

Minimization and Denial Strategies Intimate Partners Commonly Use

Intimate partner violence can come in many forms: physical, sexual, psychological/emotional or economic. Perpetrators exert this violence to gain or maintain power and control. This can include intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, male privilege, economic abuse, the use of children, threats, and minimizing or denying the abuse.

Minimization is a sophisticated appeal designed to minimize negative action and gain the sympathy of survivors. It is an attempt to lessen their actions, claim the abuse didn't occur or to shift responsibility to the survivor. This can include:

- Apologizing and asking or begging for forgiveness
- Saying they will never do it again
- Saying it wasn't their fault – and placing the blame on something else – stress at work, stress related to something else
- Blaming the survivor
- Saying to the survivor that they could never live without them
- Saying they are so stupid, they don't know why they do this, they don't have control and they need the survivor's help to make things better
- Telling the survivor that she cannot leave or abandon him
- Telling the survivor that they will harm or kill themselves if she leaves
- Telling the survivor it was not the bad or comparing it to how another husband behaves with his wife (i.e. "At least I don't do ABC. . .")
- Telling the survivor she should be lucky that it was not worse and that he spared her.

What support should be provided?

The most important things to do if a survivor discusses this type of behavior with you is the following:

- Understand how the survivor feels when this happens.
- Acknowledge and make room for the fact that she may have multiple, conflicting feelings.
- Validate those feelings.

- Provide information to the survivor in a non-judgmental way so that you share how this is part of the abuser's strategies and also part of the cycle of violence. Check in to see if that resonates with the survivor. Check in if she can think back to other times he used those strategies and what the outcome was. Help her to reflect, remember and connect the dots between the strategies and the outcomes and the fact that the violence likely did not stop.
- Potentially brainstorm with her what if anything she would like to differently when it happens again – always keeping in mind her and (if children involved their) safety.
- Continue to support her.
- Give the survivor healing education information about IPV to know more about the dynamics of violence.

Sample Script

- *"Can you tell me more about the violence perpetrated by your husband toward you?"*
- *"How many time this happen? And how many times?"*
- *"What is the effect of his behavior on you? (Psychologically, physically....)"*
- *"How is his relationship with the children?"*
- *"What is your coping strategies used to thwart his attitude?"*
- *"Let us discuss together how we can mitigate the risk face by you (safety plan)."*

