

Hierarchy of Denial

Purpose: This exercise maps how others or we may be denying reality, and thereby preventing problems being solved or social change from happening. This model also reveals the levels of denial above the one on which we are blocked.

Time: 60 minutes

Preparation: Introduce the model either using the hand-out (see Hierarchy of Denial Hand-out) or with a prepared flip sheet.

Description: Choose your social issue. In pairs or threes use the model to answer the following questions:

- What are the main levels of denial?
- Are the people you are targeting at different levels of denial?
- At what level is your campaign information/action aimed? Is this appropriate?
- Having identified the levels where the blockages are, what is the appropriate strategy to shift that denial?

Share in the wider group.

For personal work, these questions may be helpful once you have established where you are on the denial hierarchy:

- Where are you stuck with this issue?
- What does this imply?
- What do you need in order to shift?
- Where do you feel most capable of acting on this issue?

Follow-up: Work on strategies to shift the denial. Start with naming your next step.

N.B. This model is from Katrina Shields and transactional analysis theory of Ken Mellor and Eric Schiff.