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## THE BENCHMARK FOR THE FORMATION OF A PSYCHOLOGIST'S PERSONALITY IS THE AWARENESS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCES

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ОРІЄНТИР СТАНОВЛЕННЯ ОСОБИСТОСТІ ПСИХОЛОГА –  
УСВІДОМЛЕННЯ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНИХ ЗАХИСТІВ

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**The relevance of the problem area of the topic.** For several years now, Ukraine has been actively modernising the system of psychological services, the key point of which is the introduction of innovative standards that define new requirements for both the content and conditions of professional work and the results of professional activity. Of course, the emphasis is placed on the latter component, because, given the kind of requests and clients that we have to work with today, the consequences of incompetent actions can be devastating for the individual. And given that today it is quite easy to get the right to work as a psychologist, even in the field of crisis psychology (unfortunately, sometimes just by taking a small online course or certified training, without having a basic education), the issue of quality and responsibility will remain open and debatable.

The outlined range of problems is indeed urgent and relevant today and requires immediate resolution. For the most part, the issues related to the need to take care of the personality of the specialist, namely, his or her proper professional preparation for work and psychological safety, remain unaddressed. It is hoped that the introduction of the new standard will have a significant impact on increasing both the volume

and content of, and social responsibility for, the results of a psychologist's business activities.

Thus, such a modernisation and intensification of the process of providing professional services requires not only high competence and personal maturity, but also the development of properties and traits that allow for a short time to adapt to changing circumstances and specifics of work, to work in difficult stressful conditions, constantly being in a state of secondary traumatisation. Such a powerful adaptive component is the *System of unconscious Ego defences and psychological defences of the individual*, which, given the stage of professional development of a specialist, should naturally evolve and become more complex. The purpose of these defences is to eliminate or minimise traumatic personal experiences associated with internal or external conflicts, states of emotional stress and increased anxiety. We hope that the coverage of these issues will not only allow us to better understand the deep processes of psychologist's adaptation to professional activity, but also to carry out timely prevention and correction of maladaptive strategies of their behaviour and life in general.

**The state of research on the problematic topic.** For a long time, both domestic and foreign scholars (H. Ball, H. Kostiuk, G. Allport, C. Ro-

gers, C. Jung, E. Erikson, etc.) were able to accumulate a significant amount of knowledge about its various aspects: personality development in the process of professional activity, professional self-determination and destruction, crisis of professional formation, conditions and effectiveness of professional activity, adaptation of a person to work in a specialty, psychological structure of professional responsibility of a psychologist (A. Furman and A. Lypka [16]), etc. Also, significant achievements are available in the field of clarifying a number of issues of professional development of psychologists (S. Vasivska, Z. Virna, L. Dolynska, O. Dusavytskyi, V. Panko, A. Furman, A. Furman, N. Shevchenko, T. Yatsenko, etc.) In most works, scholars comprehend various aspects of the personal development of a specialist, in particular, they offer a list of professionally important traits and qualities that he or she must possess in order to carry out professional activities with high quality and at the same time have the tools to protect their personality in situations that require maximum concentration of internal resources, help a person in crisis situations and extreme conditions. But, paradoxically, even in classical studies, rather little attention is paid to the distinction and content of the conceptual invariants of *psychological defence*, which, in our opinion, requires additional careful analysis.

Despite the fact that the concept of *defence mechanisms* was proposed by the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud [10-11], it has been the focus of attention of many researchers for many decades. In general, today in psychology, only two main directions of studying this issue have been identified. The supporters of the first, like the founder himself, attribute the defence mechanisms of the psyche to the sphere of the unconscious (C. Jung, A. Adler, W. Reich, D. Arlow, C. Brenner, Otto F. Kernberg, N. Hanan, etc.). And although they consider the action of these mechanisms to be one of the basic functions of a person, which ensures his or her adaptation to difficult life circumstances, they still recognise the destructive nature of this formation, as they are convinced that the unconscious and automatic use of such defences leads to the formation of patterned, schematic behaviour, which in certain life situations can lead to psychological trauma and even destroy the inner world of a person. The ideological inspirer of the second, more socially oriented approach was Anna Freud's daughter [20]. She

proposed to consider defence mechanisms not only as perceptual and motor automatisms, but also as intellectual formations that arise in the process of involuntary and voluntary response and are the product not only of instinctive, unconscious activity, but also the result of conscious individual experience, which allows to prevent disorganisation and disintegration of behaviour, to maintain the normal mental status of the individual. This position was supported in one way or another by, for example, K. Horney, C. Rogers, E. Erikson, and others.

