Models of Health and Defense

*With Apologia to the East... from "Where the West Begins"

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Working computational model

Extended to theory of mind

Applied to language

Diagram:
- Developing Theory of Mind
  - Enriched Conversations
  - Make Inferences
  - Guessing
  - "Solving" to stimulate problem solving
  - Role Playing
  - Narratives
  - Humor at dawn
  - Play
  - Jokes & Riddles
  - Make Predictions
  - GIVE HOPE
The purpose of the Ego Defense Mechanisms is to protect the mind/self/ego from anxiety, social sanctions or to provide a refuge from a situation with which one cannot currently cope. Generally defense mechanisms are unconscious but can be rendered more conscious in some successful therapies to be less primitive and more effective in the future.

Vaillant has characterized 4 levels:

Level 1. Pathological – appears “crazy” to others
Level 2. Immature – Developmental but inefficient
Level 3. Neurotic – Core Conflicts combine with paradoxical behaviors
Level 4. Mature – Very efficient but are complex to master and require limited influence by historical negative enablers

Mental Health as Positive Psychology

1) Not the absence of negatives but the presence of positives
2) Maslow’s concept of self-actualization
3) Seligman’s book on Learned Optimism and Authentic Happiness
4) Talents, Enablers, Strengths and Outcomes

BUT:

How expensive is it?
Is it culturally insensitive?
Is optimism overrated….(or what is the p value)?...
In a human continuum, above average is healthy or healthier.

Intercorrelation of many factors must be considered.

Reflected in DSM GAF scores.

Active, joyous, enic engagement of the world.

Csikszentmihalyi – “Flow” focused attention, psychic absorption, challenge and skillful mastery.

BUT

Freud dismissed the idea of mental health as an “ideal fiction.”

And certainly not everything above average is good...

Progressive brain myelination into the sixth decade of life.

Erikson - “Criterion of Mental Health” - is the mastery of his series of 8 conflicts.

Vaillant – added Career Consolidation and Keeper of the Meaning to Eriksonian Theory.

Kohlberg – Opined on stages of Moral Development.

William Menninger – Proposed maturity as the antonym (opposite) of narcissism...
1) Accurate monitoring and conscious self-perception of personal emotions – an effective observing ego
2) Emotional Modulation and Self-Soothing
3) Recognition and appropriate responses to emotions in others – Theory of Mind
4) Skill in negotiating close relationships
5) Capacity for focused emotions to effect desired goals – delayed gratification and adaptive displacing and channeling of impulses...

“No man can be happy who not think himself so.”
But subjective happiness can be either adaptive or maladaptive, or narcissistic.
So, “Happiness and misery depend as much on temperament as on fortune.”
Spirituality provides hope that bad times will pass and it lends wonder and joy to ordinary events. It offers the miraculous.
A good marker is the question-“How do feel about your life as a whole?” Then assess this on a 7 point scale from “delighted to terrible”...
Adolf Meyer in 1925 opined “there are no mental diseases, there are only characteristic reaction patterns to stress.”

Using conscious cognitive strategies, social support and adaptive defense mechanisms

Defenses shield us from the four lodestars of conflict: affect, reality, relationships and conscience

Deploying mature defenses requires both experience and innate balance

For instance, the capacity to keep track of simple details under serious pressure...

Most defense mechanisms are fairly unconscious – that means most of us don’t realize we’re using them in the moment. Some types of psychotherapy can help a person become aware of what defense mechanisms they are using, how effective they are, and how to use less primitive and more effective mechanisms in the future.
Psychotic and Pathological Defenses

The mechanisms on this level, when predominating, almost always are severely pathological. These defenses, in conjunction, permit one to effectively rearrange external experiences to eliminate the need to cope with reality. The pathological users of these mechanisms frequently appear crazy or insane to others. These are the "psychotic" defenses, common in overt psychosis. However, they are found in dreams and throughout childhood as well.

Denial and Psychotic Denial

1. Denial
   - Denial is the refusal to accept reality or fact, acting as if a painful event, thought or feeling did not exist. It is considered one of the most primitive of the defense mechanisms because it is characteristic of early childhood development. For instance, a person who is a functioning alcoholic will often simply deny they have a drinking problem, pointing to how well they function in their job and relationships.

2. Delusional Projection: Grossly frank delusions about external reality, usually of a persecutory nature.

3. Extreme Projection: The blatant denial of a moral or psychological deficiency, which is perceived as a deficiency in another individual or group.

* If your riding ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

Distortion and Dissimulation

1. Distortion: A gross reshaping of external reality to meet internal needs.

2. Delusional Projection: Grossly frank delusions about external reality, usually of a persecutory nature.

3. Dissimulation: Manufacturing of alternate explanations by distorting facts to manipulate others when affects associated with behaviors are unacceptable.

