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**ATTITUDE TO ONESELF AND ONE'S LIFE PATH
IN PERSONS WITH CLEARLY MANIFESTED
PREDISPOSITION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSONALITY
DEFENSE IN EARLY ADULTHOOD**

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The attitude to oneself and one's life path in persons with clearly manifested predisposition to psychological personality defense at the age of 21-39 has been studied. It has been traced that the mechanisms of denial, projection and regression come to be most intense. It has been found that the denial mechanism contributes to reinforcement of positive and weakening of negative attitude to oneself and one's life path; one can overcome emotional non-acceptance of one's Self in case the mechanisms of regression and projection are slowed down. It has been shown that in individuals with average predisposition to psychological personality defense the mechanisms of denial and intellectualization, aimed at supporting positive attitude to self and to one's life path, dominate.

Key words: self-attitude, life path, psychological defense mechanisms, early adulthood.

Problem statement. Early adulthood is the period of life when a person critically reconsiders personal achievements, with due account of real opportunities and life circumstances. The output of those reflections is related to individual self-attitude, hence to acceptance or non-acceptance of oneself, one's life path (I. Bekh, E. Isayev, S. Maksymenko, V. Petrovskyi, V. Slobodchikov, etc.) [2, 3]. In that period of life, due to the crisis of the thirties (age period 28–33), the individual's idea about constructiveness of his/her life path, opportunities for self-fulfillment, clarity of self-determination in life, positive personal transformations acquire a special sense. In case it is impossible to achieve the desirable result one may expect activation of the psychological personality defense mechanisms.

Modern psychological researches focus on identification of conscious factors of positive self-attitude. Taking into account considerable potential possibilities of subconscious psychic regulation mechanisms, we consider it necessary to study special features of acceptance of oneself and one's life path in persons with clearly manifested predisposition to psychological defense mechanisms.

Analysis of the latest studies and publications. The first attempts at interpreting the phenomenon of self-attitude are related to the notion of global self-assessment understood by R. Burns as the integrator of separate self-assessments into a dynamic integrity. It is in self-assessment that individual self-attitude gets manifested, since knowledge of oneself is

not perceived by a person in an indifferent way, evoking his/her evaluations and emotions. Thus, according to the scholar, self-attitude is an affective component of the Self-concept [1]. A somewhat different interpretation of self-attitude can be found in the papers by S. Coopersmith and M. Rosenberg, where this construct is viewed as a stable personal trait, almost independent of any situation and the individual's age. Self-respect and the need for a stable 'Self' image ensure sustainable positive attitude of the individual to himself or herself [8, 9].

In the domestic psychological studies the notion of self-attitude appeared in the late 80s of the 20th century thanks to the papers of a Georgian psychologist N. Sardjveladze. In his opinion, self-attitude constitutes a structural unit of the personality's dispositional core and is split into two components: Self-objective and Self-subjective. They are actualized due to cognitive activity, emotional responses and behaviour (or readiness for it) in relation to oneself [6].

In the context of our study, taking into account the methodological toolkit used, worthy of attention are the views expressed by V. Stolin and S. Pantyleyev. V. Stolin considers self-attitude to be the reflection of the personal sense of 'Self' in the conscience depending on the subject's objective position in the society. The main structural component of self-attitude is the sum total of emotional personality manifestations: self-respect, auto-affection, self-interest – which get integrated into the general sense of positive or negative self-attitude [7]. Summing up the discussions of the multi-faceted interpretation of the notion of self-attitude, S. Pantyleyev states that self-attitude, integrating separate self-assessments, constitutes an integral, mono-dimensional and universal formation, expressing the degree of the individual's positive attitude to the image of his/her own 'Self'. He points out two subsystems in the structure of self-attitude: evaluative, and emotional and evaluative one. The evaluative one includes self-respect, the feeling of competence, the feeling of efficiency; the emotional and evaluative subsystem includes auto-affection, the sense of own dignity, inherent value, self-acceptance [5].

Accepting oneself, the individual accepts his/her life path. As psychological studies (by Ye. Holovakha, O. Zlobina, S. Maksymenko, N. Panina, V. Panok, I. Pidlasna, etc.) indicate, the category of the individual's life path is an integrating notion helping to harmonize and systematize a whole range of phenomena in the person's individual development: life situation, social development situation, life plans, life program, life strategy, and others. In V. Panok's opinion, this path constitutes a 'unique, original drama of personality's being, each act of which results from the collision of plenty of individually unique characters and life circumstances, social and natural conditions of existence' [4, p. 146]. Finally, it represents an integrity of those events and circumstances (social, biological and ecological ones), which have had a critical impact on the personality development and have caused its structure and major problems in life.

