



GASLIGHTING- Member Handout

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Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse where a person or group makes someone question their sanity, perception of reality, or memories. People experiencing gaslighting often feel confused, anxious, and unable to trust themselves.

Where gaslighting might occur:

- **Intimate partner relationships**-An abusive partner may accuse someone of being irrational or crazy in order to undermine their confidence and make them easier to control. For example, they might continuously tell someone they are forgetful until the person starts to believe it is true.
- **Child-parent relationships**-Abusive caregivers may use gaslighting to shame or control children. They may accuse them of being too sensitive to belittle their feelings or of misremembering events from when they were younger.
- **Medical gaslighting**-This occurs when a doctor or medical professional dismisses or trivializes a person's health concerns based on the assumption they are mentally ill. For example, they may tell the person their symptoms are "in their head". A 2009 study found that doctors were twice more likely to attribute coronary heart disease symptoms in middle-aged women to mental health conditions than in middle-aged men.
- **Racial gaslighting**-This occurs when people apply gaslighting techniques to a group of people based on race or ethnicity. For example, a person may deny that a specific group experiences discrimination despite evidence that says otherwise, or they might criticize civil rights activists for being too emotional to undermine their message.
- **Political gaslighting**-This gaslighting occurs when a political figure or group uses lies, denials, manipulates information to control people. Examples include downplaying or hiding their administration has done wrong, discrediting political opponents based on mental instability, or using controversy to divert attention of important events.
- **Institutional gaslighting**-The organization may deny or hide information, lie to employees about their rights, or portray whistle-blowers who uncover problems in an organization as incompetent or mentally ill.

Have you heard any of these phrases? If you have heard them over and over, then YOU are being gaslighted.

- You're so sensitive! Or-You're hysterical. Or-You are making that up.
- You know that's just because you are so insecure.
- You are just paranoid.
- You just love trying to throw me off track
- Stop acting crazy. Or: You sound crazy, you know that, don't you?
- I was just joking!
- It's no big deal.
- You're imagining things. Or-You're overreacting.
- You are always so dramatic.
- You know you don't remember things clearly.
- That never happened.
- Don't get so worked up.
- There's no pattern. Or: You are seeing a pattern that is not there.
- There you go again, you are so ungrateful.
- Nobody believes you, why should I?

In what context are you hearing these phrases? Typical triggers that create a stressful environment that can lead to gaslighting include topics such as money, sex, your family's origin, or habits you came into the relationship with.

In a gaslighting situation, when possible, don't engage. But here are things you can say:

- We remember things differently.
- I hear you. That is not my experience.
- I'm stepping away from this conversation.
- If you continue to talk to me in this way, I am not engaging.
- I am open to discussing a solution with you, I'm not open to debating my feelings.

Sources:

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