



# Types of Denial

*Denial; Selective ignorance of information, refusing to acknowledge*



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## Addiction & denial

Individuals with a [dependence on substances](#) are commonly prone to denial of their illness and it's detrimental affects on their life.

[Denial](#) is one of the main reasons [alcohol](#) and [drug addiction](#) persists, even when the negative consequences of substance abuse arise.

Addiction can cost them their career, driving license, health, family, or friends.

## Denial of fact

This form of denial is where someone avoids a fact by lying. This lying can take the form of an outright falsehood (commission), leaving out certain details in order to tailor a story (omission), or by falsely agreeing to something (assent, also referred to as "yesing" behavior).

Someone who is in denial of fact is typically using lies in order to avoid facts that they think may be potentially painful to themselves or others.

## Denial of responsibility

This form of denial involves avoiding personal responsibility by blaming, minimizing or justifying.

Blaming is a direct statement shifting culpability and may overlap with denial of fact.

Minimizing is an attempt to make the effects or results of an action appear to be less harmful than they may actually be.

Justifying is when someone takes a choice and attempts to make that choice look okay due to their perception of what is "right" in a situation.

Someone using denial of responsibility is usually attempting to avoid potential harm or pain by shifting attention away from themselves.

## Denial of impact

Denial of impact involves a person avoiding thinking about or understanding the harms their behavior have caused to themselves or others. By doing this, that person is able to avoid feeling a sense of guilt and it can prevent that person from developing remorse or empathy for others.

Denial of impact reduces or eliminates a sense of pain or harm from poor decisions.



## Denial & Substance Misuse

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The concept of denial is important in [twelve-step programs](#), where the abandonment or reversal of denial forms the basis of the first, fourth, fifth, eighth and tenth steps.

The ability to deny or minimize is an essential part of what enables an addict to continue his or her behavior in the face of evidence that, to an outsider, appears overwhelming.

This is cited as one of the reasons that compulsion is seldom effective in treating addiction — the habit of denial remains.

## Denial of awareness

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This type of denial is best discussed by looking at the concept of state dependent learning<sup>1</sup>. People using this type of denial will avoid pain and harm by stating they were in a different state of awareness (such as alcohol or drug intoxication or on occasion mental health related).

This type of denial often overlaps with denial of responsibility.

## Denial of cycle

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Many who use this type of denial will say things such as, "it just happened."

Denial of cycle is where a person avoids looking at their decisions leading up to an event or does not consider their pattern of decision making and how harmful behavior is repeated.

The pain and harm being avoided by this type of denial is more of the effort needed to change the focus from a singular event to looking at preceding events. |

It can also serve as a way to blame or justify behavior (see above).

## Denial of Denial

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This can be a difficult concept for many people to identify in themselves, but is a major barrier to changing hurtful behaviors.

Denial of denial involves thoughts, actions and behaviors which bolster confidence that nothing needs to be changed in one's personal behavior.

This form of denial typically overlaps with all of the other forms of denial, but involves more self-delusion.