

## A DICTIONARY OF THE PSYCHE

**Anxiety:** An internal feeling of nervousness and worry of two types. One, situational anxiety is directed toward a specific person or event. Two, in free-floating anxiety we have no idea of its origin, it tends to be with us 24 hours a day. Anxiety is experienced by all except perhaps those without a *conscience*. Moderate anxiety, both free floating and situational, can be very productive in that it keeps us focused, prepared and at the top of our game; however in excessive amounts either can be very counterproductive, getting in our way of effectively dealing with the situation that produces anxiety (situational) or the outside world in general (free-floating). Anxiety in the extreme can truly paralyze people to inaction whether in their careers or relationships. Anxiety is experienced in our consciousness typically as a feeling of dread about a potential future event.

Some theorists describe anxiety as a concern over challenges related to one of the desires of the *id*, meaning anxieties arise from a concern over accomplishing the goals of one of our *instinctual drives*. In fact, for men anxieties are frequently related to issues of achievement and dominance, whereas for women, anxieties are frequently related to concerns over relationships, bonding, and family.

**Compensation:** At times the real objects that we desire can not be obtained. In frustration, we then create a story to tell ourselves, a *compensation*, that allows us to either deny we really wanted that object in the first place, or to feel good about having to accept a substitute for our true goal.

**Compulsion:** A seemingly irrational need to repeat an activity over and over. Psychoanalytic theory suggests that by keeping ourselves focused upon and repeating a behavior, we are attempting to ward off *anxiety* created by a conflict between a primal desire of the *id* and the moral standards of the *superego*.

**Conscience:** The thought processes that we experience as the ego tries to reconcile the conflict between the *id's* desires and the *superego's* standards of moral behavior. A guilty conscience is when the *ego's* thoughts and/or its actual behavior are in conflict with the *superego*.

**Conscious:** The self-awareness we experience during our waking hours comprised of our sensory experiences and our thoughts. Our conscious thoughts are what constitute the *ego*.

**Defense Mechanism:** A variety of activities, thought processes (e.g. *compensation, displacement, identification, projection, rationalization, and repression*) engaged in by the *ego* to shield itself from recognizing its failure to act in ways that match with our own idealized sense of who we are. This function of the ego is in most cases experienced with accompanying emotions and is often the source of the emotional fog that keeps us from seeing ourselves and others in an honest way as well as keeping us acting self-destructively.

**Depression:** In its true clinical form, as separate from the ups and downs of daily disappointments, it is characterized by feelings of worthlessness accompanied by a loss of appetite, sexual desire, and normal sleep patterns. Some theories view *anxiety* as a first step which may then be followed by a realization that there is no hope of relieving the *anxiety*. The realization of being trapped, no way out, the battle is truly lost triggers the *depression*. As one would expect from the definition of *anxiety*, men are more frequently depressed about issues related to achievement and dominance whereas women are more frequently depressed over issues related to family, relationships, and bonding.

A variation of this theory suggests that depression results from anger directed at others (possibly the sources of anxiety) that can not be expressed or acted upon. Once the hopelessness of the situation is realized, the anger is turned inward upon oneself and experienced as *depression*.

**Displacement:** The energy and desires of the drives of the *id* cannot at times be directed at their true goal, instead, it is directed, displaced, toward something that it can achieve. For example, the old line about instead of punching the boss, when you come home from work you kick the dog.

**Ego:** Our *conscious* experience that arises as our thoughts as we try to resolve the conflict between satisfying the *instinctual* needs of our *id* with the moral and legal rules of our society in the *superego*. The ego also asserts itself as it delays gratifying our *id's* wishes until a time and place more satisfying to the wishes of the *superego*. We experience the ego as our sense of self, who we are as a person. Threats to this sense of self provoke *ego defense mechanisms* as a way to preserve our ego.

**Id:** Term to describe the part of our psyche which contains the *instinctual drives* we have inherited from our animal ancestors. The *id* is considered the energy source, the motivation for all our behaviors as we try to satisfy its needs. We usually have no *conscious* awareness of the needs of the *id*, it is an *unconscious* process.

**Identification:** One of the *ego's defense mechanisms*, typically triggered by a need to enhance the *ego's* status. We identify with and take on ourselves the characteristics of an admired/successful person and act as if they are traits of our own. Often times described as "identification with the aggressor." The complicity of the German people with Hitler's atrocities is often seen as giving themselves an *ego* boost through identification with the power and authority of their leader to make others suffer.

