

"Denial
is
JUST
a river
IN
EGYPT."



I didn't
say it
was your
fault

I said I
was going
to blame
you



Denial is the psychological process by which human beings protect themselves from things which threaten them by blocking knowledge of those things from their awareness. It is a defense which distorts reality; it keeps us from feeling the pain and uncomfortable truth about things we do not want to face. If we cannot feel or see the consequences of our actions, then everything is fine and we can continue to live without making any changes.

Denial comes in many forms. If you are human, you have denial about something—your relationships, your behavior, your health, your family, etc. We all want everything to “be fine.” We have denial to keep us from pain.

Individuals who continue to deny their behavior will continue to be their own worst enemy. . In the process, they create pain for those around them, and they have denial about that, too. To recover, they need to see their denial and see how it works so that they can change their behavior. Denial is replaced by the truth and acceptance. To be in denial feels like anger, fear, shame, and isolation. Instead of being cold and cut off from themselves and others, they can be warm and begin to grow again.

Defenses are the specific way to ward off attacks on our denial. Some defenses are conscious and we are aware of them. Others are subconscious. We use both to keep our denial intact. Listed below are common defenses, or forms of denial. We use all forms of denial, although there are some that become our favorites.

1. **SIMPLE DENIAL:** Simply denying the behavior, “I did not touch her.”
2. **MINIMIZING:** Minimizing is admitting the problem to some degree but in such a way that it appears to be much less serious or significant than it actually is, “She bruises easily, all I did was grab her.”
3. **RATIONALIZING:** Rationalizing is making excuses or giving reasons to justify your behavior, “I had to try to calm her down, she was hysterical, everyone could use a slap every now and then.”
4. **INTELLECTUALIZING or GENERALIZING:** Intellectualizing is avoiding emotional, personal awareness of the behavior by keeping it general and vague. “Doesn’t domestic violence occur in every family.”
5. **BLAMING:** Blaming (also called projecting) is maintaining that the responsibility for the behavior lies somewhere else, not with us. “She started it, hit me first, what else could I have done?”
6. **DIVERSION:** Diversion is changing the subject to avoid a subject that is difficult, “Women, it was probably her time of the month.”
7. **BARGAINING:** Bargaining is cutting deals or setting conditions for when things will be right to deal with the problem. Examples: “I’ll quit being abusive when you quit smoking.”



8. **PASSIVITY:** Passivity is ignoring the situation, or being its victim. "I can not help it, I was raised to be aggressive, what is the use in trying to change. You can not teach an old dog new tricks."
9. **HOSTILITY:** Hostility occurs when the person becomes angry or unpleasantly irritable when the subject of his/her behavior is mentioned. "Shut up, don't you tell me what to do."

Denial is automatic; it is not usually a matter of deliberate lying or willful deception. We often do not know the extent of our denial and its consequences. They are blinded to the fact that their view of the situation does not conform to reality. The denial system distorts their perception and impairs their judgment so they become self-deluded and incapable of accurate self-awareness.

Denial is progressive. The denial system becomes increasingly more pervasive and entrenched. In the very early stages it is minimal, and with encouragement, such people can usually view their own problem fairly realistically. However, by the time a person's illness is sufficiently advanced that the problem appears serious in the eyes of others, an elaborate system of defenses shields him/her from seeing what is really happening.



DENIAL , OR HOW TO AVOID ACCOUNTABILITY

DV offenders tend to blame others or exceptional circumstances for their behavior. For example they tend to attribute a DV arrest to others or circumstances outside of their control. One of the most important goals of DV treatment is to assist clients in accepting their behavior and be able to recognize how did they contribute to the problem.

After reading the denial handout, do you recognize any of these types of denial in regard to your behavior?

1. SIMPLE DENIAL:

2. MINIMIZING:

3. RATIONALIZATION:

4. INTELLECTUALIZING OR GENERALIZING:

5. BLAMING:

6. DIVERSION:

7. BARGAINING:

8. PASSIVITY:

9. HOSTILITY:
