

GASLIGHTING - MODERN DAY MANIPULATION IN RELATIONSHIPS

This month I have chosen to write about a subject that I am repeatedly being asked by clients to explain to them, that of 'Gaslighting' - this is a sinister form of manipulation and control, which derives its name from a 1938 play, Gas Light, and a film adaptation starring Ingrid Bergman. Victims of gaslighting are bombarded with false information that leads them to question what they know to be true, even about themselves, they may become indoctrinated by a partner's projections of them and this may lead to a loss of confidence, self-doubt and depression.

Victims of gaslighting may end up doubting their own memory, their perception, and even their sanity. Over time, a gaslighter's manipulations can grow more complex and potent, making it increasingly difficult for the victim to see the truth. Gaslighting can occur in personal or professional relationships, mostly I see a partner in a rel



tionship where the victim was targeted at their core: their sense of self-worth and identity were systematically and subtly eroded by a controlling partner. Often charming and likeable in their behaviour, gaslighters win people over by presenting as easy and accommodating. Gaslighters may have a lot in common with narcissists and signs of narcissism are often present in the perpetrators methods of manipulation. They also have a tendency to present one face to their target and another to the rest of the world, leading victims to assume that if they ask for help, no one would believe them.

How do you Identify Gaslighting

In the beginning, a person may start to notice that they are experiencing increased confusion and self-doubt around a gaslighter. The gaslighter will try to convince the other that what he or she remembers, thinks, and feels is wrong. This may be done in a confusing and sympathetic manner, leading the victim to believe that the other person is trying to help them. Meanwhile the gaslighter sets the victim up for criticism, character assassination and potentially makes them vulnerable. Typically, if the victim doesn't instantly agree with them, manipulators will react poorly and twist the truth to make it seem as if they themselves are being victimised. Deeper into the process, those

being gaslighted will doubt even the evidence of their own senses and find it difficult to discern the truth from the gaslighter's lies and manipulations. Tactics of a gaslighter include lying; they are adamant that what they say is true, their act can be so convincing that you DO start to doubt yourself. They will deny that they said something even though you know beyond doubt that it WAS said. They can be ruthless in using what is precious to you - they may use your children or family and friends to reinforce your 'alleged' negative trait all the time trying to make you feel unworthy.

Before you start to suspect anything may be wrong you may find that a gaslighter will confound you with the issue of compliments, confusing you into believing that they 'do' compliment so it MUST be me at fault not them, they must be right about me. They may also 'use' other people against you, they may try to align themselves with others and then make comments like "so and so also knows this about you!"

It can be liberating to finally realise that you're not going mad, but so many are caught up in this web of manipulation before finally being freed. The more you are aware of these methods, the sooner you can recognise them and take your power back.

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