

TABLE 13.2 Common Defense Mechanisms

Defense Mechanism	Psychological Process
Aggressive Mechanisms	
• Fixation • Displacement • Negativism	Person maintains a persistent, nonadjustive reaction even though all the cues indicate the behavior will not cope with the problem. Individual redirects pent-up emotions toward persons, ideas, or objects other than the primary source of the emotion. Person uses active or passive resistance, operating unconsciously.
Compromise Mechanisms	
• Compensation • Identification • Rationalization	Individual devotes himself or herself to a pursuit with increased vigor to make up for some feeling of real or imagined inadequacy. Individual enhances own self-esteem by patterning behavior after another's, frequently also internalizing the values and beliefs of the other person; also vicariously shares the glories or suffering in the disappointments of other individuals or groups. Person justifies inconsistent or undesirable behavior, beliefs, statements, and motivations by providing acceptable explanations for them.
Withdrawal Mechanisms	
• Flight or withdrawal • Conversion • Fantasy	Through either physical or psychological means, person leaves the field in which frustration, anxiety, or conflict is experienced. Emotional conflicts are expressed in muscular, sensory, or bodily symptoms of disability, malfunctioning, or pain. Person daydreams or uses other forms of imaginative activity to obtain an escape from reality and obtain imagined satisfactions.

SOURCE: Timothy W. Costello and Sheldon S. Zalkind, adapted table from "Psychology in Administration: A Research Orientation" from *Journal of Conflict Resolution* III, 1959, pp. 148–149.

may respond harshly to an employee after a telephone confrontation with an angry customer. Another aggressive defense mechanism is *negativism*, which is active or passive resistance. *Negativism* is illustrated by a manager who, when appointed to a committee on which she did not want to serve, made negative comments throughout the meeting.

Compromise mechanisms, such as compensation, identification, and rationalization, are used by individuals to make the best of a conflict situation. *Compensation* occurs when an individual tries to make up for an inadequacy by putting increased energy into another activity. Compensation can be seen when a person makes up for a bad relationship at home by spending more time at the office. *Identification* occurs when one individual patterns his or her behavior after another's. One supervisor at a construction firm, not wanting to acknowledge consciously that she was not likely to be promoted, mimicked the behavior of her boss, even going so far as to buy a car just like the boss's. *Rationalization* is justifying one's behavior

negativism

An aggressive mechanism in which a person responds with pessimism to any attempt at solving a problem.

compensation

A compromise mechanism in which an individual attempts to make up for a negative situation by devoting himself or herself to another pursuit with increased vigor.

identification

A compromise mechanism whereby an individual patterns his or her behavior after another's.

rationalization

A compromise mechanism characterized by trying to justify one's behavior by constructing bogus reasons for it.