

The Abuser's Famous Foursome: Minimizing, Denying, Justifying, Blaming

Minimizing means downplaying the severity and effects of one's abusive behavior:

- "I'm not like those men who *really* hurt women."
- "I just pushed her" (leaves out the "down a flight of stairs" part).
- "I slipped and got her by accident" (punched her in the face).
- "I only did it once."
- "I couldn't control myself."
- "It just sort of happened."

Denying means pretending the abuse never happened:

- "I never did that, she's crazy."
- "She got a restraining order because her lawyer told her to."
- "I'm not a violent guy."
- "OK, it happened, but I'll never do it again."

Justifying means inventing excuses for the abuse:

- "I had no choice."
- "It was my childhood."
- "I had a right to defend myself" (against a scared partner six inches shorter than the abuser)
- "Someone has to be in charge."
- "She started it."

Blaming means making someone else responsible for your abusive behavior:

- "I pushed her to quiet her down."
- "I wanted to make her listen."
- "I'm being framed."
- "If she'd just shut up, I wouldn't have smacked her."
- "I was arrested because of her."
- "She's the abusive one."
- "I was drunk."
- "She has ruined my life."

The goals of minimizing, denying, justifying, and blaming include:

- Salving one's conscience
- Escaping the consequences, legal or emotional or financial, of one's actions
- Getting other people on your side
- Fear
- Shame
- Concealing your abusive behaviors
- Controlling the victim by turning her against her perceptions of the abuse
- Saving face

The quickest way to outgrow and move beyond the urge to minimize, deny, justify, or blame is to take full, honest responsibility for your actions. What you do, think, feel, and become is up to you.