

# Factsheet 128

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## What is Gaslighting?

**Gaslighting is a form of mental abuse in which information is twisted, spun or selectively omitted to favour the abuser or false information is presented with the intent of making victims doubt their own memory, perception and sanity.** Ref: wikipedia

**Gaslighting is the attempt of one person attempting to overwrite another person's reality; gaslighting is a dangerous part of coercive control.** Evan Stark

*The term Gaslighting was first coined in 1938 by the play "Gas Light" and the film adaptations thereafter that helped enhance the popularity of the term.*

### GASLIGHT THE MOVIE

Paula begins to notice strange goings-on: missing pictures, strange footsteps in the night and gaslights that dim without being touched. As she fights to retain her sanity, her new husband's intentions come into question.

### What is Gaslighting?

Gaslighting is one of the most dangerous, extreme and effective forms of emotional and psychological abuse and is mostly carried out intentionally. Gaslighting is a game of mind control and intimidation that is used by narcissists, sociopaths and psychopaths as a way of controlling, confusing and debilitating someone.

The intention of Gaslighting is to decrease another's self-esteem and confidence so they are unable to function in an independent manner. The person being gaslit will eventually become so insecure that they fail to trust their own judgement, intuition and are unable to make decisions for themselves. Eventually the victim will become so unsure of what reality looks like that they become completely dependent on their abuser. The abuser will appear to the victim (and those around him and the victim) to be the only one to have a clear "grip" of their mind, the situation and what is going on around them.

The perpetrator will...lie, alter reality, change the rules, disorientate the victim, withhold information, exaggerate information, be aggressive and angry; disagree with the victim, tell you you're wrong, tell you half the story (one way or another), create mistrust, call you names, insult and humiliate you and will even flirt and cheat and tell you are imagining it and it is all in your mind.

The perpetrator will...accuse the victim of always being negative, paranoid, misunderstanding everything, being stupid, jealous, insecure and vulnerable.

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In the play, Gas Light, the husband used forms of manipulation in an attempt to drive his wife crazy, for example he deliberately dims the gaslights in the house but tells his wife she is imagining it. With use of various tricks he tried to convince his wife that she was going insane and also that she was losing her memory.

The Gaslight effect happens slowly and over a long period of time (20 plus years in my case) whereby you do not realise what is happening and your sense of reality is so compromised that you eventually believe that it must "you" that is the problem, not the perpetrator.

## Gaslighting usually happens in stages...

- Disbelief
- Defence
- Depression

## Here are some of the signs...

1. You are constantly second-guessing yourself
2. You ask yourself, "Am I too sensitive?" a dozen times a day
3. You often feel confused and even crazy at work
4. You're always apologizing to your mother, father, boyfriend or boss
5. You can't understand why, with so many apparently good things in your life, you aren't happy
6. You frequently make excuses for your partner's behaviour to friends and family
7. You find yourself withholding information from friends and family so you don't have to explain or make excuses
8. You know something is terribly wrong, but you can never quite express what it is, even to yourself
9. You start lying to avoid the put downs and reality twists
10. You have trouble making simple decisions
11. You have the sense that you used to be a very different person - more confident, more fun-loving, more relaxed
12. You feel hopeless and joyless

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13. You feel as though you can't do anything right
14. You wonder if you are a "good enough" girlfriend/ wife/employee/ friend; daughter
15. You find yourself withholding information from friends and family so you don't have to explain or make excuses

Gaslighting does not discriminate; it can happen to anyone regardless of gender, age, race, colour, culture, faith or social standing. It can happen to you, a friend, family member and colleague. If you or someone you know is being gaslit please be sensitive and compassionate, listen and please believe. Ask sensitively if there is anything you can do to help, give them all the support they need.

If in immediate danger call 999

If your need to report a crime call 101

## **Resources and Further Information:**

<http://www.elephantjournal.com/2015/08/gaslighting-the-mind-game-everyone-should-know-about/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/power-in-relationships/200905/are-you-being-gaslighted>

<http://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/seven-signs-you-are-a-victim-of-gaslighting-fiff/>

## **Serious Crime Act 2015 - Section 76 Statutory Guidance Document here:**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/482528/Controlling\\_or\\_coercive\\_behaviour\\_-\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482528/Controlling_or_coercive_behaviour_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)

## **Serious Crime Act 2015 - Section 76 - legislation here:**

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/76/enacted>

## **Books:**

Coercive Control by Evan Stark

Women at Risk by Evan Stark

Without Conscience by Robert D. Hare