Defense Mechanism Definitions. Psychology 1A. Milligan, PhD**

**Repression.** Emotionally painful experience and memory is pushed down into the unconscious – totally forgotten.

**Denial.**  Behaving, thinking, feeling as though an emotionally painful experience/memory does not exist.

**Projection.** Attributing one’s own painful thoughts and feelings to another person..

**Identification.** A person takes on attributes of someone who appears to be pain free in the area(s) where the person experiences emotional pain.

**Regression.** In the face of psychological pain, returning to an earlier stage of development and experiencing the pleasures of that earlier stage.

**Intellectualization.** Removing psychological pain by abstracting the painful experience.

**Reaction formation.** Thinking, feeling, acting the opposite of painful thoughts and feelings.

**Displacement.** Expressing painful thoughts and feelings toward someone or something other than the object of that pain. (These painful thoughts and feelings include forbidden love as well as anger, fear, guilt, and other so-called “negative” feelings.

**Sublimation.** Redirecting painful thoughts and feelings into creative activity.

**Rationalization.** Making an excuse for emotionally painful experiences, particularly failure, loss, rejection. Two types of rationalization: sour grapes and sweet lemons.

**Emotional Insulation or Psychological Numbing.** All feelings are turned off as a way of not experiencing emotional pain.

**NOTE:** All of these defense mechanisms occur in the unconscious. A person is not conscious, i.e., aware, of using defense mechanisms.

1. **Carson, a student at SRJC, did not get into the only class she needs to get her AA at the end of this semester, causing Carson painful disappointment. On the first day of class, she shows up anyway, expecting to hear her name called from the roster. Mechanism? DENIAL If, instead, she repressed her disappointment, what would she say when asked about the class by a friend?**
2. **R.J. had a very punitive, abusive third grade teacher. Now, at the age of 19, R.J. cannot remember anything about his third grade school experience. Mechanism? REPRESSION If, instead, he projected the pain and possible anger about this experience onto a friend, what might he say to the friend when they were talking about their early education?**
3. **Sigmundia is in love with her best friend’s boyfriend. She believes that the boyfriend is in love with her, Sigmundia. Mechanism? PROJECTION If instead, she engaged in reaction formation, what feelings would she declare about the boyfriend?**
4. **Carlos, who is a very mature 5 year old, now has a new sibling. When the baby comes home, Carlos sucks his thumb, wets the bed and talks in baby talk. Mechanism? REGRESSION Instead, how might Carlos rationalize the arrival of his new sibling?**
5. **Freudiana, a student at SRJC, just received a poor grade on her first test of the semester, and is angry with the instructor. When she gets home that evening, she picks a fight with her roommate (who is innocent of any wrongdoing). Mechanism? DISPLACEMENT. If, instead she intellectualized this experience, what might she say when asked about her grade?**
6. **Mari, the youngest member of her family, and less certain than her older cousin about appropriate behavior, smiles and strikes a pose just like her older cousin when their grandmother photographs them. Mechanism? IDENTIFICATION. If instead, she sublimated her insecurity, what might she do?**
7. **When Ellis has a humiliating and painful fall at the skate board park, he immediately engages in a dispassionate discussion about skateboard injury statistics – types of injuries, recovery times, etc., etc., etc. Mechanism? INTELLECTUALIZATION. If, instead, he regressed after the fall, how would he have behaved?**
8. **Barry, a professional baseball player, dislikes being forced to take drug tests. What he says, however, when asked about compulsory testing, is that testing is good for the sport and clean playing will provide a good model for youngsters. Mechanism? RATIONALIZATION. If, instead, he engaged in denial, how might he behave?**
9. **Jack is very fond of his girlfriend Jill, but he cannot tolerate her dog. He is fearful about offending Jill, so he thinks, feels and acts as though he loves the little pooch. Mechanism? REACTION FORMATION. If, instead, Jack emotionally insulated himself from the dog, what would he say or do or feel about said pooch?**
10. **Mary suffered an extremely painful childhood and, deep down, wished she had a happy childhood. Now, as an adult, she is emotionally unresponsive, and has little feeling, positive or negative, about other people. Mechanism? EMOTIONAL INSULATION. If, instead, she engaged in identification, how might she behave?**
11. **John, who plays the electric guitar and is the leader of a band, received a lower grade than he expected in his Algebra exam. That night at band practice, he threw himself into his music and played better and more creatively than he ever had. Mechanism? SUBLIMATION. If, instead, he engaged in displacement, how might he have behaved toward the band members.**

**Jack and Jill**

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water,

Jack fell down and broke his crown, and Jill came tumbling after.

Up Jack got and home he ran, as fast as he could caper.

There his mother bound his head, with vinegar and brown paper.

**1.** One reason Jill fell is that she depended on Jack to show her the trail. She seldom, if ever, independently made decisions. She is very compliant. Freud MIGHT say Jill is fixated at what stage, and, as a result of too little or too much gratification? According to Horney, what accounts for Jill’s compliance? **2.** We know that Jill does not have much confidence in her hiking skills. We see that she is dressed just like Jack, even adopting his walking style. Which defense mechanism is this? **3.** When Jack falls down, he immediately blames the fall on Jill, saying if she hadn’t been following him so closely, he wouldn’t have fallen. Defense mechanism? Jack feels guilty after he yells at Jill. What part of the psyche is the source of guilt? **4.** We know that a “broken crown” is very painful and that Jack was probably embarrassed by his fall. When his mother tries to comfort him and apply the healing brown paper and vinegar, Jack tries to stop her, saying, “Oh, it was nothing.” Defense mechanism?