



# A Family Guide to Common Terminology Associated With Psychological Evaluations

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**AFFECTIVE REACTIONS:** Response to emotions, feelings, sensibility, or mental state.

**ANXIETY:** A general uneasiness of the mind characterized by irrational fears, panic, tension, and physical symptoms including palpitations, excessive sweating and increase pulse rate.

**ASSESSMENT:** The process of gathering information about children in order to make educational decisions.

**BASELINE DATA:** An objective measure used to compare and evaluate the results obtained during some implementation of an instructional procedure, (such as the amount of time a child spends sitting in his/her seat).

**COMPULSION:** A persistent, repetitive act which the individual cannot consciously control.

**CONFABULATION:** The act of replacing memory loss by fantasy or by some reality that is not true for the occasion.

**DEFENSE MECHANISMS:** The unconscious means by which an individual protects her or herself against impulses or emotions that are too uncomfortable or threatening. Examples of these mechanisms include the following:

- ◆ Denial: A defense mechanism in which the individual refuses to admit the reality of some unpleasant even, situation, or emotion.
- ◆ Displacement: The disguising of the goal or intention of a motive by substituting another in it's place.
- ◆ Intellectualization: A defense mechanism in which the individual exhibits anxious or moody deliberation, usually about abstract matters.

- ◆ Projection: The disguising of a source of conflict by displacing one's own motives to someone else.
- ◆ Rationalization: The interpretation of one's own behavior so as to conceal the motive it expresses by assigning the behavior to another motive.
- ◆ Reaction Formation: A complete disguise of a motive, expressed in a form of that is directly opposite to its original intent.
- ◆ Repression: Refers to the psychological process involved in not permitting memories and motives to enter consciousness but are operating at an unconscious level.
- ◆ Suppression: The act of consciously inhibiting an impulse, affect, or idea, as in the deliberate act of forgetting something so as not to have to think about it.

**DELUSION:** A false belief firmly held despite obvious proof to the contrary. The belief is not one ordinarily accepted by other members of the person's culture or subculture. An example is a delusion of grandeur -- exaggerated ideas of one's importance or identity. It is usually a characteristic of paranoia.

**DEPERSONALIZATION:** A nonspecific syndrome in which the individual senses that he/she has lost personal identity, that he/she is different, strange, or not real.

**ECHOLALIA:** Refers to the repetition of what other people say as if echoing them.

**ETIOLOGY:** Refers to the cause(s) of something.

**HALLUCINATION:** An imaginary visual image that is regarded as a real sensory experience by the person.

**MAGICAL THINKING:** Refers to primitive and prelogical thinking in which the child creates an outcome to meet fantasy rather than the reality.

**NEOLOGISMS:** Made up words that only have meaning to the child.

**OBSESSIONS:** A repetitive and persistent idea that intrudes into a person's thoughts.

**PANIC ATTACK:** A serious episode of anxiety in which the individual experiences a variety of symptom including palpitations, dizziness, nausea, chest pains, trembling, fear of dying, and fear of losing control. These symptoms are not the result of any medical cause.

**PARANOIA:** A personality disorder in which the individual exhibits extreme suspiciousness of the motives of others.

**PHOBIA:** An intense irrational fear, usually acquired through conditioning to an unpleasant object or event.

**PROJECTILE TESTS:** Evaluative methods used by psychologists and psychiatrists to study personality dynamics. These tests require the child or adult to make up answers when presented with a series of inkblots, picture, or sentences. In this way, the professional will be able to see how the individual feels about certain things in his/her life that he/she may not be aware of on a conscious level.

**PSYCHOSIS:** A serious mental disorder in which the individual has difficulty differentiating between fantasy and reality.

**RORSCHACH TEST:** An unstructured psychological test in which the individual is asked to project responses to a series of ten inkblots.

**SCHOOL PHOBIA:** A form of separation anxiety in which the child's concerns and anxieties are centered around school issues and as a result he/she has an extreme fear about coming to school.

**SYMPTOM:** Refers to any sign, physical or mental, that stands for something else. Symptoms are usually generated from the tension of conflicts. The more serious the problem or conflict, the more frequent and intense the symptom.

**SYNDROME:** A group of symptoms.

**THEMATIC APPERCEPTION TEST:** A structured psychological test in which the individual is asked to project his/her feelings onto a series of drawings or photos.

**WECHSLER SCALES OF INTELLIGENCE:** A series of individual intelligence tests measuring global intelligence through a variety of subtests.