

# StirFry Seminars

February 2008

Each month in 2008 we will be highlighting vignettes from our *ART OF MINDFUL FACILITATION* book. For more information or to place an order, please visit our website at [stirfryseminars.com](http://stirfryseminars.com).

## Workshop Issues: *Denial*

*"Even if only a minority of one, the truth is simply the truth." -Ghandi*

The definition of denial is the failure to acknowledge an unacceptable truth or emotion or accept it into consciousness. Often it is used as a defense mechanism.

Denial often serves to protect something valuable that we sense is in danger. If I deny the problem, I avoid the responsibility and the guilt it may bring with it. Denial can be healthy for survival. It is, however, unhealthy when the problem no longer exists and we are still practicing denial. What would happen if you did take responsibility?

Denial is also about fear of the unknown, of some perceived threat. A group of educators once told me that there were four major reasons why they did not want to hear the truth. They were:

1. I like keeping things familiar.
2. What if everything gets too emotional? I don't like getting angry or hurt.
3. I don't want to know the truth, because what if I'm responsible?
4. If I give people of color and women what they want, I will be out of a job.

### Suggested Interventions:

Have the participant look at the individual or group he/she is in denial about. That way they can see the impact of their denial. It also helps so he/she can put a face to their fears and possibly stimulate a much-needed dialogue.

1. Ask "What are the rewards or benefits from maintaining your denial?"
2. "Is there a fear of any personal responsibility?"
3. Try "What keeps you from believing?"
4. Ask "What are you protecting?"
5. Inquire "If the veils were lifted, what do you think would happen?"
6. Notice if questions are used to mask a statement. What is the statement underneath your question?
7. Use the audiences' personal stories and reactions to get a reality check.

### FEBRUARY WORLDWIDE CELEBRATIONS

February is **Black History Month** • February is **International Friendship Month**  
February 1 - **National Freedom Day** (U.S.) • February 5 - **Mardi Gras** (International)  
February 7 is **Chinese New Year** • February 19 is **Ashura** (Shia Islam)  
February 23 is **Milarepa Day** (Tibet) • February 26 is **People Power Day** (Phillipines)