

## DENIAL

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Denial, in ordinary English, is asserting that a statement or allegation is not true. It is a psychological defense mechanism seen when a person is faced with a fact that is too uncomfortable to accept and rejects it instead, insisting that it is not true despite what may be overwhelming evidence.

The subject may use:

- **simple denial**: denying the reality of the unpleasant fact altogether;
- **minimization**: admitting the fact but denying its seriousness (a combination of denial and rationalization);
- **projection**: admitting both the fact and seriousness but denying responsibility by blaming somebody or something else.

The concept of denial is particularly important to the study of addiction. The theory of denial was first researched seriously by Anna Freud. She classified denial as a mechanism of the immature mind, because it conflicts with the ability to learn from and cope with reality.

Where denial occurs in mature minds, it is most often associated with death, dying and rape. More recent research has significantly expanded the scope and utility of the concept.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross used denial as the first of five stages in the psychology of a dying patient, and the idea has been extended to include the reactions of survivors to news of a death. Thus, when parents are informed of the death of a child, their first reaction is often of the form, "No! You must have the wrong house, you can't mean our child."

Denial is one of the most controversial defense mechanisms.

Understanding and avoiding denial is also important in the treatment of various diseases. The American Heart Association cites denial as a principal reason that treatment of a heart attack is delayed. It is common for patients to delay mammograms or other tests because of a fear of cancer, even though this is clearly maladaptive.

- Denial of fact
- Denial of responsibility
- Denial of impact
- Denial of awareness
- Denial of cycle
- Denial of denial

Denial is an area that affects us all at one time or another. Being in a state of denial should not create a feeling of conviction or despair. Being in a state of denial should only provoke you in to action and self reflection in order to overcome the obstacles before you.