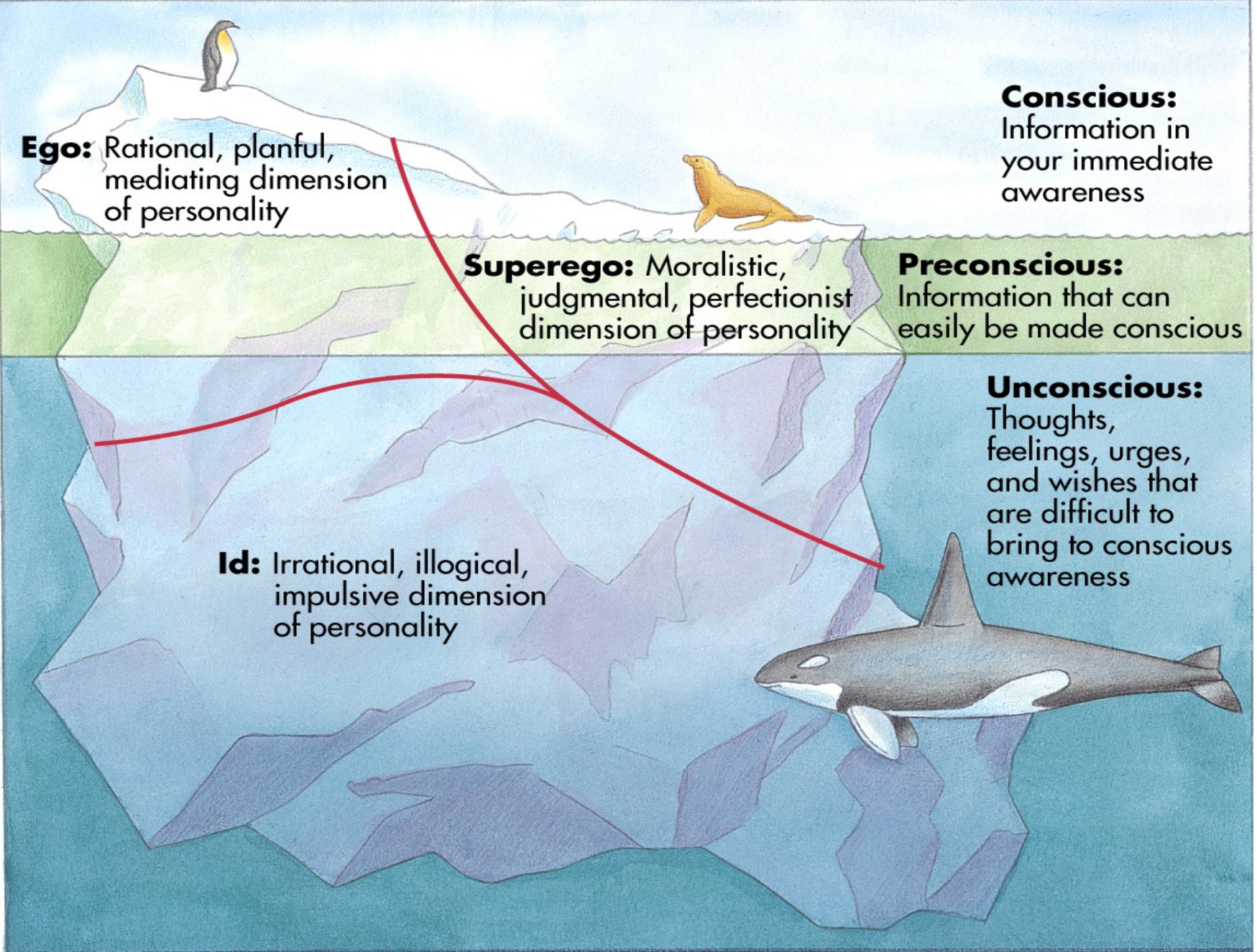




Defence Mechanisms in Clinical Practice

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An illustration of an iceberg floating in the ocean, representing Freud's model of the psyche. The iceberg is divided into three horizontal layers. The top layer, above the water, is white and represents the conscious mind. It contains a penguin on the left and a seal on the right. The middle layer, at the water's surface, is green and represents the preconscious mind. The bottom layer, submerged in the blue water, is purple and represents the unconscious mind. It contains a large orca swimming. Red lines connect the text labels to their corresponding parts of the iceberg: one line from 'Ego' to the white top, one from 'Superego' to the green middle, and one from 'Id' to the purple bottom. Another red line connects 'Unconscious' to the submerged part of the iceberg.

