

Defense Mechanisms for Lunch
(suggested answers)

Henry felt pissed when he got the lab report back and saw the D marked in red at the top of the page. He hated Dr. Winnemuck. "Forget it," he thought to himself. "It's time for lunch." (suppression) When he got to the cafeteria, his good friends Molly and Barb were already eating at the their table. Somewhat agitated, he slid into the chair across the table from them.

"Hey Molly," he said loudly, "I heard your date dumped you last night!" (displacement)

"He did NOT dump her!" Barb shot back. Looking indignant and protective, she put her arm around Molly. (denial)

"No, he's right," Molly interjected. "But it was best that way. We weren't right for each other." (rationalization)

"Yeah, well, he doesn't have to be such a jerk about it," Barb said, glaring at Henry. "You can be so insensitive sometimes."

Henry fell quiet. He looked hurt. No one spoke for several minutes. With a guilty expression on his face, he glanced up at Barb, then reached into his pocket and pulled out a roll of mint lifesavers. He handed it to her. "Here, you want this? It's the kind you like, right?" (undoing)

"Yeah, thanks," Barb said, a pleased look erasing her somewhat sad expression for just a second.

"You know," Henry said, "We've been talking about this sort of thing in my psychology class. When people are criticized or rejected, they experience it as.... uh.... the destruction of the introjected good parent.... In fact, I just started writing a paper about it." (sublimation, intellectualization)

"Huh?" Barb said. Molly looked confused too.

"Oh, never mind," Henry mumbled. He began tapping his fingers on the table. Molly continued eating while Barb studied Henry's nervous behavior. He couldn't help but notice her stare and the serious look on her face. "What's the matter, Barb. Are you depressed or something?" (projection)

"No," I'm just wondering what's going on with you.

"I feel really happy," Henry answered, trying to sound enthusiastic. "Everything is good." (reaction formation)

"How did you do on that lab report you were worried about?"

Henry immediately stiffened up. "I got a D," he said matter-of-factly.

"Oh shit!" Barb and Molly both said in unison. "You must be so upset."

"I guess so," he said without any emotion in his voice, almost casually. (isolation of affect)

"Oh come on!" Barb answered back. "You've been worried about that report for weeks. Don't act like it's nothing. Don't give us that blank look of yours!"

"Oh yeah, well how about I give you this?" Henry answered as he reached for the potato chips on Molly's plate and threw them at Barb. Shocked, she froze for just a second, then reached for a handful that she threw right back at him. (regression)

"Food fight!" someone cried out from the table next to them.

Barb, Molly, and Henry just looked at each other, and started laughing