**Instinctual Drives:** We do not learn to feel hungry and to eat to satisfy the *instinctual drive* of hunger. The feeling of hunger and how to satisfy it comes in our genes, it is innate, not learned. The same is true of many of our interactions with other people such as those related to sex, child rearing, marking and defending our territory, and participating in a dominance/status hierarchy. That we want to participate in these activities requires no learning, they are innate in our genes. However, how we express them is very culturally determined.

**Narcissism:** Named after the person, Narcissus, in Greek mythology who spent all his time admiring his reflection in a pond. An excessive preoccupation with one's own looks; tends to go along with a self-centered personality. To the narcissistic personality, the world revolves around them and exists to satisfy their needs. The feelings of others take a distant second place in comparison with one's concern for their own feelings.

**Neuroses:** The friction between the needs of the *id* and the rules of the *superego* creates a state of tension which is called *neuroses*. *Neuroses* are not necessarily bad, all people experience them as the inevitable unfulfilled part of the needs of the *id*. However, in some people the *neuroses* are sufficiently powerful they disrupt normal psychological functioning and lead to self-destructive behaviors. On the plus side, it is the unfulfilled desires of the *id* that motivates us to improve our lives.

**Personality:** Comprises who we are as experienced by other people, our expression of the interactions between our *id*, *ego*, and *superego*.

**Projection:** Attitudes, thoughts, and feelings that we have are sometimes found to be unacceptable or threatening to our ego's sense of who we would like to be. Instead of accepting them as our own, we project them onto other people as a way of protecting ourselves from the damaging self-awareness. For example, someone who grew up in a morally very strict home and then becomes a preacher who rails from the pulpit against others watching pornography, yet goes home at night compelled to watch dirty movies. His railing against the sins of others is the ego's defense mechanism by projecting its own unacceptable thoughts onto others. Perhaps the type of behavior described by Shakespeare: "Me think thou doth protest too much."

**Rationalization:** A complex process where we make up a story that allows us to ignore objective reality. By believing the story we avoid confronting something about ourselves that would otherwise be very painful to our *ego* to realize about ourselves.

**Resistance:** A description of the general processes of the *defense mechanisms* and *repression*. An inability to think certain thoughts or experience certain feelings because these thoughts or feelings would be challenges to our *ego's* sense of pride in who we are. An action our *ego* takes to fend off thoughts or feelings that are threatening to the status quo of our psyche.

**Repression:** In the case where our attempts to allow the drives of the *unconscious* to find at least partial expression are met with complete failure, our *ego* to avoid dealing with this failure may simply *repress* these needs back into the *unconscious*. An example would be a woman who can not have children will hide her deep desire for motherhood under a blanket of thoughts about how she "never really wanted children anyway."

**Secondary Gain:** Describes a process whereby our unconscious needs control our conscious experience. For example, a medically unexplained illness such as pain, will bring the patient a great deal of attention and sympathy from both doctors and friends, as well as makes them the center of attention in their family. A person's unconscious creates

a feeling of pain because the secondary gain, the attention, is worth the primary event, the pain that is consciously very real.

**Sublimation:** The instinctual drives of the *id* can never find their true expression into reality, a society of moral and legal standards has no room for such animalistic actions. Sublimation is the process whereby the *ego* figures out a compromise action between the needs of the *id* and the rules of the *superego* in order to give partial satisfaction to the *id*.

**Superego:** Beginning with the earliest admonitions from our parents, we are constantly learning the rules and regulations, both moral and legal, of our society. The part of our psyche that stores these rules of the road for living is called the *superego*.

**Suppression:** A *conscious* action by the *ego* resulting from its realization that we can not realistically fulfill the *id's* desires and the *ego* then actively chooses to *suppress* the *id's* wishes. The *ego* is in full control and completely aware of the desires of the *id* and in full understanding of the constraints of the *superego*, pushes these desires into the background, if not fully back into the *id*.

**Unconscious:** A world of *instinctual drives* that are the primal determinants of our behavior. We are usually unaware *consciously* of these feelings. They are unacceptable in their purest form in a complex society of moral and legal rules. It is the frustration our psyche feels in not being able to express these drives one-hundred percent that is the source of our emotional woes.