The Mirror Effect

Understanding Projection & How to ReThink Your Reality



re•think

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*Understanding Projection & How to **ReThink** Your Reality*

It’s Not Them, It’s You (And That’s Okay)

Ever had one of those days where it feels like *everyone* is being incredibly rude, judgmental, or defensive? You walk away from a conversation thinking, *"Wow, they have a serious attitude problem,"* or *"Why are they being so insecure?"*

We’ve all been there. But here’s a radical thought that might be a little uncomfortable at first: **What if what you’re seeing in them is actually a reflection of what’s happening inside of you?**

In psychology, we call this **Projection**.

Think of your mind like a movie projector. When we have a thought, a feeling, or a trait that we don't like about ourselves—maybe it’s "weakness," "anger," or "unworthiness"—our brain tries to protect us from that discomfort. Instead of owning it, we "project" that image onto the people around us.

We see *our* suppressed anger as *their* hostility. We see *our* self-judgment as *their* criticism.

The good news? Once you understand projection, you stop being a victim of everyone else’s "bad vibes" and start reclaiming your own power. You stop reacting to the movie on the screen and start looking at the projector.

Let’s use the **ReThink** framework to clear the lens.

Part 1: Why We Project

We project because it's a survival mechanism. It's easier to point at someone else and say, *"You're being difficult,"* than it is to sit with the feeling that *we* might be feeling overwhelmed and out of control.

But when we project, we lose. We lose our connection to others, and we lose our ability to grow. To overcome it, we have to build **Emotional Fitness**—the strength to look in the mirror without flinching.

Part 2: The ReThink Workbook

Grab a pen. These five exercises are designed to help you catch your projections in real-time and turn them into breakthroughs.

ReThink Exercise 1: The "Trigger Tracker"

Projection always starts with a strong emotional reaction (a trigger).

Think of someone who has really gotten under your skin lately. What is the specific trait that bothers you most about them? (e.g., "They are so lazy," or "They are so arrogant.")

The person and the trait:

On a scale of 1-10, how much does this trait upset you?

ReThink Exercise 2: The Mirror Flip

This is where we test the projection.

Look at the trait you wrote above. Now, ask yourself: *"In what way am I being [that trait] toward myself or others lately?"* Or, *"In what way am I judging myself for having that trait?"* Be honest.

Where is this trait currently living in my own life?

ReThink Exercise 3: Dissolving the "Shoulds"

Projection is often fueled by hidden rules we've made for ourselves.

Complete this sentence: *"That person shouldn't be so _____ because if I acted like that, it would mean I am _____."*

ReThink Exercise 4: Reclaiming the Projector

Now, let's rewrite the narrative.

Instead of: *"They are making me feel insignificant,"* ReThink it to: *"I am feeling insignificant right now, and I'm looking for evidence of it in their behavior."* Write your own "ReThink" statement below for the situation that triggered you.

My ReThink Statement:

ReThink Exercise 5: The Compassion Turn-Around

Once we own the feeling, the projection dies. Compassion takes its place.

If the trait you're seeing in them is actually a part of you that needs love, what would you say to that part of yourself right now?

My Loving Response to Myself:

Outro: Living Without the Projector

When you stop projecting, the world starts looking a lot friendlier. Not because people changed, but because you've stopped looking for "villains" to carry your own suppressed feelings.

This isn't about blaming yourself; it's about **freedom**. When you realize that your triggers are just arrows pointing back to areas of yourself that need healing, you become unstoppable.

Next time you're about to point a finger, remember: Three fingers are pointing back at you. Take a breath, use your ReThink tools, and choose to see the truth instead of the movie.

With love and clarity,

iKE & Ande

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Keep ReThinking,

iKE ALLEN & Ande Anderson, MS, RD

Co-Founders of **AVAIYA** University

