

10 Common Habits of a *GASLIGHTER.*

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Note: The download is a companion piece to our video series on gaslighting, published on YouTube in April 2024.

Please see our channel youtube.com/prioritymessages for all 3 videos and many others on the subject of mental health and self care.

Introduction

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation that seeks to make a person doubt their own perceptions, memories, and sanity for the purpose of gaining power and control over them.

Recognizing the tactics that gaslighters use is an important first step in protecting yourself from their behavior. Below are ten common things which indicate that you might be dealing with a gaslighter and/or someone who is trying to manipulate you.

1. They Love to Shift the Goal Post

Gaslighters are famous for setting rules, expectations and standards that they expect you to meet, however they often do not tell you what they are, or they will change them later without letting you know. This constant moving of the finish line sets you up to fail, making it impossible to meet their demands or “make them happy” because you will always fall short.

This is a deliberate action, make no mistake about it – and it is one that is intended to push the victim into a constant state of feeling inadequate. With time, this can significantly damage someone’s confidence and belief in themselves and their abilities, and it can be a process to fix this even long after the relationship with the gaslighter is over.

2. They are Highly Consistent.

Strangely enough, people who are gaslighters are often very consistent individuals. This is probably because gaslighting is something that plays out over time, so the perpetrator must be committed to crafting a narrative of BS stories and twisted fact – AND sticking to it. The intended result of this is that they will successfully and systematically change your thinking and “break you down” by questioning yourself over and OVER AND OVER until doubt settles in.

The fact that gaslighting takes time and consistency to properly implement is one of the main reasons it’s SO effective...it can go on for some time before you even realize exactly what’s happening.

Gaslighters carefully and deliberately create a story and stick with it– no matter what. They will usually not diverge from it even when they are confronted with solid, verifiable evidence to the contrary. They have convinced themselves that this now the truth, and they will pull out all the stops to convince you that it is YOUR truth, too.

3. They are Not Afraid to Hit Close to Home.

When we disagree or argue with someone we care about, we will often refrain from “hitting below the belt” or bringing up things that we know are very sensitive subjects for them. There are a variety of reasons for this, but one of the biggest ones is that we probably hope to repair that relationship at some point...and that becomes a LOT harder to do when you have pushed an especially painful button for the other person.

Gaslighters tend to not quite operate that way. They can often quickly figure out what your weaknesses or “sore spots” are, and they will often use them as ammunition or leverage against you. Even if they know a certain subject is “off limits,” they will find a way to drag it into the situation and use it to try to weaken your resolve against their manipulation.

4. “De-nial” is Not Just a River in Egypt to Them.

If you have ever had someone adamantly deny that they said or did something, and continue to do so EVEN AFTER you have presented and shown them the proof that they did...you may have experienced gaslighting.

Continuing to push their false narrative even after you have done everything in your power to disprove it is a classic, textbook gaslighter maneuver. It's one of the most frustrating, too. Sadly, it is rare for the gaslighter to break down and admit that they were trying to purposely deceive, confuse, or manipulate you. It's even more rare for them to completely abandon or change their story...instead opting to double down on accusing you of “misunderstanding” or “making things up.”

**It's someone else's fault. It's ALWAYS someone else's fault.
This is the gaslighters' mantra.**

5. Liar, liar...pants on fire.

One very common characteristic of a gaslighter is that they are very often compulsive liars. Being a liar is never really a good thing, but in the case of the gaslighter, their ability to tell lies with not even the slightest sense of remorse or unease is an important tool in their kit, and it's one that is effective in making their narratives sound true and correct...even when they aren't.

Much like a compulsive liar, a gaslighter will rarely if ever come clean about their dishonesty or attempts to manipulate. This is because doing so would take away some of the “power” or feelings of superiority that the gaslighter gains over their victim by manipulating them. This is why, as we said earlier in this list, that gaslighters will often double down on insisting that their “version of the truth” is the only correct and true one, and that the victim “must be crazy or imagining things,” even when they are presented with ample evidence to the contrary.

The Lowdown about Liars

A liar is a liar is a liar...right? Well, not necessarily! There are 3 basic kinds of liars...here's a quick rundown on the differences...

