



**Anxietylab.org**  
**3-4-5 Program Course**  
**Method #9: Overcoming Denial**

Denial is one of the strongest psychological forces known. It is the exact opposite of desire but works the same way – they are both incredibly powerful psychological forces that drive human behavior.

When we have desire for something, we are highly motivated to get it. Our minds work consciously and unconsciously to achieve what we want, prompting our thoughts and behaviors; sometimes making us do things we can't explain.

When we want to NOT do something, NOT know something, NOT believe something, our minds work consciously and unconsciously to deny what we don't want to think about. It's the same powerful force as desire but it goes in the opposite direction.

Many people who have had very negative childhood experiences may not realize it or they just may not want to admit it.

**Admitting that a parent or relative hurt us is difficult and many want to deny it. It is also a source of negative feelings like shame, which makes the urge to deny even stronger.**

There is a standardized test (the ACE quiz [Microsoft Word - Finding Your ACE Score ra hbr 10 24 06.doc \(theannainstitute.org\)](#) ) that you can take to see if your experiences in childhood may qualify as traumatizing. The list includes things like sexual and physical abuse, living in a house with mental illness, having a parent in prison or an alcoholic parent, witnessing extreme violence, etc. (Info on ACE quiz here: [Blog Therapy, Therapy, Therapy Blog, Blogging Therapy, Therapy... \(goodtherapy.org\)](#)

Once you've taken the quiz and have determined that your experiences have given you some of these issues, then it may be time to consider what to do about it. If you're here, you've already

figured out something needs to change.

**Taking charge of your own healing is a truly courageous thing.**

**What to do about denial:** it is incredibly difficult to change once a belief is deeply wired into our mind/brain. It will take a lot of effort and time to re-wire new beliefs. If you had extremely bad experiences as a child but never admitted that those were “abusive” and damaging, then you probably have a long hard road ahead to re-write that belief. But it is possible with effort and time.

This is where neuroplasticity is important - the brain can change if we try hard to make it change. **These negative (and false) beliefs we carry served a purpose for a long time – to protect our hurt selves from facing a painful truth.** That is a natural protective mechanism in the human psyche. But it turns out to be quite harmful when a person denies a painful reality for too long – especially when those experiences that are being denied are the reason we have these afflictions, (anxiety, depression, addictions, on-going relationship troubles, anger problems, obesity, gambling, stealing, bullying, cutting, lying, cheating on spouses, smoking, health problems, etc.).

### **Method:**

1. **Take the standard ACE quiz.** Get objective, outside confirmation that your childhood experiences are not normal and do qualify as abuse. If you have taken the quiz totally honestly and the results show you qualify, then that is objective evidence that you may be a “survivor of abuse” even if you never thought of yourself that way.
2. **Write in your journal** and meditate and do the other activities until you have determined **the TRUTH of your childhood.** Then keep journaling until you have discovered what you really believe and want to be.

*Example: “I can now admit I was abused as a child. When So-and-So did X to me, that was abuse.”*

3. Write then **REPEAT EVERY DAY the AFFIRMATIONS** that you want to replace the old negative beliefs.

Example: *"I will heal the effects of what was done to me. I am strong and will get better."*  
Or *"What happened to me was wrong. I will heal and be the person I want to be."*

4. **Notice what the people who hurt you do:** do they trash your reputation behind your back? Do they undercut your self-esteem? Do they say things did not happen that you know did happen (Gas-lighting)? If so, then ask yourself why they do these things. It's common to have a strong subconscious desire to protect the very people who hurt us, it used to be called the Stockholm Syndrome. We are trained to fear them if we exposed them. If you are protecting someone else, you will have to *deny* that they are doing these things. For these reasons, denial is very strong and may take a while to end.
5. Ask yourself this question: **"How did I get PTSD?"**