Ego: Rational, planful, mediating dimension of personality

Conscious:
Information in your immediate awareness

Superego: Moralistic, judgmental, perfectionist dimension of personality

Preconscious:
Information that can easily be made conscious

Id: Irrational, illogical, impulsive dimension of personality

Unconscious:
Thoughts, feelings, urges, and wishes that are difficult to bring to conscious awareness



Defense Mechanisms

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Unconscious Self-Deceptions

Defense Mechanisms

- Unconscious mental processes employed by the ego to reduce anxiety by unconsciously distorting reality.

Repression

- Puts anxiety-producing thoughts, feelings, and memories into the unconscious mind
- Unconscious forgetting
- The basis for all other defense mechanisms

Denial

- Rejecting the truth of a painful reality.

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Regression

- Going back to a safer, simpler way of being.
- Assuming childlike behaviors when facing stress or trauma

Reaction Formation

- Replacing an unacceptable wish with its opposite
- Behaving in ways that are exactly opposite of how we truly feel.

Projection

- Attributing something that we don't like about ourselves to someone else.

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Rationalization

- Displaces real, anxiety-provoking explanations with more comforting justifications for one's actions
- Reasoning away or making excuses to reduce anxiety-producing thoughts

Displacement

- Shifts an unacceptable impulse toward a more acceptable or less threatening object or person
- “Taking out” an emotion on a safe or more accessible target than the actual source of the emotion.



Sublimation

- Substitute an undesirable emotion or drive with a socially acceptable one.

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Undoing

- Unconsciously neutralizing an anxiety causing action by doing a second action that undoes the first.

Table 11.1

The Major Ego Defense Mechanisms

Defense	Description	Example
Repression	The complete exclusion from consciousness of anxiety-producing thoughts, feelings, or impulses; most basic defense mechanism.	Three years after being hospitalized for back surgery, the person can remember only vague details about the event.
Displacement	Emotional impulses are redirected toward a substitute person or object, usually one less threatening or dangerous than the original source of conflict.	Angered by a neighbor's hateful comment, a mother spanks her daughter for accidentally spilling her milk.
Sublimation	A form of displacement in which sexual urges are rechanneled into productive, nonsexual activities.	A graduate student works on her thesis 14 hours a day while her husband is on an extended business trip.
Rationalization	Justifying one's actions or feelings with socially acceptable explanations rather than consciously acknowledging one's true motives or desires.	After being rejected by a prestigious university, a student explains that he is glad, because he would be happier at a smaller, less competitive college.

Table 11.1

The Major Ego Defense Mechanisms (continued)

Defense	Description	Example
Projection	The attribution of one's own unacceptable urges or qualities to others.	A married woman who is sexually attracted to a co-worker accuses him of flirting with her.
Reaction formation	Thinking or behaving in a way that is the extreme opposite of unacceptable urges or impulses.	Threatened by their awakening sexual attraction to girls, adolescent boys often go out of their way to tease and torment adolescent girls.
Denial	The failure to recognize or acknowledge the existence of anxiety-provoking information.	An alcoholic fails to acknowledge that he is addicted to a drug.
Undoing	A form of unconscious repentance that involves neutralizing or atoning for an unacceptable action or thought with a second action or thought.	A woman who gets a tax refund by cheating on her taxes makes a larger than usual donation to the church collection on the following Sunday.
Regression	Retreating to a behavior pattern characteristic of an earlier stage of development.	After her parents' bitter divorce, a 10-year-old girl refuses to sleep alone in her room, crawling into bed with her mother.