

## Behavioral Definitions... Why we do what we do....

**Denial** – This is when a person refuses to admit that they've done something harmful or hurtful when they clearly have. It's a way they lie (to themselves as well as to others) about their intentions. This "Who... Me?" tactic is a way of "playing innocent," and invites the victim to feel unjustified in confronting a person about the inappropriateness of a behavior. It's also the way a person gives him/herself permission to keep right on doing what they want to do. This denial is not the same kind of denial that a person who has just lost a loved one and can't quite bear to accept the pain and reality of the loss engages in. That type of denial really is mostly a "defense" against unbearable hurt and anxiety. Rather, this type of denial is not primarily a "defense" but a maneuver the a person uses to get others to back off, back down or maybe even feel guilty themselves for insinuating he's doing something wrong.

**Selective Inattention** – This tactic is similar to and sometimes mistaken for denial. It's when a person "plays dumb," or acts oblivious. When engaging in this tactic, the person actively ignores the warnings, pleas or wishes of others, and in general, refuses to pay attention to everything and anything that might distract them from pursuing their own agenda. Often, a person knows full well what you want from him when he starts to exhibit this "I don't want to hear it!" behavior. By using this tactic, a person actively resists submitting himself to the tasks of paying attention to or refraining from the behavior you want him to change. Actively listening to and heeding the suggestions of someone else are, among other things, acts of submission.

**Rationalization** – A rationalization is the excuse a person tries to offer for engaging in an inappropriate or harmful behavior. It can be an effective tactic, especially when the explanation or justification the person offers makes just enough sense that any reasonably conscientious person is likely to fall for it. It's a powerful tactic because it not only serves to remove any internal resistance the person might have about doing what he wants to do (quieting any qualms of conscience he might have) but also to keep others off his back. If a person can convince you he's justified in whatever he's doing, then he's freer to pursue his goals without interference.

**Diversion** – A moving target is hard to hit. When we try to pin a manipulator down or try to keep a discussion focused on a single issue or behavior we don't like, he's expert at knowing how to change the subject, dodge the issue or in some way throw us a curve. People use distraction and diversion techniques to keep the focus off their behavior, move us off-track, and keep themselves free to promote their self-serving hidden agendas. (The agenda is usually to point fingers at someone else while justifying their on destructive behavior.)

**Playing the Victim Role** – This tactic involves portraying oneself as an innocent victim of circumstances or someone else's behavior in order to gain sympathy, evoke compassion and thereby get something from another. One thing that this tactic counts on is the fact that less calloused and less hostile personalities usually can't stand to see anyone suffering. Therefore, the tactic is simple. Convince a person you're suffering in some way, and they'll try to relieve your distress while at the same time diverting attention from the core issue.

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**Vilifying the Victim** – This tactic is frequently used in conjunction with the tactic of playing the victim role. A person uses this tactic to make it appear he is only responding (i.e. defending himself against) against attack.

**Projecting the blame (blaming others)** – A person is always looking for a way to shift the blame for their aggressive behavior on to someone or something else .A person becomes skilled at finding scapegoats, they're expert at doing so in subtle, hard to detect ways.

**Minimization** – This tactic is a unique kind of denial coupled with rationalization. When using this maneuver, the aggressor is attempting to assert that his abusive behavior isn't really as harmful or irresponsible as someone else may be claiming. It's the aggressor's attempt to make a molehill out of a mountain.