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| **DEFENSE** | **DESCRIPTION** | **EXAMPLE** |
| **denial** | arguing against an anxiety provoking stimuli by stating it doesn't exist | denying that your physician's diagnosis of cancer is correct and seeking a second opinion |
| **displacement** | taking out impulses on a less threatening target | slamming a door instead of hitting a person, yelling at your spouse after an argument with your boss |
| **intellectualization** | avoiding unacceptable emotions by focusing on the intellectual aspects | focusing on the details of a funeral as opposed to the sadness and grief |
| **projection** | placing unacceptable impulses in yourself onto someone else | when losing an argument, you state "You're just Stupid;" homophobia |
| **rationalization** | supplying a logical or rational reason as opposed to the real reason | stating that you were fired because you didn't kiss up the the boss, when the real reason was your poor performance |
| **reaction formation** | taking the opposite belief because the true belief causes anxiety | having a bias against a particular race or culture and then embracing that race or culture to the extreme |
| **regression** | returning to a previous stage of development | sitting in a corner and crying after hearing bad news; throwing a temper tantrum when you don't get your way |
| **repression** | pulling into the unconscious | forgetting sexual abuse from your childhood due to the trauma and anxiety |
| **sublimation** | acting out unacceptable impulses in a socially acceptable way | sublimating your aggressive impulses toward a career as a boxer; becoming a surgeon because of your desire to cut; lifting weights to release 'pent up' energy |
| **suppression** | pushing into the unconscious | trying to forget something that causes you anxiety |

**Ego Defense Mechanisms**

The ego's job is to satisfy the id's impulses, not offend the moralistic character of the superego, while still taking into consideration the reality of the situation. This is not an easy job. Think of the id as the 'devil on your shoulder' and the superego as the 'angel of your shoulder.' We don't want either one to get too strong so we talk to both of them, hear their perspective, and then make a decision. This decision is the ego talking, the one looking for that healthy balance.

Before we can talk more about this, we need to understand what drives the id, ego, and superego. According to Freud, we only have two drives; sex and aggression. In other words, everything we do is motivated by one of these two drives.

Sex, also called Eros or the Life force, represents our drive to live, prosper, and produce offspring. Aggression, also called Thanatos or our Death force, represents our need to stay alive and stave off threats to our existence, our power, and our prosperity.

Now the ego has a difficult time satisfying both the id and the superego, but it doesn't have to do so without help. The ego has some tools it can use in its job as the mediator, tools that help defend the ego. These are called **Ego Defense Mechanisms** or Defenses. When the ego has a difficult time making both the id and the superego happy, it will employ one or more of the defenses in the chart below.

Ego defenses are not necessarily unhealthy as you can see by the examples in the chart. In fact, the lack of these defenses, or the inability to use them effectively, can often lead to problems in life. However, we sometimes employ the defenses at the wrong time or overuse them, which can be equally destructive.