In this context, the ideas are now being developed that in particularly emotionally charged situations associated with the performance of certain professional duties, primarily the provision of psychological services, the presence of differently perceived psychological defence mechanisms is a multihierarchical personal formation.

**Objective of the study:** substantiation of one of the central lines of the ontogeny of the psychologist's personality, which runs from the action of the protective mechanisms of the psyche at the initial stage of his professional training to the establishment of psychological defences as clearly reflected mental development trends at the highest levels of his professional competence.

**Author's idea of the study.** During one of the methodological seminars of the scientific school of Professor A. Furman, an opinion was expressed about the essential difference between the defence mechanisms of the Ego and psychological defences. It was noted that only a psychologist who becomes a specialist, unlike other professionals, has a constructive effect of formed, clearly understood psychological defences that enrich personal maturity and professional competence. Therefore, we consider it necessary to provide a psychological argumentation of this main idea.

## A PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN RESEARCH MATERIAL

The modern approach to the process of professional development considers it as part of the general problem of life development of a personality, which is a process of its gradual changes that occur under the influence of socially significant activities and personal activity aimed at self-improvement and realisation of inner potential. It is also a process caused by socio-cultural conditions and the main field of activity, which

leads to the development of the subject of professional activity and determines the achievement of psychosocial maturity by the individual [5, p. 202]. Given the multidimensional nature of the study of this issue, the works of domestic and foreign authors present in different ways both the stages that a person goes through *during professional development* and the components whose level of formation should indicate the success of this process. Thus, scholars mostly distinguish its stages: professional orientation, competence, a set of socially significant and professionally important traits and their integration, readiness for continuous professional growth, search for optimal methods of productive performance in accordance with the individual psychological characteristics of a particular person. At the same time, important internal prerequisites for this process are the formed intellectual potential, adequate self-esteem, emotional and sensual maturity, emotional and mental self-regulation of the individual.

When researching the process of psychologist's personality development, scientists often turn to the identification of the most important traits of a specialist's personality for the effective provision of psychological assistance. Currently, several of the most well-known models of such traits have been substantiated.

*Component models* are created on the basis of the authors' experience and contain a list of professionally important traits. They are often used in foreign works on psychotherapy and psychological counselling, and also form the basis of the occupational profile of the profession of psychologist. Among these traits, it is reasonable to highlight authenticity, openness to one's own experience, development of self-knowledge, personality strength, tolerance to uncertainty, readiness for personal responsibility, ability to have deep relationships with others, setting realistic goals, empathy, etc.

*Structural models* focus on more complex abilities that ensure the overall effectiveness of a psychologist's work. For example, they talk about the talent of communication', which covers a number of personality characteristics that are combined into separate blocks: the ability to accurately perceive an object, observation, quick orientation in a situation, the ability to conduct figurative and qualitative analysis, psychological intuition, empathy, willingness to help, tact, and listening skills.

*Systemic models* are based on the characteristics of more complex systems in which psycho-

logical activity is a major part. A striking example here is J. Holland's concept, in which the psychologist's activity is attributed to social professions, so such traits-qualities as social responsibility, ability to interact, verbal abilities, emotionality, activity, etc. are important.

*Predictive models* use correlation analysis to identify the main components of professional abilities that depend on the severity of certain personality traits. For example, a regression equation for successful psychotherapists and psychodiagnosticians was developed on the basis of R. Cattell's questionnaire, which demonstrates that the higher the scores on such factors as the need for communication, verbal intelligence, and insensitivity to social threats, the higher the predicted effectiveness of the specialist.

