

Additional Try It Yourself Exercises Chapter 5

Try It Yourself

The behaviours associated with defence mechanisms seem relatively common – Woody Allen has often used them to comic effect in his films. Examine the following list of behaviours and decide which defense mechanisms are being demonstrated.

- Sandra says "John didn't ask me to go to the dance with him, but that's good because I really have too much work to do anyway."

Rationalisation

- After failing a test at school, Kevin yells at his roommate for not having washed the dishes.

Displacement

- Joanna, who has always worried about being overweight, takes pleasure in cooking wonderful cakes and pies for her family, although she never eats them herself.

Sublimation

- Stephen is a painter whose work seems very intense and full of emotion, but he is very peaceful and mild in his everyday life.

Reaction formation

What examples can you find in your everyday experience? Does finding such behaviours necessarily mean that the causes are related to unconscious conflicts? Can you think of alternate explanations?

There are almost always several alternate explanations for isolated behaviours. For example, Freud would say that some students display testy moods to their friends and family when they are in the middle of writing examinations because they are really angry at having to be evaluated and are displacing their anger onto a more immediate and safer object. But it is possible that the testy mood is more indicative of the student being under a great deal of stress at this time, with its attendant physiological arousal (see Chapter 2). This arousal may account for the student's impatient reactions to those around him or her more accurately than the idea of unconscious anger.