

# Inverse Psychological Projection

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Freud (1894) defined “psychological projection” as a defense mechanism in which one attributes negative aspects of their personality to others and is thus able to ignore their own flaws and problems. Its inverse form is defined as follows: when a person repeatedly (sometimes angrily) advises another person to ignore or pay no attention to either someone or something, it is usually because the person who advises this is experiencing inverse psychological projection; that is, if this person’s needs have been disregarded in the past, their experience will be reflected in their reaction to the person they advise.

However, such advice is relevant only when the type of hurt is a very specific case of banal mockery. If a mentally ill person tells somebody they are ugly, the best advice is to ignore them. However, if this person hurts someone in a way that has nothing to do with banal mockery of self-image (e.g., public humiliation, contempt, invasion of privacy, incitement, threatening behavior, discrimination, abuse, sexual or ordinary harassment, violence, annoyance) or if what was said had already hurt the other, then advising them to ignore or pay no attention to that mentally ill person disregards this damage.

This defense mechanism can be activated in a person if they have been unable to cope with similar types of hurt in their own past and have been exposed to related mental damage, if their egoism is stimulated by the same matter, or if, due to this stimulation, it is either shameful for them to acknowledge their egoism because stimulated (or vulnerable) egoism is considered socially inferior or difficult for them to contain the other’s hurt feelings or bruised egoism.

Consequently, they deny the problem's existence and thus advise others to also ignore it due to their will to either stimulate (and unburden) their antagonism to others or to demonstrate their ability to rise above the same issue and “win” against it. Moreover, in contrast to classic psychological projection, in which a person attributes negative aspects of their own personality to others when they are unable to deal with these aspects (so they can ignore them), in its inverse form, a person attributes the quality that they would like to but cannot demonstrate/be able to succeed in (which relates to their ability to efficiently manage things or problems that stimulate their own egoism), so they can avoid dealing with these things or problems.

In similar scenarios, inverse psychological projection may include saying things such as “I don’t care what you think (or say)/Who cares what people think (or say),” “Don’t get excited by the background noise,” “I will not stoop to your level,” “Don’t let them influence you,” “Don’t give them the satisfaction,” “Don’t give them a platform,” “They aren’t worth it,” or “What do you expect from him?” (one must distinguish between “expected to” and “predicted to” as these two possess different responsibilities). Alternatively, when discussing a television show, one may say, “Who even watches it?” and in

the context of social media, “Don’t feed the trolls” or “Haters gonna hate.”

Moreover, individuals may reflect their own negative emotions toward people who ask them for help; for example, someone is hungry and tells their friend, and the friend, who is also hungry, says something like “Wow. You probably want a good hamburger or a tasty pizza with olives and mushrooms.” The problem (hunger) remains, causing damage to the other, arguably worsening their pain because the person they asked for help could not help them (or reflected their own hunger on their already hungry friend, thereby making them hungrier).

Regarding psychotherapeutic treatment, a therapist suffering from this type of psychological projection would often find it difficult to demonstrate empathy toward patients. The problem, however, is two-dimensional, as the patient also bears the consequences.

Inverse psychological projection has unfortunately become a common phenomenon in the general population today, evident in everyday situations and scenarios and social media interactions. Notably, it is more likely to appear in a person whose egoism satisfaction infrastructure is not satisfied.

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