Self-defense against the frustrating information about oneself and one's life path, distancing his/her Self from destructive influences is one of the main motives of human behaviour. Hence, the question arises which personal factors contribute to the activation of protection mechanisms. V. M. Kunitsyna is of the opinion that development of those mechanisms is caused by low individual's self-respect. Self-respect determines the nature of relations with

other people, in particular, the less the person respects himself/herself, the less (s)he appreciates others, is more afraid of them, striving for self-affirmation via depreciation of opinions and activity of the people around him/her. Hence, V. M. Kunitsyna assumes that low self-respect requires from an individual to more frequently resort to psychological defense mechanisms in order to protect himself/herself from self-torturing, constant psychological discomfort and complexes. Thus, a conclusion is drawn: defense constitutes a necessary precondition for preserving stability of the personality structure in the conditions of permanent pathogenic conflict between different layers of self-conscience [acc. to 3].

In our opinion, the range of problems relating to attitude to oneself and one's life path can be expanded through their analysis in the context of human predisposition to psychological personality defense. The tasks of our study were, primarily, to clarify which psychological defense mechanisms get activated at the age of early adulthood in cases when a person is particularly prone to use them; secondly, what their role in supporting positive and preventing negative self-attitude and constructive life path is.

Layout of the main material of the study. To diagnose self-attitude the methodology of self-attitude by V. Stolin and S. Pantyleyev, measuring the following modalities: closedness, self-confidence, self-management, mirror Self, self-value, self-acceptance, inner proneness to conflict, self-attachment, self-accusation, self-respect, auto-affection and self-humiliation, was used. For identification of attitude to one's life path the methodology 'Personality biography' by O. Motkov, designed for studying constructiveness and harmoniousness in personality, brightness of his/her self-fulfillment, clarity of his/her life self-determination, positive nature of personal transformation, was used. The degree of expression of protective personality mechanisms was determined by the questionnaire test 'Life Style Index' by R. Plutchik and H. Kellerman, which allows to diagnose the degree of intensity of the main defenses (denial, displacement, regression, compensation, projection, replacement, intellectualization, reactive formation).

For identification of a group of person with clearly manifested predisposition to psychological personality defense cluster analysis with the method of k-means for the respondents was used. The group of respondents (124 persons aged 21-39, average age – 29 years) was divided into two subgroups with Wilks' Lambda: .30238 approx. $F(7,116)=38,232$ $p<0.0000$ (Fig. 1).

Of greatest importance in clustering were the following scales: general intensity of defense mechanisms, displacement, denial, reactive formation, projection, compensation, and replacement. Correctness of classifications for the first cluster is 96.87%, for the second one – 100%. The first cluster included 64 persons, while the second one – 60 persons.

Comparative analysis made using Student's t-test method, showed that persons belonging to the first cluster had much better expressed defense mechanisms as compared to persons from the second cluster (t within the range of 0.018-0.000), but for denial and displacement mechanisms. The general intensity index for the first cluster was 61.29%, which reflects really existing, however not solved external and internal conflicts; for the second one – 44.76%, which is a standard figure for this value. On these grounds the first cluster was assigned the name 'Persons with clearly manifested predisposition to psychological defense' (the main group of respondents), and the second one – 'Persons with average predisposition to psychological defense' (control group of respondents).