A critical analysis of existing approaches to the study of professionally important traits-qualities of a psychologist allows us to identify the key characteristics for his/her effective work. These are, in particular, those traits that ensure constructive communication and establishing contact with the client, values and orientations (respect, openness, conscientiousness), adequate self-esteem and understanding of oneself, as well as personal maturity, flexibility and responsibility (see [12; 17, etc.]).

The diversity of developments in the field of studying and structuring psychologist's professional traits and abilities indicates the multifaceted nature of this topic. In order to coordinate different areas of research, it is appropriate to focus on the theoretical model of psychologist's personal traits, which includes four basic blocks: cognitive (professional training, knowledge, skills, self-knowledge), value-motivational (value orientations, professional intentions, social attitudes, personal maturity), communication (ability to communicate constructively, ability to establish contact) and regulatory (emotional stability, self-control, psychological protection mechanisms). It is the allocation of the regulatory block in this model that is important for ensuring professional resilience and preventing burnout in the daily activities of a psychologist.

Once again, we emphasise that in modern studies of the role of psychological defence in professional activity, there are two approaches: 1) interpretation of the defence mechanisms of the psyche as a prerequisite for the formation of professional destruction of the specialist's personality; 2) consideration of the system of con-

conscious defence mechanisms as a powerful adaptive structure of the person, which ensures his/her ability to implement adequate ways of behaviour and activity and thus stabilise his/her internal state. In particular, it is argued that the professional activity of a psychologist is characterised by a large number of situations that cause anxiety and anxiety, which activate the action of the defence mechanisms of the psyche. However, in order to cope with these instinctive feelings, a specialist consciously actualises the work of psychological defence in order to regulate his/her intense emotional state and to adapt to the conditions and content of his/her own activity. At the same time, the question remains as to under what conditions, when and at what stage of professional development this process ceases to be unconscious, and therefore instinctive and automatic, and moves to a higher level – psychological, i.e. acquires the status of controlled and reflective.

Analysis of the available scientific research on this issue proves that the defence mechanism has a structural tier organisation, and therefore can be substantiated by the epistemological resources of the act approach (V. Romenets [1; 7-8], P. Myasoid [3]), and even better, by the principles, regularities and norms of A. Furman's cyclic-action approach [5; 13-15], which made it possible to build a *thought diagram* (Fig.). Thus, the first can be interpreted as *biopsychic*. This is a genetically determined way of responding to adverse influences, based on urges that are pushed into the unconscious and rejected by the Ego level, and manifested in rather primitive forms of behaviour.

The second level is *psychophysiological*: with the development of cognitive structures, more complex formations are formed, based on the mechanisms of the first level. Structurally, these forms are a combination of the mechanisms of this deeper level into a system or a reconstruction of these forms into new variants. The third level is *psychosocial*: the creation of a prototype of the Self' requires a person to behave holistically, adaptively to a wide range of options for external and internal conditions of his or her existence. At this level, personal defence is formed as a style of behaviour. The fourth level is the *self-personal level* (C. Jung): here, defence begins to produce the way a person interacts with the environment; it is based on the style of defensive behaviour developed at the previous stage, but its manifestation becomes relatively controlled

and socially controlled. These levels are the structure of defensive behaviour and are connected by numerous links. The system-forming factor in this case is the function of adaptation/adaptability of the individual.

We would like to express the opinion that the very fact of singling out and containing the *self-personal level* of existence of protection, which is the highest point of professional development of a psychologist, makes it possible to consider it in the form of a psychoregulatory system, which, in the Jungian formulation, allows simultaneously to distinguish between the existing levels of defence mechanisms of the psyche (1-2) and psychological defences (3-4), which archetypically unites the personality into a holistic structure where the unconscious and conscious complement each other (C. Jung [17]).

This division is also extremely relevant because only a psychologist, when implementing counselling, psycho-correctional and developmental areas of his or her activity, deals not only with his or her own, but also with the psychophysiological defences of clients at the stage of formulating a request and further processing its problems.

