



# A Case Study On Defense Mechanism: Reference To Christopher's Coping Mechanisms

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## INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud first proposed the idea of the defense mechanism, stating that defensive reactions happen when the ego tries to shield itself from the id. The ego attempts to avoid conscious awareness of unsettling emotions or undesirable motivations when the id presents the ego with inappropriate motivations or thoughts. But in modern psychology, the term "defense mechanism" refers more widely to any pattern of behaviour that an individual uses to shield themselves from negative emotions like guilt, anger, or shame.

George Vaillant is a psychiatrist who has contributed to the study of defense mechanisms. Renowned for his work on the Harvard Study of Adult Development, a longitudinal study that has been going on since 1938, is researcher and psychiatrist George E. Vaillant. Vaillant has written about a number of psychological ideas, including defense mechanisms. Defense mechanisms are psychological techniques people unknowingly employ to keep their self-esteem intact and shield themselves from anxiety. In his own research, Vaillant expanded on defense mechanisms and built on the findings of Sigmund Freud. From mature to immature, he divided defense mechanisms into four categories of adaptation. According to Vaillant's research, people may depend on various defense mechanisms at different stages of their lives, and using more developed defenses is linked to improved psychological health. People tend to stray from immature defenses and rely more on mature ones as they get older. It's crucial to remember that although defense mechanisms can aid people in managing stress, their overuse or strict application can result in maladaptive behaviours and mental health problems. The studies conducted by Vaillant advance our knowledge of how people deal with life's obstacles and preserve their psychological health as they mature.

By amplifying fear/anxiety and sadness, intelligence plays a role in the initiation of anxiety disorders and depression. The impairment of sleep, appetite, concentration, energy level, sexual desire, and motivation inherent in clinical anxiety and depression greatly diminishes a person's capacity to function. Adapting to changing environmental conditions requires motivation, concentration, and problem-solving abilities that all suffer when severe adverse emotions take over. Psychological defense mechanisms serve an important function by attenuating negative emotions to maintain or restore a healthier state of mind. Another way of looking at the matter is that the by-product of intelligence, intensified fear/anxiety and sadness/depression, has favoured the evolution of psychological defense mechanisms designed to reduce the intensity, frequency, and duration of these adverse feeling's states. This emotion-dampening function of defense mechanisms contributes an adaptive value beyond containing and redirecting disturbing impulses and drives. Consequently, the psychological defense system is expressed often unknowingly in each and every person much like the immune system operates without our conscious awareness (Vaillant, 1994).

Examining psychological defense mechanisms through the lens of an evolved strategy highlights typical expressions rather than the typical focus on the pathological or neurotic. Considering that the majority of evolved traits exhibit a variety of expressions, this viewpoint is also consistent with the idea that psychological defense mechanisms manifest in a range of severity. Like the immune system, which employs humoral and cellular defenses, these spectrums ought to be founded on a common template. The two overlapping spectrums of dissociation and cognitive distortions are thought to contain the majority of psychological defense mechanisms. Although this perspective emphasizes more severe variants, it downplays the much more common and functional manifestations of these psychological entities, which are frequently thought of as pathological. The majority of traditional defense strategies, including intellectualization, rationalization, isolation, and denial, will be further discussed, but they are really derived from dissociation templates and cognitive distortion to a lesser degree.

According to the study, self-destructiveness was more accurately predicted by the behavioral brain systems' sensitivity to punishment subscale than by any other. This result is consistent with the theory of brain-behavioral systems, which holds that the brain-behavioral system is activated in fear-inducing situations and is sensitive to punishment and non-reward. Anxiety is an emotional state brought on by this system's activity, which also results in behavioral inhibition, passive avoidance, and quiet. This system's two behavioral components are extinction (quitting actions that don't produce rewards) and passive avoidance (avoiding punishment by submission or inaction). (Gray, J. A., McNaughton, N. (2000))

According to the balance model, people whose brain-behavioral system of sensitivity to punishment is activated tend to suppress negative emotions, which can lead them to make self-destructive decisions. This is because, as previously mentioned, the system is sensitive to anxiety-provoking, punishing, and non-reward conditions that activated in fearful conditions. (Mousavi, A. S., & Norouzi, L. (2022))

**KEYWORDS:** workplace, anxiety, positive, humor, anticipation.

## CASE

Christopher, a 34-year-old software engineer, found himself caught in the intricate web of family and workplace pressure, leading to increasing levels of anxiety. Juggling responsibilities at home and navigating a demanding work environment took a toll on his mental well-being. Regardless of these various things he used to tackle those with some or the other way. Christopher was on high time as there was appraisal nearby and had to achieve at any cost, he was working extra hours to accomplish it. There were times where office politics would put into hurdles for his tasks, few of personal life stuff would also affect since he couldn't give more time to his family. He used to still be strong at these times in pressure because he used to anticipate few things earlier as well as even was having mentally strong defenses mechanism to cope up in these kinds of situations.