*Never take another man's bet. He wouldn't offer it if he didn't know something you don't.
*You can't always tell a gunslinger by the way he walks.

Splitting

A primitive defense. Negative and positive impulses are split off and unintegrated. Fundamental example: An individual views other people as either innately good or innately evil, rather than as a whole continuous person.

* Tellin' a man to go to hell and makin' him do it are two entirely different propositions.
These mechanisms are often present in adults and more commonly present in adolescents. These mechanisms lessen distress and anxiety provoked by threatening people or by uncomfortable reality. People who excessively use such defenses are seen as socially undesirable in that they are immature, difficult to deal with and seriously out of touch with reality. These are the so-called “immature” defenses and overuse almost always leads to serious problems in a person’s ability to cope effectively. These defenses are often seen in severe depression and personality disorders. In adolescence, the occurrence of all of these defenses is normal.

**Acting Out**

Acting Out is performing an extreme behavior in order to express thoughts or feelings the person feels incapable of otherwise expressing. Instead of saying, “I’m angry with you,” a person who acts out may instead throw a book at the person, or punch a hole through a wall. When a person acts out, it can act as a pressure release, and often helps the individual feel calmer and peaceful once again. For instance, a child’s temper tantrum is a form of acting out when he or she doesn’t get his or her way with a parent. Self-injury may also be a form of acting-out, expressing in physical pain what one cannot stand to feel emotionally.

**Projection**

Projection is the misattribution of a person’s undesired thoughts, feelings or impulses onto another person who does not have those thoughts, feelings or impulses. Projection is used especially when the thoughts are considered unacceptable for the person to express, or they feel completely ill at ease with having them. For example, a spouse may be angry at their significant other for not listening, when in fact it is the angry spouse who does not listen. Projection is often the result of a lack of insight and acknowledgement of one’s own motivations and feelings.

This mechanism is generally dysphoric, but sometimes...nothing else works...
Projective Identification

Projective Identification is a term first introduced by Melanie Klein of the object relations school of psychoanalytic thought in 1946. It refers to a psychological process in which a person engages in the ego defense mechanism projection in such a way that their behavior towards the object of projection invokes in that person precisely the thoughts, feelings or behaviors projected. Projective identification differs from simple projection in that projective identification is a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby a person, believing something false about another, relates to that other person in such a way that the other person alters their behavior to make the belief true. The second person is influenced by the projection and begins to behave as though he or she is in fact actually characterized by the projected thoughts or beliefs. This is a process that generally happens outside the awareness of both parties involved, though this has been debated.

* When you give a lesson in meanness to a critter or a person, don’t be surprised if they learn their lesson.

Overidealization and Devaluation

All therapists recognize the “fall from the pedestal” phenomenon. Poor emotional modulation tends to contribute to this defensive strategy especially in Cluster B personality disorders and is a common difficulty in treatment. If the doctor, or anyone in a close relationship, is all good or all bad, then it eliminates the need for self-reflection or personal responsibility and renders the complex concrete. Few are either saints or truly evil, most of us struggle for identity and integrity.

* If your gonna take the measure of a man, take the full measure.

* If you get to thinkin’ you’re a person of some influence, try orderin’ someone else’s dog around.

This one deserves a couple of extra East Texas insights:

Never drop your gun to hug a grizzly.

A man who wants to loan you a slicker when it ain’t raining ain’t doing much for you.
Fantasy
Tendency to retreat into fantasy in order to resolve inner and outer conflicts. Fantasy, when used as a defense mechanism, is the channeling of unacceptable or unattainable desires into imagination.

Ignoring realistic factors…
For instance: it might seem like a good idea at the time, but never…

* Kick a fresh turd on a hot day

Somatization
The transformation of negative feelings towards others into negative feelings toward self, pain, illness, and anxiety.

* Ain't never seen a wild critter feelin' sorry for itself.

Passive Aggression and Passive Dependency
Aggression towards others expressed indirectly or passively such as using procrastination, or the inverse remarkable dependency or codependency

* Makin' it in life is kinda like busting broncs: your gonna get thrown a lot. The simple secret is to keep gettin' back on.

Neurotic Defenses
Less primitive defense mechanisms are a step up from the primitive defense mechanisms in the previous section. Many people employ these defenses as adults, and while they work okay for many, they are not ideal ways of dealing with our feelings, stress and anxiety. If you recognize yourself using a few of these, don't feel bad – everybody does.
**Displacement**

Displacement is the redirecting of thoughts, feelings and impulses directed at one person or object, but taken out upon another person or object. People often use displacement when they cannot express their feelings in a safe manner to the person they are directed at. The classic example is the man who gets angry at his boss, but can’t express his anger to his boss for fear of being fired. He instead comes home and kicks the dog or starts an argument with his wife. The man is redirecting his anger from his boss to his dog or wife.

