

Coping skills and ego defense mechanism

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Coping strategies & mechanisms of defense

- ▶ **Coping Strategies may be adaptive or maladaptive: -**
- ▶ Adaptive coping strategies are of two kinds: **Problem-Solving Strategies**, which can be used to make adverse circumstances less stressful, and **Emotional-Reducing Strategies**, which can enhance adaptation to stressful circumstances, .

Coping strategies & mechanisms of defense

- ▶ **Problem-Solving Strategies** Includes: -
 - Seeking help from another person, or obtaining information or advice that would help to solve the problem;
 - **Problem solving** –making and implementing plans to deal with the problem;
 - **Confrontation** –defending one's own rights, or persuading another person to change his behavior, when either action would help the patient.

Coping strategies & mechanisms of defense

- ▶ **Emotion-Reducing Strategies** Includes: -
 - **Ventilation of emotion-** talking to another person and expressing emotion;
 - **Avoidance** –refusing to think about the problem, avoiding people who are causing problems, or avoiding reminders of the problem;
 - **Positive reappraisal** – recognizing that the problem has led to some good, for example self-betterment;
 - **Accepting or rejecting responsibility** – recognizing that one is wholly or partly responsible for the problem and can deal with it, or that one is not responsible and need not react.

Coping strategies & mechanisms of defense

- ▶ These coping strategies are generally useful in reducing the problem or in lessening the emotional reaction.

Coping strategies & mechanisms of defense

▶ Maladaptive Coping Strategies : -

- **Use of alcohol or unperceived drugs** to reduce the emotional response or to reduce awareness of stressful circumstance.
- **Deliberate self-harm** either by drug overdose or self-injury. Sometimes the skin is cut with a sharp instrument to induce pain and draw blood as a way of reducing tension.

Coping strategies & mechanisms of defense

- ▶ **Maladaptive Coping Strategies** (Cont....): -
 - **Histrionic behavior:** an unrestrained display of emotion may reduce tension, and in some societies such behavior is sanctioned in particular circumstances, e.g. grieving.
 - **Aggressive behavior:** overt aggression may release pent-up feelings of anger and provide immediate release. In the longer term, however, it damages relationships and increases the person's difficulties.

Coping strategies & mechanisms of defense

- When particular coping mechanisms are used repeatedly by a person in different situations they are said to constitute a coping style.
- **Mechanisms of defense:**
 - Were originally described by Sigmund Freud and later elaborated by his daughter Anna Freud (1936).
 - Defense mechanisms are unconscious processes.

Study of ego defense mechanisms – psychodynamics

- 1) Describes the **dynamic interactions of unconscious and conscious forces** in the mental life of a person
- 2) The dynamic interactions are often interpreted as **conflicts in unconscious drives and forces** which in turn become expressed in the relationships of the individual

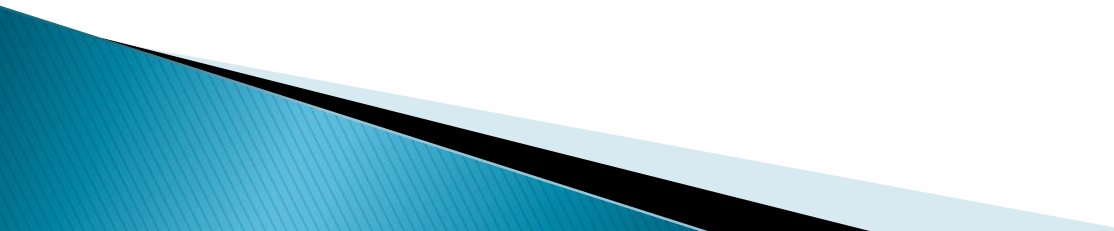
Ego defenses

- ▶ When the conflicts in the unconscious rise to a heightened level the the conflicts threaten to become manifested in the conscious life of the person
- ▶ This is a way to discharge the anxiety created between the unconscious conflicts