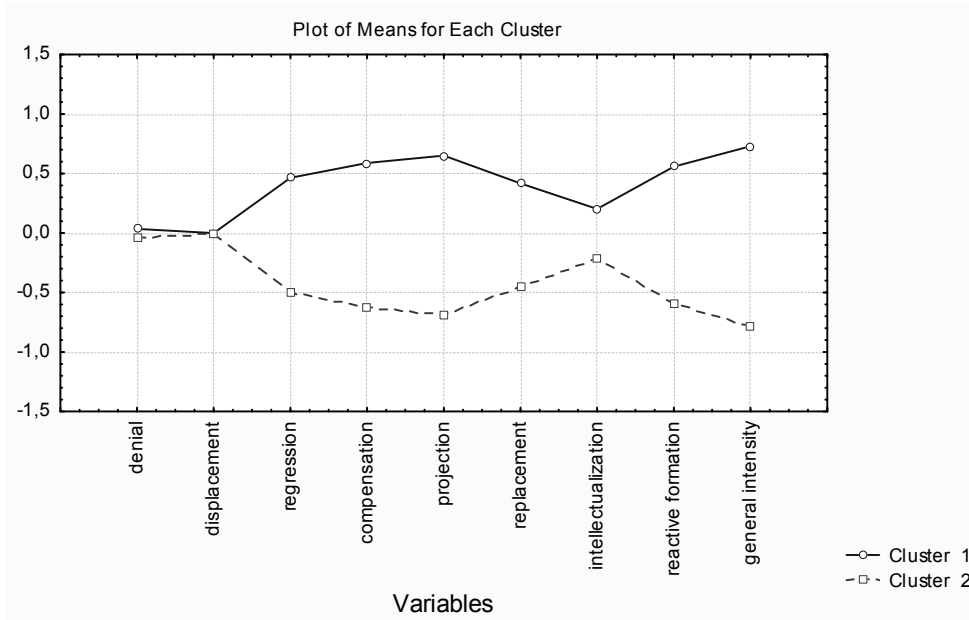


Fig. 1. The clustering graph by the method of k-means for the respondents

For persons with *clearly manifested predisposition to psychological defense (cluster I)* the most intense mechanisms are denial (70.31%), projection (68.99%), and regression (67.97%) (fig. 2). It is them that play the major role in the regulation of self-attitude within this subgroup.

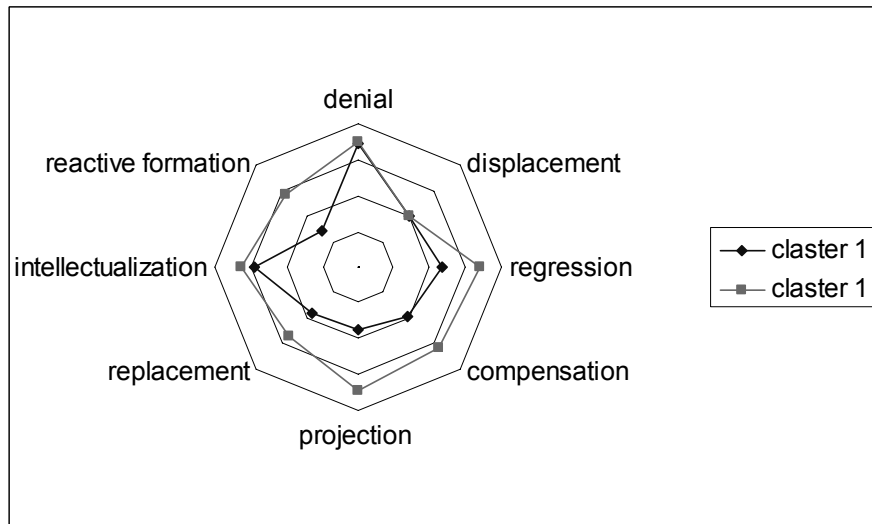


Fig. 2. Intensity of psychological defense mechanisms for the studied cluster 1 (N=64) and cluster 2 (N=60)

One may judge about the role of denial in supporting positive and avoiding negative self-attitude both on the basis of factor, and correlation analysis. Factor analysis for this group of respondents was conducted using the method of main components with Varimax rotation at factor loads >0.500 . The first factor of the five-factor model that accounts for 62.95% of the general data dispersion includes such a mechanism of defense dominating within this subgroup as 'denial' (0.649), as well as components of positive self-attitude: auto-affection (0.836), self-respect (0.687), self-value (0.666), mirror Self (0.528), self-management (0.622), self-attachment (0.656), – and components of negative self-attitude: self-humiliation (-0.592), self-accusation (-0.618). This factor was labeled 'Denial as the leading mechanism of positive self-attitude in persons with clearly manifested predisposition to defense mechanisms'. There is also a close relation between denial and all the scales of the self-attitude methodology (but for the closedness scale). Absolute values of correlation factors (r -Pearson at $p < 0.05$) vary within 0.247-0.612. Denial also correlates well with the general personality constructiveness ($r = 0.404$).