*Remember, even a kick in the caboose is a step forward.*

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**Dissociation**

Dissociation is when a person loses track of time and/or person, and instead finds another representation of their self in order to continue in the moment. A person who dissociates often loses track of time or themselves and their usual thought processes and memories. People who have a history of any kind of childhood abuse often suffer from some form of dissociation. In extreme cases, dissociation can lead to a person believing they have multiple selves (*multiple personality disorder*). People who use dissociation often have a disconnected view of themselves in their world. Time and their own self-image may not flow continuously, as it does for most people. In this manner, a person who dissociates can “disconnect” from the real world for a time, and live in a different world that is not cluttered with thoughts, feelings or memories that are unbearable.

* A body can pretend to care, but they can’t pretend to be there.

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**Hypochondriasis**

An excessive preoccupation or worry about having a serious illness.

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**Isolation of Affect**

Isolation of affect: You "think" the feeling but don’t really feel it. "I guess I’m angry with him, sort of."

OR:

* After eating an entire bull, a mountain lion felt so good he started roaring. He kept it up so long a hunter came around and shot him. The moral: when you’re full of bull, keep your mouth shut.
Rationalization

Rationalization is putting something into a different light or offering a different explanation for one's perceptions or behaviors in the face of a changing reality. For instance, a woman who starts dating a man she really, really likes and thinks the world of is suddenly dumped by the man for no reason. She reframes the situation in her mind with, "I suspected he was a loser all along."

* One must be careful not to push this too far…

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Intellectualization

Intellectualization is the overemphasis on thinking when confronted with an unacceptable impulse, situation or behavior without employing any emotions whatsoever to help mediate and place the thoughts into an emotional, human context. Rather than deal with the painful associated emotions, a person might employ intellectualization to distance themselves from the impulse, event or behavior.

* The quickest way to double your money is to fold it over and put it in your pocket.

* There’s a lot more to ridin’ a horse than just sittin’ in the saddle and lettin’ your feet hang down.

* The length of a conversation don’t tell nothin’ about the size of the intellect.

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As rationalization is so common:
More inciseful analysis and advice from Fort Worth

Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.

There’s only two things to be afraid of: a decent woman and bein’ left afoot.

If you work for a man, ride for his brand. Treat his cattle as if they were your own.
### Reaction Formation

Reaction Formation is the converting of unwanted or dangerous thoughts, feelings or impulses into their opposites. For instance, a woman who is very angry with her boss and would like to quit her job may instead be overly kind and generous toward her boss and express a desire to keep working there forever. She is incapable of expressing the negative emotions of anger and unhappiness with her job, and instead becomes overly kind to publicly demonstrate her lack of anger and unhappiness.

* To get a handle on modern French philosophers, just assume that everything nonphysical is real, while everything of substance is unreal. So, sadness is real but escargot is not.

### Regression

Regression is the reversion to an earlier stage of development in the face of unacceptable thoughts or impulses. For example, an adolescent who is overwhelmed with fear, anger and growing sexual impulses might become clingy and start exhibiting earlier childhood behaviors he has long since overcome, such as bedwetting. An adult may regress when under a great deal of stress, refusing to leave their bed and engage in normal, everyday activities.

* Never go to your room in the daytime.
* You can never step in the same river twice.
* You can just about always stand more 'n you think you can.

### Repression

Repression is the unconscious blocking of unacceptable thoughts, feelings and impulses. The key to repression is that people do it unconsciously, so they often have very little control over it. "Repressed memories" are memories that have been unconsciously blocked from access or view. But because memory is very malleable and ever-changing, it is not like playing back a DVD of your life. The DVD has been filtered and even altered by your life experiences, even by what you’ve read or viewed.

* Don’t let so much reality into your life tat there’s no room left for dreamin’

The easiest way to eat crow is while it’s still warm. The colder it gets, the harder it is to swallow.

### Undoing

Undoing is the attempt to take back an unconscious behavior or thought that is unacceptable or hurtful. For instance, after realizing you just insulted your significant other unintentionally, you might spend then next hour praising their beauty, charm and intellect. By "undoing" the previous action, the person is attempting to counteract the damage done by the original comment, hoping the two will balance one another out.

