**Defense Mechanisms**

Sometimes, painful emotions such as fear and guilt can be difficult to cope with. Even if you deal with a difficult emotion in a healthy way, you may still feel upset. If an emotion gets too overwhelming, you may use a technique called a defense mechanism. A defense mechanism is an unconscious thought or behavior used to avoid experiencing unpleasant emotions. The table below shows a list of these defense mechanisms and some examples.

Because defense mechanisms are unconscious behaviors, you don’t plan or decide to use them. However, you can observe yourself and become aware of how you react and treat others.

**Study the names and descriptions in the table below. Read over the examples of defense mechanisms identified. Using a different font color, paraphrase the descriptions. Then, come up with another example of each kind of defense mechanism.**

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| **Mechanism** | **What is it?** | **Paraphrase** | **Example** | **Your example** |
| **Compensation** | Making up for weaknesses in one area by achieving in another. |  | Trying to get an A in your other classes because you are doing poorly in math. |  |
| **Daydreaming** | Imagining pleasant things that take your mind off the unpleasant reality. |  | Daydreaming in detention about what it will be like when you graduate and when teachers can’t tell you what to do anymore. |  |
| **Denial** | Refusing to accept reality. |  | Telling everyone that you are still going out with your boyfriend or girlfriend even though he or she broke up with you. |  |
| **Displacement** | Shifting feelings about one person or situation to another person or situation. |  | Yelling at your family when you are angry at your teacher. |  |
| **Idealization** | Copying someone you think highly of because you don't feel good about who you are. |  | Copying the clothing and appearance of a famous musician. |  |
| **Projection** | Seeing your own faults or feelings in someone else. |  | Accusing your boyfriend or girlfriend of flirting with others because you flirt. |  |
| **Rationalization** | Making excuses for or justifying behavior. |  | Not studying for a test because you need the time to practice for the school play. |  |
| **Regression** | Reacting to emotions in a childlike or immature fashion. |  | Kicking the lockers because you were sent to the principal’s office. |  |
| **Repression** | Blocking out painful thoughts or feelings. |  | Ignoring your memories about all the times your divorced parents had fights. |  |
| **Sublimation** | Redirecting negative impulses into positive behavior. |  | Painting a mural when you are mad instead of creating graffiti. |  |