The tripartite model of the mind

- ▶ Freud
 - Ego
 - ID
 - Superego
- ▶ The id is need gratifying and impulsive, instinctual
 - Hedonic drives for instance
- ▶ Superego is roughly eq. to conscience
 - Determines that some needs are not consistent with an underlying view of one's self (Ego ideal)

Ego

- ▶ Ego is the mediator between the unconscious world of the Id and Superego and the conscious world of reality
 - ▶ The ego's job is to mediate the struggle between the superego and id
 - ▶ When superego and id are in conflict the person experiences 'signal anxiety'
 - ▶ Ego must convert the signal anxiety to defuse it and make it less threatening.
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Ego Defenses

- ▶ If the signal anxiety cannot be defused it may overwhelm the ego and allow the primitive primary process thinking of the unconscious to become manifested in the conscious life of the person

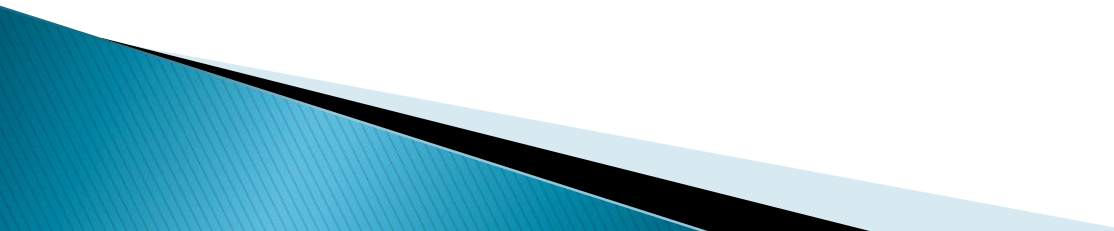
Developmental aspects

- ▶ The Id is the earliest component of the psychodynamic apparatus
 - The infant is basically in a pleasure seeking mode of operating (sometimes this is confused with 'sexuality')
 - The infant also conceives of the world in a narcissistic fashion. Things exist only as they relate to him or her
 - At times the pleasure seeking runs into barriers in the outside world
 - This result in infants being confronted with reality
 - New skills and coping mechanisms develop

Orderly sequence of development

- ▶ Normally there is an orderly sequence as the child matures
- ▶ If significant trauma occurs the child may have difficulty learning the mechanisms that are normally learned at these times
 - Fixated – uneven development of ego function which results in a part of the ego retaining more primitive or immature function
 - Repetition compulsion – replay of events related to significant traumas

Stages

- ▶ Oral
 - ▶ Anal
 - ▶ Phallic
 - ▶ Latency
 - ▶ Genital
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There are characteristic defense mechanisms used in specific stages

- ▶ It is possible to describe defense mechanisms along a hierarchy of maturation– actually done first by Freud's Daughter (Anna)
- ▶ The defenses used provide some evidence for stages where there are fixations

Defense mechanism classification

Narcissistic	Immature	Neurotic	Mature
Denial	Acting out	Displacement	Altruism
Projection	Regression		Humor
Distortion	Passive-aggressive behavior	Reaction formation	Sublimation
Splitting		Repression	Anticipation
	Somatization	Isolation	Suppression
		Rationalization	
	Hypochondriasis	Sexualization	
	Blocking	Intellectualization	

Other immature defense mechanisms

- ▶ Splitting—the tendency to see things as either black or white
 - The rigidity prevents the normal flexibility which is necessary in dealing with ambiguity
 - Borderline and narcissitic PD use this
- ▶ Magical thinking—
- ▶ Undoing

Some characteristic defenses used in specific stages

- ▶ Oral– narcissistic defenses
 - Projection, denial, distortion
- ▶ Anal–
 - Identification, undoing, reaction formation, isolation, regression
- ▶ Phallic / oedipal
 - Intellectualization
- ▶ Latency
 - Symbolization, sublimation