Coping refers to active efforts to master, reduce or tolerate the demands created by stress. When we cope, we consciously think and make a decision to deal with the problems we face. However, we may cope in negative ways. We may drink too much, eat too much, worry too much, or even abuse medication and drugs. (page 360).

Sometimes stress, frustration and conflict with dealing with our problems interferes with our ability to maintain our self-concept. We become extremely sensitive to threats to our ego and self-concept. In order to protect our feelings of self-esteem and self-concept, we may unconsciously distort reality (page 360).

These ego defense mechanisms do not deal with the problem that is causing us anxiety, but will buy us some time to effectively deal with our problems. Defense mechanisms have two primary characteristics

(1) They distort and/or deny reality
(2) They operate unconsciously.
# Major Ego Defense Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of anxiety</th>
<th>Defense mechanism to reduce anxiety</th>
<th>Name of the defense mechanism</th>
<th>How the defense mechanism works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A young girl was sexually abused by her uncle.</td>
<td>As an adult, she can’t remember anything about the traumatic experience.</td>
<td>Repression</td>
<td>The master defense mechanism; the ego pushes unacceptable impulses out of awareness, back into the unconscious mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A college student does not get into the fraternity of his choice.</td>
<td>He says that if he had tried harder he could have gotten in.</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
<td>The ego replaces a less acceptable motive with a more acceptable one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman who fears her sexual urges</td>
<td>becomes a religious zealot</td>
<td>Reaction formation</td>
<td>The ego transforms an unacceptable motive into its opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man who has a strong desire to have an extramarital affair</td>
<td>accuses his wife of flirting with other men.</td>
<td>Projection</td>
<td>The ego attributes personal shortcomings, problems, and faults to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every time she and her husband have a big argument</td>
<td>A woman returns home to her mother</td>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>The ego seeks the security of an earlier developmental period in the face of stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman can’t take her anger out on her boss.</td>
<td>so she goes home and takes it out on her husband</td>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>The ego shifts feelings toward an unacceptable object to another more acceptable object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman with strong sexual urges</td>
<td>becomes an artist who paints nudes.</td>
<td>Sublimation</td>
<td>The ego replaces an unacceptable impulse with a socially acceptable one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A team of doctors has diagnosed a man with cancer.</td>
<td>but he won’t acknowledge that he has cancer</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>The ego refuses to acknowledge anxiety producing realities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify the defense mechanism

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

“On the other hand, the daily rate is a lot cheaper than at the ski lodge.”

“I can’t seem to pinpoint the cause of your ailment...

(Reversion to childhood)

It’s probably due to drinking...

(Reaction formation)

Then I’ll come back when you’re sober!”
Identify the Ego Defense Mechanisms

- Denial
- Regression
- Displacement
- Repression

- Reaction Formation
- Projection
- Rationalization
Identify the following Ego Defense Mechanisms

1. Anne’s car broke down. Since she does not have enough money for repairs, she must leave an hour earlier to ride her bicycle or walk to work. Anne commented that she enjoys the exercise and saving the gas and oil money.

2. Chad had stopped sucking his thumb by the time he was four. At age seven he was told that his parents were divorcing and he would be living with his mother and a “new father.” Chad began sucking his thumb again.

3. Martin was cutting wood and injured his hand with his chain saw. While driving to the emergency room of a local hospital, he recalled the painful shots he received during his last visit. He missed the turn to the hospital and had to ask for directions to find it.

4. Eric is a big spender. He tips heavily, buys extravagant gifts, and often gambles. When his thrifty wife bought materials to make new kitchen curtains, he accused her of squandering money needlessly. He claimed the old worn curtains were adequate and said she was wasting our money.

5. Little Suzi was upset when her mother spanked her. She ran to her toy crib and smacked her doll.

6. Jeremy has always been a problem to his mother. He never keeps rules and argues with her constantly. In choosing a tattoo, he selected a large heart with “Mom” in the center to show his affection for her.

7. Whenever Elizabeth is angry she heads for her piano. She has composed several outstanding jazz tunes.
Identifying Defense Mechanisms

Label each statement with the correct defense mechanism from this list:

- Repression
- Denial
- Reaction Formation
- Rationalization
- Displacement
- Sublimation
- Projection

1. Sarah is heavily involved with an anti-pornography campaign and fights her own erotic interest in it. She hopes her campaign will convince others of her purity.

2. A woman who was assaulted and raped a number of years ago in a terrifying attack has forgotten the incident.

3. Your boss yelled at you, you yelled at your co-worker, your co-worker yelled at his wife, his wife spanked the kid, and the kid kicked the dog.

4. "Stop asking me! I don't want any ice cream. I think YOU want more ice cream!"

5. Eduardo reads an article about skin cancer. He goes home and examines the marks on his leg. He then comments to his friend on the tendency for his family to have very dark moles with irregular borders.

6. Joshua had a bad semester and was put on academic probation. Instead of returning to college, he quits to "pursue something worthwhile."

7. Mia is usually an angry, hostile person. But since she's been playing on the volleyball team her mood has improved.

8. You got fired and couldn't make your car insurance payments, so you're riding your bike. You tell friends, "I really prefer to ride my bike. I need the exercise."

9. A young woman who finds herself attracted to other women proclaims that she hates lesbians and joins a vicious anti-gay group.

10. The parents of Jim say that "Everyone goes through a drinking stage; it's not a problem" even though Jim just received his third DUI.

11. Soldiers exposed to traumatic experiences in concentration camps sometimes had amnesia and were unable to recall any of their ordeal.

12. A priest converts his sexual energy into running a busy soup kitchen to feed the poor.

13. A woman with a strong sexual drive constantly criticizes her female co-workers for dressing seductively and flirting.