

RECOVER ARRIVE BECOME

CLINICAL THERAPY PRACTICE

DARVO

WHEN ACCOUNTABILITY GETS TURNED AROUND

A confusing response pattern can shift attention away from harmful behavior and onto the person who raised the concern.

WHAT DARVO MEANS

- DARVO stands for Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender.
- It describes a pattern that can happen when a person is confronted about harmful behavior.
- DARVO is a pattern to notice - not a diagnosis and not proof, by itself, that abuse occurred.

DENY

- The person may say the event never happened, was misunderstood, or was someone else's fault.
- They may minimize what happened or focus on small details to avoid the larger issue.
- Repeated denial can make another person question their memory or judgment.

ATTACK

- Attention may shift from the behavior to attacks on the person raising the concern.
- Examples can include insults, accusations, threats, ridicule, or claims that the other person is unstable, dishonest, or malicious.
- The goal may be to discredit, intimidate, or silence.

REVERSE VICTIM & OFFENDER

- The person accused of harm may present themselves as the one being harmed.
- They may claim that accountability, boundaries, reporting, or speaking about the behavior is an attack on them.
- This reversal can be especially confusing when others only see part of the situation.

WHAT CAN HELP

- Focus on specific behaviors, dates, messages, and events rather than getting pulled into every accusation.
- Save documentation when it is safe to do so.
- Reality-check with trusted people who understand the broader pattern.
- You do not have to respond immediately, publicly, or to every claim.

SAFETY & SUPPORT

- If there are threats, stalking, violence, or escalating harassment, make an individualized safety plan.
- A victim advocate or attorney can help you understand options without requiring you to confront the other person.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233; text START to 88788.
- Call 911 for immediate danger.

Stay anchored in facts, safety, and support.

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