

Regression

Regression is one of the immature ego defenses that is best characterized as a reversion to a younger state. This is involuntary and often stress-induced. Regression is the opposite of another immature ego defense, fixation.



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Characteristics

Reversion to a Younger State

Reverse Time Machine

Regression is a form of ego defense described as a reversion to a younger state, aiming to go back to the past when a person felt safer than in the current situation. This ego defense occurs due to a stressful event that most likely happened in early life.

Immature Ego Defense

Immature-baby with Ego-Lego Getting Defensive

Regression is an immature ego defense. Immature ego defenses help to reduce anxiety and distress from uncomfortable situations but are detrimental over the long-term in psychosocial development. This leads to the inability of a person to cope effectively.

Involuntary

No-sign Volunteer

Regression happens in an involuntary way. The person does not necessarily want to bring about this immature ego defense but he/she does not have a better way to cope with the stress.

Stress-Induced

Stressed-guy

Regression usually occurs due to a stressful situation. An example of regression is when a child is bedwetting again after successfully being toilet-trained. Another example is when a child sucks his/her finger again after seemingly growing past it. New stressors in life can cause regression.

Opposite of Fixation

Opposite of Fixing (Worker Making Damage)

Regression is the opposite of another immature ego defense, fixation. Fixation can be described as someone being "stuck" in development. An example of fixation is a physician that throws a tantrum because a patient is late.