The role of regression and projection in negative self-attitude of individuals is shown by another factor – 'Psychological defense in negative self-attitude', which unites the mechanisms of regression (0.735) and projection (0.524), general intensity of defense mechanisms (0.774), self-humiliation (0.716), inner conflict (0.702) and self-accusation (0.621). The data of factor analysis is confirmed by the correlation between regression and inner conflict ($r = 0.505$), self-accusation ($r = 0.413$), self-humiliation ($r = 0.493$); between projection and mirror Self ($r = -0.317$), inner conflict ($r = 0.342$), self-accusation ($r = 0.283$) and self-humiliation ($r = 0.336$).

Of importance for the analysis of the results of our study is the fourth factor 'The role of intellectualization in self-realization', which consists of the following scales: intellectualization (0.639), replacement (-0.636), closedness (0.527).

The scales which allow to judge about the constructive life path of an individual formed the third factor – 'Constructive life strategy of persons predisposed to psychological defense' (factor loads within 0.774-0.924). It should be indicated that the scale of positive transformation shows reverse connection with the scales of 'mirror Self' ($r = -0.279$), 'self-acceptance' ($r = -0.261$), 'auto-affection' ($r = -0.258$), 'compensation' ($r = -0.275$).

As compared to other peers, it seems to persons with clearly manifested predisposition to psychological defense that those around them have less affection for them and do not understand them sufficiently, as well as do not fully approve of their actions ($p = 0.041$). They also have a more vividly expressed inner conflict ($p = 0.000$), live through self-accusation ($p = 0.000$) and self-humiliation ($p = 0.000$) in a more acute way. Along with that, the values of life self-determination ($p = 0.019$), personality transformation ($p = 0.037$), harmoniousness of personality ($p = 0.015$) and general personality constructiveness ($p = 0.011$) in them are significantly lower, than in persons with average intensity of defense mechanisms.

The respondents from both subgroups have shown a high level of interest in their own 'Self', feel the value of their own personality for them and for others ($M1 = 8.063$; $M2 = 8.267$). No significant differences in self-value relations with indicators of self-acceptance and acceptance of one's life path have been traced.

If a person with intense psychological defense at the age of early adulthood is convinced that much more positive changes are taking place in his/her life than before, most probably,

(s)he does not expect positive attitude to him/her from others, shows symptoms of inner disadaptation related to insufficient self-acceptance and affection for himself/herself, and this is normally characteristic of the people who are not prone to compensate for their real or imagined drawbacks by assigning achievements and values of more successful people to themselves.

Thus, on the one hand, there is a positive assessment of the dynamics of one's life, and on the other hand – lack of certainty as to whether those around him/her accept and approve of a person in whose life these changes have occurred, certain doubts as to affective value of Self. Obviously, it is higher intensity of psychological defense mechanisms that 'blocks' access to positive information in human conscience. Imaginary value for the people around increases in case the denial mechanism gets activated. Positive self-attitude and avoidance of negative attitude is promoted by the refusal to acknowledge the reality of the psycho-traumatic situation, as well as idea of oneself as of a strong-willed, energetic, reliable person capable of self-management. It becomes possible to overcome doubts and disagreement with oneself and emotional non-acceptance of one's Self in case a person in psycho-traumatic situations is not predisposed to regression and projection: subjectively complicated tasks are not replaced with simple and accessible ones, the individual does not resort to behaviour stereotypes, does not ascribe his/her negative traits to those around him/her. Logical substantiation of the actions taken contributes to concealing of an unpleasant or subjectively unacceptable situation from oneself and from others, as well as to ensuring inner peace for oneself for a certain period, however, there is no release of negative emotions on more accessible objects. Ignoring of potentially worrying information also contributes to the idea of oneself as of a person building up a constructive life path.

For people with *average predisposition to psychological defense (cluster 2)* the most intense mechanisms are denial (68.97%), intellectualization (57.50%), and regression (47.14%).

The factor model built for this subgroup (accounting for 61.77% of the general data dispersion) includes the fourth factor 'The role of denial in supporting positive self-attitude in persons with average predisposition to psychological defense', which includes denial (0.543) and such self-attitude modalities as: mirror Self (0.571), self-acceptance (0.825), self-attachment (0.541), and auto-affection (0.784). The same as for the previous subgroup, some interrelation was traced between denial and the scales of self-attitude methodologies, except for the scale of closedness. Absolute values of correlation factors (r-Pearson at $p < 0.05$) vary from 0.273 to 0.567. There can also be traced a statistically significant connection between denial and general personality constructiveness ($r = 0.508$).