In other words, it is about overcoming resistance, the study of which has been central to the theory and practice of psychotherapy and counselling since the time of Freud. In almost all concepts, resistance is perceived as an obstacle to professional activity. Thus, the beginning of the counselling process usually causes anxiety, as a person feels that his or her worldview and system of values can be destroyed by external influence. In this case, resistance is a form of manifestation of a person's natural defence, an attempt to preserve the usual way of life [11]. On the part of the psychologist, working with client resistance is an emotionally demanding aspect of activity that requires regulation of one's own behaviour and emotions, which, in turn, is impossible without the participation of a system of psychological defences.

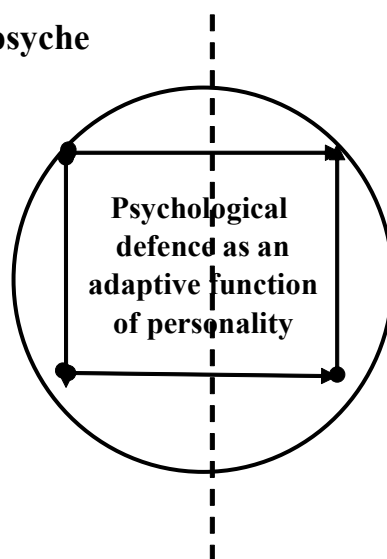
Another phenomenon that only psychologists deal with in their work is *transference* (the client's transfer of their emotions, experiences, attitudes, and unresolved conflicts to the psychologist's personality) and *countertransference* (the psychologist's transfer of their own traumatic experience to the client) [4]. Regardless of the maturity of the counsellor's personality, he or she is a human being and will certainly have unresolved internal conflicts. It is the pain-

**Defence mechanisms of the psyche****1 - biopsychic:**

a genetically determined (instinctive) way of responding to adverse influences

**2 - psychophysiological:**

stabilisation of the inner world of a person in a situation of excessive emotional stress, elimination of internal discomfort by natural resources of the psyche

**Psychological defences****4 - self-personal:**

self-reflection on choosing the optimal set of defence mechanisms and ways to overcome them (coping)

**3 - psychosocial:**

a way of adaptively conflict-free interaction of an individual with the environment, in which he/she uses one of the previously developed options for personal protection

*Fig.*  
**Tier structure of psychological defences of a psychologist's personality**

ful topics that give rise to countertransference if the client unwittingly touches on them. In particular, C. Gelso [19] distinguishes between a broad and a classical definition of countertransference. The first one covers all emotional reactions of the counsellor and the client, while the second one characterises countertransference as a reaction in response to the client's transference. According to N. Bolger [18], the feelings that the counsellor experiences in relation to the client are part of the latter's problems. In other words, what the psychologist feels in the process of counselling can be a component of the client's communication (conscious, semi-conscious or unconscious). Based on this information, a programme of activities is formulated and decisions are made. Given the high moral responsibility of the specialist to the client for the result of the work, these stages of activity are associated with the experience of anxiety and excitement. Thus, the complementarity of Ego and psychological defence mechanisms is aimed at reducing anxiety and stabilising the psychologist's psycho-emotional state.

It is clear that the levels of action / formation of psychological defences in a psychologist will depend on many factors, ranging from personal and professional readiness and maturity to the stages of professionalisation and self-actualisation. It has been proven that, for example, the mechanisms of sublimation, displacement,

coping strategies of emotional reactions and problem solving are characterised by a sharp decline in indicators at the stage of secondary socialisation. A sharp increase in indicators at the stage of primary adaptation is distinguished by coping strategies of avoidance, distraction, and social distraction [6].

Thus, psychological defences are most fully present in the subsystem of professionally important traits and qualities, as they are embedded in the personality structure. The relationship between the personality and different levels of psychological defences is interdependent: certain instinctive (unconscious) mechanisms protect the person, and the person determines which psychological mechanisms will be used for protection. In the canonical case, it is a reflexive mechanism that is responsible for the formation of a coping system [2; 9].

Obviously, here the subsystem of stabilisation of a person's life performs homeostatic functions', using his/her unconscious mechanisms of psychophysiological defence. The main function of this subsystem is to eliminate or minimise the feeling of anxiety associated with the occurrence of an unfavourable situation by fencing off the sphere of consciousness from traumatic experiences. The other subsystem, coping, is perceived as an individual's activity aimed at eliminating or reducing the impact of the source of anxiety (stressor), its function

being to regulate the relationship between the individual and the environment.

