**Defense Mechanisms – Gestalt (Perls)**

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| **Common “reactive” responses to feedback**(R.A.P.I.D)Gestalt (Fritz Perls) |
| **R**etroflexionRetroflection | “The act of bending backwards”Taking the feedback too far the other way.It’s all my fault… It’s always my fault.*If I’m responsible for everything, then I don’t have to risk feeling vulnerable.* |
| **A**ttribution | “Assigning to a cause or source”To assume, interpret, and judge the feedback.You must be saying that because you are jealous…*You’re responsible for everything; it’s all outside of me*. |
| **P**rojection | “a defense mechanism by which your own traits and emotions are attributed to someone else.”Seeing in the other person what is being presented.*What I pay attention to in you is really unowned by me.*The behavior that aggravates me in you is something I should look at in myself.Positive projection is what’s unclaimed in me when I “shine the light” positively on another |
| **I**ntrojection | “the unconscious incorporation of the values, attitudes, and qualities of another person into the individual’s own egostructure”Swallowing something whole.Joe says I’m an idiot, and I start to feel bad because I believe I’m an idiot.*Values, attitudes, beliefs that I’ve been taught and lived unchallenged until I bump into conflict – (voices in our heads)* |
| **D**eflection | Backing away from the information.Denying its validity completely. Changing the subject instead. |
| **C**onfluence | *(two rivers coming together) – when two people parallel each other and never risk disagreement* |

We desire authentic interaction, and yet we develop behavior that keeps us from getting it.

Our defenses are things we typically do without thinking when we feel vulnerable.

It’s important to have defense mechanism – they are useful and healthy.

The problem is when these mechanism gets in the way of our **learning**.

When talking about defense mechanisms, these are typically things we do unconsciously.

Applying the above defense mechanisms to Family Systems,

**Virginia Satir** in “Peoplemaking”, identified four types of family systems:

cf.: Communication Skills, p 57-70

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| Blaming | It’s your fault; “if only you wouldn’t…”At extremes, a psychopath will never own responsibility.This is both **Attribution** and **Projection** |
| Distracting | Members don’t answer anything directly.It is a way of disappearing.**Deflection** is the primary defense mechanism |
| Placating | Submissive, rolling over, surrendering to other person, peace at any price; losing self.**Confluence** and **Introjection** are the primary defensemechanisms. |
| Computing | not paying attention to heart or feelings; rational; logical – talk about politics |