Analysis of the third and the fifth factors also helps to achieve the goal of this study. The third factor 'The role of intellectualization in self-respect and self-confidence of the personality' included the scales of intellectualization (0.593), self-respect (0.837), self-confidence (0.630), and closedness (0.780). Also, statistically reliable interrelations were traced between the mechanism of intellectualization and such self-attitude modalities as: closedness ($r = 0.374$), self-management ($r = 0.412$), self-value ($r = 0.285$), self-respect ($r = 0.396$), self-accusation ($r = -0.369$), and self-humiliation ($r = -0.318$). The fifth factor 'Hyper-compensation in self-humiliation' consists of the scales of reactive formation (0.749) and self-humiliation (0.535).

No correlations were traced between reactive formation and self-attitude modalities for this subgroup of respondents.

The mechanism of regression, which is among the three most wide-spread ones for this subgroup of respondents, is closely connected to inner conflict ($r=0.463$), self-humiliation ($r=0.357$), self-confidence ($r=-0.303$), self-management ($r=-0.263$), mirror Self ($r=-0.295$), self-respect ($r=-0.397$), general personality constructiveness ($r=0.313$). The first factor 'Constructive life strategy of persons with average predisposition to psychological personality defense' points to the role of constructive assessment of one's life path (factor loads within the range of 0.780-0.941). The scale of positive transformation shows a statistically significant connection with self-management scale ($r=0.266$).

Persons with average level of psychological defense are of a higher opinion about the value of their Self for others as compared to the ones prone to frequent usage of defense ($p=0.041$). This opinion will change even more in case the following mechanisms are 'switched on': the mechanism of denial ($r=0.509$) and compensation ($r=0.280$), and when the mechanism of regression 'is switched off' ($r=-0.295$).

It is not only the refusal to acknowledge the evidence of life problems, but also the attempt to find a substitution for them, without going down to the earlier stages of libido development, that constitute the mechanisms of psychological defense that help people from this subgroup to see the importance of their Self for others. In this case the mechanism of denial is mainly directed at providing intensive support to positive self-attitude, in some cases, as the correlation analysis shows, it is directed at preventing individual's negative self-attitude. Logical justification of actions which do not deserve approval, concealing of them from oneself and from others help the person have a better opinion about the social importance and value of their Self both for them and for others, feel a more confident and independent person capable of managing oneself, avoiding self-accusation and self-humiliation.

Persons who transform inner emotionally unacceptable impulses into their opposites are more prone to self-humiliation. In case of regression, replacement of more complicated life tasks with simpler ones, one may expect reinforcement of the negative aspects of self-attitude, like inner conflict and self-humiliation, as well as weakening of positive ones: a person loses self-confidence, does not believe that (s)he can manage his/her behaviour and emotions, the forecasts for the expected attitude from others become more pessimistic, and, as the result, self-respect goes down. 'Closing one's eyes' to frustrating information and replacement of complicated life tasks with simpler ones also contributes to acceptance of one's life path as a successful one. If at the age of 21–39 an individual assesses his/her life path as the one full of positive changes as compared to previous years of life, and (s)he has a moderate capacity for psychological personality defense, (s)he most probably accounts for the changes by his/her own activity.

Conclusions and prospects for further studies. In the period of early adulthood, regardless of individual predisposition to psychological defense mechanisms, the most intense is the mechanism of denial. For people with clearly manifested predisposition to the use of protective mechanisms the mechanisms of projection and regression are active besides that; for those with average predisposition – that of intellectualization.

A person with a clearly manifested psychological defense is more prone to have negative self-attitude as compared to other peers, considering that those around him/her don't fully understand them. In spite of an insufficiently positive attitude of others, in their opinion, they assess their life as the one with positive changes. Due to constant higher intensity of psychological defense mechanisms positive information may remain unrealized by the individual, this causing an insufficiently positive self-attitude and underestimation of his/her self-determination, harmoniousness and constructiveness of personality. The mechanism of denial contributes to reinforced positive and weakened negative attitude to oneself and one's life path; one can overcome emotional non-acceptance of one's Self in case the mechanisms of regression and projection are slowed down.

In persons who have moderate predisposition to psychological defense mechanisms in early adulthood, denial is mainly directed at intensive support of positive self-attitude, and in some cases – at preventing the negative one. Intellectualization of frustrating information is mainly directed at improved individual's self-attitude and contributes to positive ideas of one's life; regression, vice versa, worsens self-attitude and makes life path seem more pessimistic.