* The first thing to do when you get up in the morning is put on your Stetson.
Mature defense mechanisms are often the most constructive and helpful to most adults, but may require practice and effort to put into daily use. While primitive defense mechanisms do little to try and resolve underlying issues or problems, mature defenses are more focused on helping a person be a more constructive component of their environment. People with more mature defenses tend to be more at peace with themselves and those around them.

Altruism

**Altruism**: Constructive service to others that brings pleasure and personal satisfaction.

**BUT**: Altruistic suicide has been described, for instance: hari – kari or insurance based suicide, when a person believes they are worth more to their loved ones dead than alive.

Humor

Overt expression of ideas and feelings (especially those that are unpleasant to focus on or too terrible to talk about) that gives pleasure to others. Humor, which explores the absurdity inherent in any event, enables someone to "call a spade a spade."

* Can’t think of an example for this one

Anticipation

Realistic planning for future discomfort.

* No matter who says what, don’t believe it if it don’t make no sense.

* Control your generosity when dealin’ with a chronic borrower.
**Identification**

Identification: The unconscious modeling of one’s self upon another person’s character and behavior.

* A woman’s heart is like a campfire, if you don’t tend to it regular, you’ll soon use it.

* And remember: Generally, you ain’t learnin’ nothin’ when your mouth is a-jawin’.

**Introjection**

Identifying with some idea or object so deeply that it becomes a part of that person.

* The best way to keep your word is not to give it foolishly.

* Honesty is not something you should flirt with it is something you should be married to.

**Sublimation**

Sublimation is simply the channeling of unacceptable impulses, thoughts and emotions into more acceptable ones. For instance, when a person has sexual impulses they would like not to act upon, they may instead focus on rigorous exercise. Refocusing such unacceptable or harmful impulses into productive use helps a person channel energy that otherwise would be lost or used in a manner that might cause the person more anxiety.

Sublimation can also be done with humor or fantasy

* The only way to drive cattle fast is slowly.

**Thought Suppression**

Suppression: You are vaguely aware of the thought or feeling, but try to hide it.

"I’m going to try to be nice to him."

* It’s best to keep your troubles pretty much to yourself, ’cause half the people you’d tell them to won’t give a damn, and the other half will be glad to hear you’ve got ‘em.

* If you want to forget all your troubles, take a little walk in a brand-new pair of high-heeled ridin’ boots.
In some areas of psychology (especially in psychodynamic theory), psychologists talk about “defense mechanisms,” or manners in which we behave or think in certain ways to better protect or “defend” ourselves. Defense mechanisms are one way of looking at how people distance themselves from a full awareness of unpleasant thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Psychologists have categorized defense mechanisms based upon how primitive they are. The more primitive a defense mechanism, the less effective it works for a person over the long-term. However, more primitive defense mechanisms are usually very effective short-term, and hence are favored by many people and children especially (when such primitive defense mechanisms are first learned). Adults who don’t learn better ways of coping with stress or traumatic events in their lives will often resort to such primitive defense mechanisms as well.

Compartmentalization is a lesser form of dissociation, wherein parts of oneself are separated from awareness of other parts and behaving as if one had separate sets of values. An example might be an honest person who cheats on their income tax return and keeps their two value systems distinct and un-integrated while remaining unconscious of the cognitive dissonance.

Exaggeration

The cowboy who exaggerates to much soon finds that everyone else has left the campfire.
Minimization
Not always the most clever plan

**Simplicity**
The simplest solutions are often the cleverest.
They are also usually wrong.

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**The Prisoner's Dilemma**

Player A

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<th>Defect</th>
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Player B

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Curses...Foiled AGAIN!!!

- If you rat on me but I say good things about you, you get the biggest raise. But if we praise each other, we can both get a small raise.
- Gailly, if you rat him out, I'll let you look at my 'Victoria's Secret' catalog. This is exactly why there are no coded prisons.

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So, in conclusion...3 pearls from East Texas, courtesy of my Grandfather, Oscar Thomas

- Don't get mad at somebody who knows more than you...it ain't their fault
- Only a buzzard feeds on his friends
- And Finally
- Never miss a good chance to shut up
### Other defenses

- Whining
- Anthropomorphism
- Externalization
- Turning on the self
- Symbolization
- Condensation
- Daydreaming
- Prevarication
- Confabulation
- Provocation
- Rumination

- Counterphobia
- Socialization
- Distancing
- Concretization
- Disidentification
- Hyperabstraction
- Garrulousness
- Avoidance
- Substance Abuse
- Clinging
- Gaslighting

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### Bibliography

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- Kaplan & Sadock’s Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry Eighth Edition Volume 1 Chapter 37 Normality and Mental Health
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- Don’t Squat With Yer Spurs On: A Cowboys Guide To Life: The Code of the West
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