This approach is fully in line with the theoretical foundations of Professor A. Furman, who states: Personality is a reflection of the essential core of a person, a manifestation of his or her integral qualitative characteristics as a socialised being endowed with the potential for self-changing, self-development and self-actualisation. The formation of a personality is the emergence of a person as a full-fledged and responsible subject of life, capable of independent actions that outline the peculiarities of the functioning of the meaningful life sphere, which, in turn reveals the depth of the subjective causation of behaviour, serves to comprehend its consequences, produces authentic beliefs, specifies aspirations, promotes reflective assessment and further foresight of one's own self-shifts in the dimensions of spiritual self-creation [12, p. 440]. In fact, the above broad definition of personality essentially outlines the conscious action of the self-personal mechanism of an effective psychologist.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The formation and development of a personality in the profession is a complex, dynamic and long-term process. The multidirectional progress of professionalisation is realised throughout the entire life path of an individual, which has certain periods and stages, and at each of which not only a set of special competences is formed, but also the personal traits-qualities of a specialist are improved.

2. The professional activity of a psychologist is often associated with a high level of stress and emotional burden due to work with people who have serious psychological problems. The formation of a psychologist's personality is complementary to the processes of self-knowledge and the development of internal resources to maintain mental stability, avoid emotional burnout and the development of other personal destructions.

3. The study argues the idea of the tier functioning of *psychological* defences as important factors in the internal stabilisation of a psychologist's life, which contributes to the effective implementation of his/her professional functions and roles. It is proved that the defence system of a humanitarian specialist is a separate evolutionary process, which is evidence of his/her personal and professional development, which

begins with the course of unconscious mental processes aimed at protecting the personality from excessive emotional stress and adapting to the working conditions, reaching a certain awareness as psychological defences of the self level, which involves self-reflection on acts of cooperation with the subject environment (primarily colleagues, clients).

4. A professional psychologist should be able to recognise when their defences become excessive or uncontrollable, as this can affect the quality of interaction with clients, and when a thorough thought-reflective work is required, which should result in the choice of optimal coping, which is part of a previously formed conscious psychoregulatory system, whose action is aimed at regulating the relationship between the individual and the environment in order to maintain their comfortable psycho-emotional state.

5. The formation of such a system of multi-level psychological protection is available only to a psychologist who, overcoming a difficult path of professional formation, has reached a high level of professional competence and personal development, where the substructure of psychological protection has become an integral part of his/her conscious work with a client.

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## АНОТАЦІЯ

**НАДВИНИЧНА Тетяна Лонгінівна, КУЗЬ Ігор Миронович, ВОРОБЕЦЬ Петро Петрович.**

**Орієнтир становлення особистості психолога – усвідомлення психологічних захистів.**

У статті висвітлено одну з центральних траєкторій онтогенезу особистості професійного психолога, яка у розвитковому функціонуванні пролягає від дії захисних механізмів психіки на початковому етапі його фахової підготовки до утвердження низки психологічних захистів як чітко відрефлексованих психічних тенденцій поступу на вищих щаблях його компетентнісної зрілості. Доведено,