Everyone has told a lie about something, somewhere – for example, when you say you only ate one donut when you actually ate two – and this is usually done impulsively. In general, these lies are motivated by feeling better about ourselves, being seen as better by our peers, and avoiding admitting things we aren't proud of. This is the **impulsive liar**, and most of the time, these lies – and liars – are harmless. If left unchecked, however, this type of dishonesty can become problematic and harder to stop. As with all dishonesty, the more of it there is, the harder it is to know what is happening, and thus the harder it is to handle it.

A **compulsive liar** is someone who lies out of habit. They tend to bend the truth about everything, large or small, and sometimes they will lie about things that are completely unnecessary to lie about. A lot of them find it easy to avoid confrontations with the truth, which is why they stick to lying. As mentioned on the previous page, many gaslighters tend to be compulsive liars and that characteristic is what often makes their deception and manipulation so effective.

Unlike the compulsive liar, who generally knows right from wrong, a **pathological liar** lives with a false sense of reality and very little self awareness – and lies incessantly in order to get their way. They will usually have very little regard or respect for others, are manipulative and cunning, and if confronted, they often become defensive and still fail to admit they have lied. Also unlike compulsive liars, pathological liars are often very difficult to catch in the act. These people are excellent liars because they lie constantly and confidently, thus it becomes extremely difficult to distinguish the truth from false statements.

6. Perplexing Positivity.

The gaslighter is not ALWAYS working on how best to manipulate you...sometimes they will be pleasant and kind with their behavior and words. This is another reason why gaslighting works SO well, because having positive exchanges and throwing in some positive comments and confuses the victim and makes them think "Oh, well, this person is not ALL bad all the time!"

7. Powerful projection.

Gaslighters very, VERY often accuse their victims of lying, cheating or manipulation when in fact, this is what they themselves are doing. This tactic is designed to get the victim to focus on their own behavior instead of the gaslighter's problematic behavior. It also prevents the gaslighter from having to take accountability for their actions or words.

8. Flying Monkeys and Other Nuisances.

What better way to alienate a victim than to turn their allies against them? The expert gaslighter capitalizes on this to the utmost degree by spreading their lies and misinformation to other people in the victim's life...either to help further their manipulation agenda or to reinforce to the victim that THEY are the problem: "See, (Name)?? Even your mom and sister and dog think you are crazy!"

Sometimes, they will also recruit these people to be their "flying monkeys" – which is a term that comes from The Wizard of Oz. If you have seen the film (and who hasn't??) you may recall that the Wicked Witch of the West puts flying monkeys under her spell and sends them out to do her bidding for her. Flying monkeys of this variety basically do the same thing – they help carry out the work of an abusive person by twisting facts, questioning events, and passing information...or rather, MISinformation back and forth between parties...resulting in even MORE confusion for the victim.

You hear "flying monkeys" be referenced all the time when relationships with narcissists are being discussed, but gaslighters definitely use their services too. They will often work just as hard on others to help them manipulate as they do on their victim.

9. Everyone Else is Lying...I Would NEVER!

From friends to family to even the media, the gaslighter will tell victim that no one can be trusted but them. "Everyone else is lying! Only I am telling the truth!" or "Stop listening to what other people are saying I did...pay attention to what I say – that's the real truth!" are two things that gaslighters love to say to make you feel like everyone else EXCEPT them is the problem.

A good way to see through this statement is when you look at it as you would someone who is telling you that their sixth marriage is about to end...you have to start to ask the VERY valid question: Is it REALLY all of those other people? Or is it YOU?

A gaslighter also often has an exaggerated sense of importance about themselves so to them, saying that "Everyone else is the problem, they are all conspiring against me to make me look bad!" makes sense...and they may TRULY believe that. But even a victim who is deeply under a gaslighter's spell has to be able to realize that...statements like this do not make a lot of sense, and the reality is that the liar...has been THEM the whole time.

10. "You're Crazy!!!"

Gaslighters have no qualms about accusing you or people who point out their behavior of being "crazy". They do this to instill self doubt and even psychosis and sad to say, much like with anything that you hear over and over, some victims begin to believe it.

In Part 3 of the Gaslighting video series, we discuss at length how you can reject the gaslighter's attempt to convince you that you are the problem. Among those things are making sure that you collect evidence, speak up for yourself, and remain confident in the ACTUAL truth. This will help you stay grounded and focused on you versus their attempts to manipulate.

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