Anxiety

- An unpleasant state ranging from a vague and uneasy sense that no all is right with the world to desperate and debilitating terror—the classic “anxiety attack”
- Can form within the mind itself (Freud found more interesting) and from the outside world

Defense mechanisms

- Denial
- Repression
- Reaction formation
- Projection
- Rationalization
- Intellectualization
- Displacement
- Sublimation

Denial

- Simplest defense mechanism
- Denies that the source of anxiety exists, or fails to perceive it in the first place
- Common and effective in the short run, but if used for very long can lead to a serious lack of contact with reality
- i.e. fail exam
  - Will deal realistically by studying harder next time
- Self-serving bias
  - Tend to take credit for own successes, but blame failures on external circumstances or people
  - i.e. when students don’t do well on a test, the test must’ve been invalid, but when they do well, the test was just fine
- Can also be used to defend against internal anxiety
- Persistent denial can be a sign of psychopathology
  - i.e. symptom of alcoholism
- Used effectively, the primary purpose of denial is to keep us from being overwhelmed by the initial shock as we gather our resources to do something about it
  - Kubler-Ross' stages of grief/loss—learn about a life-threatening illness in ourselves or others

Repression

- More complex, farther reaching, and longer lasting than denial
- Denial focuses on pushing out of awareness current things whereas repression is banishing the past from pleasant awareness which is a less outright negation of reality
- With repression you don’t deny that something exists, you just manage not to think about it
- The ultimate purpose is to keep out of consciousness and action a problematic impulse of the id, unpleasant thought, feeling, or memory, or something in the real world that’s a potential source of stress
- Protection from anxiety-arousing stimuli can cause a wide range of slips or memory lapses
- More complicated than denial b/c the connection between what is forgotten and what is being defended against can be so indirect
- If the feeling, memory, or impulse is locked away in the unconscious, then you’re successfully defended against the anxiety, but this defense doesn’t come free
  - The ego has a limited store of psychic energy that’s taken from the id
  - If the ego runs low on energy or tries to defend against too many impulses simultaneously, it can lose the struggle and these forbidden impulses will rise to consciousness and you’ll feel anxiety w/o knowing why
- The problem is that if ego energy fails—illness, stress, trauma—forbidden impulses might suddenly come to consciousness and maybe even act on at the same time which can result in violent lashing out, emotional binges, and irrational behaviors
  - i.e. a passive person could suddenly kill someone and the neighbors are surprised
- The ego’s energy store is limited and the more it has tied up in repression, the less it has available for other purposes
  - A severe shortage of psychic energy can lead to depression
- Any dam can hold back only so much for so long so repression can’t be used too often
### Reaction formation
- Even more complex than repression
- Keeps forbidden thoughts, feelings, and impulses out of awareness and action by instigating their **opposites**
- The ego is particularly likely to use this tactic if the forbidden impulse is very dangerous or very strong
- Doing or thing the opposite builds a safety margin so the impulse doesn’t reach conscientiousness or action

### Projection
- Like reaction formation to protect against unwanted impulses by causing a behavior that, at first glance, appears to be opposite
- It’s attributing a thought or impulse you have to someone else that is feared in yourself
- i.e. homosexuality
  - aljkdffffffffffffffffffffffff
- Self-doubt can lead to projection

### Rationalization
- Most widely used defense mechanism
- Defends against the anxiety aroused by having done something ashamed and concocting a seemingly rational case for why you had to do it
- They are obviously rationalizations and people who use them seem to believe them anyway
- **Trivialization**
  - Convincing yourself that you are shortcomings or your regrettable actions don’t matter

### Intellectualization
- Turn the feeling into a thought
- i.e. war—necessary for military personnel to effectively strategize
- i.e. medical profession talking about a gallbladder vs. a person—necessary for physician to do their surgery
- i.e. psychology categorizing to explain and deal with
- Builds a barrier better you and reality to enable you to go on with what you need to do
**Displacement**

- Less-intellectual defense mechanism based on a property of primary process thinking
- Replacing one object of emotion with another
- A feeling about your boss might be displaced on a family member
- Relocates the object of an emotional response or desire from an unsafe one to a safe one
- The direction of displacement depends on 2 things
  - Generally an id impulse will be displaced on the available target that’s most similar to the actually desired object, but that it’s also socially desirable
  - Satisfying similar substitutes will be relocated to an acceptable behavior
- i.e. you might become angry at your boss, but fear losing your job if you confront him so you go home and ‘kick the dog’
- It’s useful in redirecting the forbidden and dangerous impulses onto safe targets, but it can be a problem if it becomes a substitute for necessary direct action
- Displacement can also be a problem if it causes aggression to be directed against innocent targets
  - It’s not the dog’s fault that your boss is difficult
- Displacement isn’t always effective
  - A person who displaces anger may become more not less aggressive

**Sublimation**

- To sublime is to be elevated and noble
- Forbidden impulses are transformed into constructive behaviors
- A type of displacement in which the object of an impulse is relocated so that the result is high cultural attainment
  - i.e. great works of art by people such as da Vinci and Michelangelo may be influenced by psychological traumas experienced in childhood
- Occupational choice can be a way to channel otherwise unacceptable impulses into a constructive direction
  - i.e. urge to express hostility and argue lawyer
- Freud considered sublimation to be a positive thing