Passive Aggression

Passive aggression is characterized by the expression of negative feelings, resentment, and aggression in an unassertive passive way. In short, people using this defense mechanism are unconsciously demonstrating hostile feelings in a nonconfrontational manner. This is an unconscious, immature ego defense that is characterized by indirect opposition. It is associated with borderline personality disorder.



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Characteristics

Indirect Expression of Opposition

Indirect-sign Girl doing Opposite Actions

Indirect opposition is the core feature of passive aggression. People using this defense mechanism are unconsciously demonstrating hostile feelings in a nonconfrontational manner. For example, a child wetting herself as a way to get back at her father, who hasn't been treating her well. Alternatively, an employee repeatedly coming late to work as a way to get back at the manager who has been humiliating him.

Immature Ego Defense

Immature-baby Lego-ego

Passive aggression is a type of immature defense mechanism. Other important immature defense mechanisms are projection, isolation of affect, identification, idealization, fixation, displacement, splitting, dissociation, rationalization, acting out, passive-aggressiveness, and denial. Immature psychological defense mechanisms are psychological processes that play an important role in suppressing emotional awareness and increase the risk of various medical conditions. These patients are more likely to lead unhealthy lifestyles and use food and drugs to cope with external stressors.

Associations

Borderline Personality Disorder

Borderlined Person with Purse-onality Disordered

Borderline personality disorder is characterized by self-harm, unstable relationships with friends and family, and fear of abandonment. While splitting is typically associated with these patients, passive aggression is also associated with borderline personality disorder.

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