що різнорівнева система психологічних захистів психолога є невід'ємною складовою його професійних рис-якостей як особистості, котра у своєму самовдосконаленні піднімається від найпростіших захисних форм психічної активності до найскладніших, більш усвідомлених конструктів та психологічних копінгів, що засвідчує досягнення ним як вищих рівнів фахової майстерності, так і нових психодуховних горизонтів особистісного розвитку. В цьому аналітичному контексті розглянуто сутнісний інваріативний зміст компетентісних, структурних, системних і прогностичних моделей формування важливих рис-властивостей особистості психолога в аспекті ефективного надання психологічної допомоги клієнту. Аргументовано функціональну відмінність захисних механізмів психіки від психологічних захистів, котрі, маючи порівневу структурну організацію, набувають у його повсякденній активності конструктивний усвідомлюваний вплив та забезпечують особистісну зрілість і професійну досконалість. Відповідно до принципів, закономірностей і нормативів циклічно-вчинкового підходу А. В. Фурмана у формі мислесеми обгрунтовано чотири рівні перебігу психологічних захистів особистості психолога, які у взаємодоповненні забезпечують його адаптацію / адаптованість до професійної діяльності: 1) *біопсихічний* – генетично зумовлений (інстинктивний) спосіб реагування на несприятливі впливи; 2) *психофізіологічний* – призначений для стабілізації внутрішнього світу особи у ситуації надмірного емоційного навантаження, усунення внутрішнього дискомфорту природними ресурсами психіки; 3) *психосоціальний* – спосіб адаптивно безконфліктної взаємодії особистості з довкіллям, за якого вона застосовує один з раніше напрацьованих варіантів персонального захисту; 4) *самісно-особистісний* – саморефлексія щодо вибору оптимального набору захисних механізмів і способів їх подолання (копінгів). Висловлено думку про те, що розвиток вищих рівнів психологічних захистів можливий лише за умов, коли психолог, долаючи складний шлях індивідуального та фахового становлення, досяг вершин професійної компетентності, а його усвідомлені захисти стали невід'ємною складовою його особистості як підсистеми сталих рис-якостей.

**Ключові слова:** *особистість психолога, психоаналітична теорія, діяльність, клієнт, психологічна допомога, особистісне та професійне становлення, професіоналізація, захисні механізми психіки, психологічний захист, мислесема, копінг, опір, перенос, структурна організація захистів особи, контрперенос, самість, прикладні можливості психолога.*

## ANNOTATION

*Tetiana NADVYNCHNA, Ihor KUZ, Petro VOROBETS.*

**The benchmark for the formation of a psychologist's personality is the awareness of psychological defences.**

The article highlights one of the central trajectories of the ontogeny of a professional psychologists personality, which in

its developmental functioning runs from the action of the protective mechanisms of the psyche at the initial stage of their professional training to the establishment of a number of psychological defences as clearly reflected mental tendencies of progress at the highest levels of their competence maturity. It is proved that the multi-level system of psychological defences of a psychologist is an integral part of his professional traits and qualities as a personality, which in its self-improvement rises from the simplest protective forms of mental activity to the most complex, more conscious constructs and psychological coping, which testifies to the achievement of both higher levels of professional skills and new psycho-spiritual horizons of personal development. In this analytical context, the essential invariant content of competence, structural, systemic and prognostic models of the formation of important traits of a psychologists personality in terms of effective psychological assistance to a client is considered. The functional difference between the defence mechanisms of the psyche and psychological defences, which, having a comparable structural organisation, have a constructive conscious influence in the daily activity of a psychologist and ensure personal maturity and professional excellence, is substantiated. In accordance with the principles, regularities and norms of A. Furmans cyclic-action approach, four levels of psychological defences of a personality and a psychologist are substantiated in the form of a thought diagram, which in complementarity ensures their adaptation/adaptability to professional activity: 1) biopsychic – a genetically determined (instinctive) way of responding to adverse influences; 2) psychophysical – designed to stabilise the inner world of a person in a situation of excessive emotional stress, eliminate internal discomfort with the help of natural resources of the psyche; 3) psychosocial – a way of adaptively conflict-free interaction of an individual with the environment, in which he/she uses one of the previously developed options for personal protection; 4) self-personal – self-reflection on the choice of the optimal set of defence mechanisms and ways of overcoming them (coping). The author suggests that the development of higher levels of psychological defences is possible only when a psychologist, overcoming the difficult path of individual and professional development, has reached the heights of professional competence, and their conscious defences have become an integral part of their personality as a subsystem of stable traits and qualities.

**Keywords:** *psychologists personality, psychoanalytic theory, activity, client, psychological assistance, personal and professional development, professionalisation, defence mechanisms of the psyche, psychological defence, thought pattern, coping, resistance, transference, structural organisation of personality defences, countertransference, self, applied capabilities of a psychologist.*

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