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Denial

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Definition

A psychological coping mechanism used to protect against stressful events. Early conceptualizations by Freud, as well as recent references such as *DSM-V*, describe “mechanisms that mediate the individual’s reaction to emotional conflicts and to external stressors” (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Denial can be adaptive or maladaptive, depending upon the context and extent to which it is used. In neurological impairments, denial of disability is contrasted with anosognosia and unawareness. Simplified conceptualizations view denial as a psychological process that occurs independently of cognitive impairment, while anosognosia is viewed as a problem of insight that is neurologically and cognitively mediated. More comprehensive conceptualizations consider both denial and impaired self-awareness as “continuous variables which may interact in a given individual” following brain damage (Prigatano and Klonoff 1998). One scale used to tease apart and describe the constructs of denial of disability and impaired self-awareness is described by

Prigatano and Klonoff (1998). Psychotherapy allowing patients the “dignity of risk” (Klonoff 2014) by attempting tasks which are likely beyond their capabilities enhances self-awareness.

Cross-References

- ▶ [Anosodiaphoria](#)
- ▶ [Anosognosia](#)
- ▶ [Coping](#)
- ▶ [Insight, Effects on Rehabilitation](#)

References and Readings

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