Even the office ambience as well as the bunch of co-workers around would make fun out of him, try to pull his legs, utilise him as opportunity to get their works done. This was also haunting him during his work. This also led to at the various frustration both in office and home. Sometimes it was even like a trauma for him to get out of these things. He eventually at the times used to manage to put frustration out but would lead to other consequences as the same frustration he would have out elsewhere.

### Coping Mechanisms:

1. Humor as a Coping Mechanism: To combat anxiety, Christopher developed a habit of finding humor in challenging situations. He would take things in a pretty simpler and funny way thus regardless all the things which used to challenge him mentally would try to stay focused. This adaptive coping mechanism allowed him to view problems through a lighter lens, providing temporary relief from stressors.

2. Anticipation and Future Planning: Christopher proactively anticipated potential challenges, allowing him to plan for future discomforts. This strategic approach helped him regain a sense of control over his life and mitigate anxiety by preparing for potential stressors. Thus, even was ready to always accept the challenges since he was knowing about his coworkers very well what intentions do they carry, his management where they used to Favor few and also put people inn critical situations put hurdles into his works and his family too thus would anticipate well in advance and plan for the situations thus make his works easier and even mentally be prepared for the tasks.

3. Work-Home Boundary Challenges: Unfortunately, Christopher struggled to maintain a clear boundary between work and home. Frustrations from the workplace would sometimes spill over into his personal life, causing conflicts within the family. This would make his personal life also miserable thereby making things go still worse.

4. **Suppression of Dangerous Thoughts:** At times, faced with overwhelming anxiety, Christopher attempted to bury dangerous thoughts. This avoidance strategy, however, posed a risk as it prevented him from addressing the root causes of his anxiety. Which made him to not actually analyse the things well about what exactly happening since he use to suppress things which was also made him to not to express his thoughts openly nor even had some kind of thought process on how he could come out of it hence this was also kind of mechanism which was only a short term suppresser.

5. **Positive Reframing:** Christopher demonstrated resilience by actively working to convert negative thoughts and emotions into positive instincts. This cognitive restructuring helped him navigate challenges with a more optimistic mindset, fostering emotional well-being.

#### Challenges Faced:

Despite his coping mechanisms, Christopher encountered moments of overwhelming anxiety. Balancing family expectations with workplace demands proved to be an ongoing struggle, and at times, his humor and planning weren't enough to alleviate the pressure.

#### Professional Support:

Realizing the need for professional help, Christopher sought therapy to explore deeper issues contributing to his anxiety. Through therapy, he gained insights into managing stressors more effectively and learned additional coping strategies.

#### Outcome:

Christopher's journey was one of resilience and self-discovery. By embracing humor, anticipating challenges, and seeking professional support, he gradually gained control over his anxiety. Over time, he developed a more balanced approach to family and work expectations, fostering a healthier mindset.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Encourage Christopher to establish clear boundaries between work and home to prevent workplace frustrations from affecting his personal life.
2. Suggest seeking professional support, such as therapy, to address underlying issues and develop healthier coping mechanisms.
3. Advocate for open communication within the family to manage and adjust expectations, reducing family-related stressors.
4. Provide stress management resources within the workplace to support employees facing high-pressure environments.
5. Promote a healthy work-life balance, emphasizing the importance of self-care and taking breaks to recharge.

## CONCLUSION

So thus, above case where Christopher had used humour, anticipation, suppression, displacement and are defense mechanisms which can be observed. Coping up with mechanisms show how exactly the Christopher used to deal with his anxieties. The various challenges faced by antagonist even though few favour in his way. The outcome provides what exactly Christopher have been into and way through which he used to come out of that anxiety.

Few recommendations above may also enhance upon making sure mental health to be well but still the question arises that ‘whether defense mechanism understanding in individual would really help them to come out of the anxiety for a short term or long term’? ‘Whether these do provide the kind of impact which necessarily needed for human’? also should look at what are various mechanisms which actually happens in human. Further can also enhance on what exactly the phenomenon can be existing? How exactly these things get? what individual what exactly they want? Even one can analyse what they would have done in these situations?

Hereby this case showcases there are many other defense mechanisms apart from these which readers can go out of interest to look deeper into these kinds of aspects.

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