Further studies of this range of problems could be related to the study of peculiarities of the life path of persons who do not accept themselves, as well as to expansion of the age range in the group of respondents.

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СТАВЛЕННЯ ДО СЕБЕ ТА СВОГО ЖИТТЄВОГО ШЛЯХУ В ОСІБ З ВИРАЖЕНОЮ СХИЛЬНІСТЮ ДО ПСИХІЧНОГО ЗАХИСТУ ОСОБИСТОСТІ У РАННІЙ ДОРОСЛОСТІ

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Проаналізовано, які механізми психічного захисту активізуються у віці ранньої дорослості у випадку, коли людина особливо схильна до їх використання, яка їхня роль у підтриманні позитивного та запобіганні негативного самоствавлення і конструктивного життєвого шляху. Використано методики самоствавлення В. Століна і С. Пантисєва, “Особистісна біографія” О. Моткова, тест-опитувальник “Індекс життєвого стилю” Р. Плутчика і Х. Келлермана. Група досліджуваних: 124 особи у віці від 21 до 39 років (середній вік – 29 років), яку на підставі кластерного аналізу поділили на дві підгрупи – з вираженою схильністю до механізмів психічного захисту (N=64) і середньою схильністю (N=60).

Якщо людина з напруженим психічним захистом у віці ранньої дорослості переконана, що в її житті відбувається значно більше позитивних змін, порівняно з тим, що було раніше, то, найімовірніше, вона не очікує позитивного ставлення до себе з боку інших, має симптоми внутрішньої дезадаптації, що пов'язано з недостатнім самоприйняттям і симпатією до себе. З одного боку, позитивна оцінка динаміки свого життя, з іншого – невпевненість у тому, чи навколишні приймають і схвалюють людину, у житті якої відбулись ці зміни, певні сумніви щодо афективної цінності свого Я. Очевидно, що саме підвищена напруженість механізмів психічного захисту “блокує” доступ позитивної інформації до свідомості людини. Уявна цінність для навколишніх зростає з активізацією механізму заперечення. Позитивному ставленню до себе й униканню негативного сприяє відмова визнати реальність психотравмуючої ситуації, а також уявлення про себе як вольову, енергійну, надійну людину, яка здатна керувати собою. Подолати сумніви, незгоду зі собою та емоційне неприйняття свого Я стає можливим у випадку, якщо людина у психотравмуючих ситуаціях не схильна до регресії і проєкції: суб'єктивно складні завдання не підміняє на простіші і доступніші, не вдається до поведінкових стереотипів, не приписує навколишнім свої негативні риси. Приховування від себе та інших неприємної або суб'єктивно неприйнятної ситуації, а отже, забезпечення собі на певний час внутрішнього спокою, сприяє логічне обґрунтування скоєних вчинків, однак не практикується розрядка негативних емоцій на доступніших об'єктах. Ігнорування потенційно тривожної інформації сприяє також уявленню про себе як людину, яка буде конструктивний життєвий шлях.

Особи зі середнім рівнем психічного захисту мають вищу думку стосовно цінності свого Я для інших порівняно з тими, хто схиляється до частого використання захистів. Не лише відмова визнати очевидність життєвих негараздів, а спроба знайти їм заміну, не спускаючись на більш ранні стадії розвитку лібідо, є тими механізмами психічного захисту, які допомагають особам цієї підгрупи побачити значущість свого Я для інших. У цьому випадку механізм заперечення головно спрямований на інтенсивну підтримку позитивного самоствавлення, в окремих випадках він спрямовується на запобігання негативному самоствавленню людини. Логічне виправдання вчинків, які не заслуговують на схвалення, приховування їх від себе та інших допомагають людині підвищити уявлення про соціальну значущість і цінність свого Я для себе та для інших, відчувати себе впевненою та самостійною людиною, здатною управляти собою,

уникнути самозвинувачень і самоприниження. При регресії можна очікувати зростання негативних аспектів самоствалення і послаблення позитивних. Прийняти свій життєвий шлях як успішний сприяє також “закривання очей” на фруструючу інформацію. Якщо у 21–39 років людина оцінює свій життєвий шлях як такий, що сповнений позитивних змін порівняно з попередніми роками життя, має помірну здатність до психічного захисту особистості, то, найімовірніше, вона ці зміни зачисляє до власної активності.

Ключові слова: самоствалення, життєвий шлях, механізми психічного захисту, рання дорослість.