

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327944201>

Gaslighting and the knot theory of mind

Preprint · September 2018

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.30838.86082

CITATION

1

READS

14,826

1 author:



[Domina Petric](#)

UHC Split

181 PUBLICATIONS 4 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



The Knot Theory of Mind [View project](#)



Toxicology [View project](#)

Gaslighting and the knot theory of mind

Domina Petric, MD

ABSTRACT

Aim is to discuss gaslighting and to provide advices how to recognize the abuser and how to defend oneself from the gaslighting.

INTRODUCTION TO GASLIGHTING

Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation that seeks to sow seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or in members of a targeted group, making them question their own memory, perception and sanity. Using persistent denial, misdirection, contradiction and lying, it attempts to destabilize the victim and delegitimize the victim's belief (1, 2).

Sociopaths and narcissists use gaslighting tactics. Sociopaths consistently transgress social mores, break laws and exploit others, but typically also are convincing liars, sometimes charming ones, who consistently deny wrongdoing. Thus, some who have been victimized by sociopaths may doubt their own perception (3).

The abuser wants full control of feelings, thoughts or actions of the victim. The abuser discreetly emotionally abuses the victim in hostile, abusive or coercive ways

(4). Signs of gaslighting are withholding information from the victim, countering information to fit the abuser's perspective, discounting information, verbal abuse (usually in the form of offensive jokes), blocking and diverting the victim's attention from outside sources, trivializing the victim's worth and undermining victim by gradually weakening them and their thought process (5).

Three most common methods of gaslighting are hiding, changing and control. The abuser wants to hide things and informations from the victim, change something about the victim so that the victim molds into abuser's fantasy and fully control the victim (6).

Gaslighting can occur in private relationships, in school as a form of bullying, on the work as a form of mobbing, or can be institutional and systematic.

Gaslighting in the workplace can occur when individuals perform actions that cause colleagues to question themselves and their actions in a way that is detrimental to their careers (7). The victim may be deliberately excluded, made the subject of gossip, or persistently discredited or questioned in an attempt to

destroy the victim's confidence. The perpetrator may reroute conversations to perceived faults or wrongs (8). Gaslighting can be committed by any colleague and can be especially detrimental when the perpetrator is someone in a position of power (9).

Systematic and institutional gaslighting occurs in totalitarian and corrupted regimes (communism, nazism, fascism, organized crime) when the group of abusers that serve the totalitarian regime and organized crime abuse a targeted group of honest individuals that oppose to totalitarianism and crime.

GASLIGHTING AND THE KNOT THEORY OF MIND

Gaslighting is a powerful weapon of the abuser and can be very detrimental for the victim. Gaslighting, especially when it is long lasting, can cause anxiety, depression and even psychosis. Mental and emotional abuse causes the formation of many knots of negative thoughts and emotions with cognitive and emotional damage. This type of abusers (the gaslighters) like to break the victim's introspective mirror so that the victim starts to doubt in oneself. Very powerful weapon of the gaslighters is gossip. Abusers often slander their victims and are often very persistent in lying.

Gaslighters like to question the victim's sanity so that the victim loses credibility. Gaslighters often have double standards so that the targeted individual feels isolated and marginalized. Very popular tactic is **the warm-cold behavior**. The perpetrator is sometimes throwing the victim in the positive reinforcement to confuse the victim (10) and the rest of the time is being very abusive and cold. Gaslighters also like to project their flaws on the victim and steal creative ideas and merits from the victim. For example, incompetent abusive boss will try to present the victim as incompetent and steal the victim's merits.

HOW TO DEFEND ONESELF FROM THE GASLIGHTING

Gaslighters use toxic emotions (pathological negative emotions) such as hatred and envy to damage the victim's emotional and cognitive health. The victim should never internalize the abuser's negative emotions and thoughts about oneself. It is very important to use only healthy negative emotions (for example, healthy anger) when defending and to avoid developing pathological negative emotions (hatred, rage, depression, pathological shame, pathological anxiety). It is very important not to feel hatred towards the abuser because hatred is

always toxic for emotional health. The victim should always look for the positive stimuli so that the balance between positive and negative emotions and thoughts is maintained. After the conflict with the abuser is finished, it is very important to restore the homeostasis of the mind and to feel positive emotions (love, joy, gratitude) and think positive about oneself.

It is very important to raise awareness in the society about gaslighting and to use social measures to prevent gaslighting in the school, at workplace, in the institutions and private relationships. High quality legislative measures that protect victims from gaslighting (bullying, mobbing, institutional gaslighting, discrimination, private gaslighting) are mandatory.

CONCLUSION

Gaslighting is very dangerous form of psychological manipulation and abuse that can occur in private relationships, in the school, at workplace and systematically. The consequences of the gaslighting can be devastating. It is very important to raise awareness in the society about gaslighting and to provide high quality legislative measures that will protect all the victims of the gaslighting. The knot psychotherapy

(disentanglement of the knots) might be helpful for the victims of gaslighting.

REFERENCES:

1. Oxford Dictionaries (April 20, 2016). Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gaslight>
2. Dorpat TL. On the double whammy and gaslighting. *Psychoanalysis & Psychotherapy*, 1994;11(1):91-96.
3. Stout M. *The Sociopath Next Door*. Random House Digital, 2014:94-95.
4. Dorpat TL. Crimes of Punishment: America's Culture of Violence. Algora Publishing, 2007:118-130.
5. Evans P. *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize it and How to Respond*. Holbrook, Mass: Adams Media Corporation, 1996.
6. Greenberg E. Are You Being Gaslighted By the Narcissist in Your Life? *Psychology Today*. Sussex Publisher (September 17, 2017). Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/understanding-narcissism/201709/are-you-being-gaslighted-the-narcissist-in-your-life>

7. Portnow KE. Dialogues of doubt: The psychology of self-doubt and emotional gaslighting in adult women and men (1997). Retrieved from <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=5572602>

8. Young S. Gaslighting at work-when you think you are going crazy (July 22, 2016). Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/gaslighting-work-when-you-think-going-crazy-samantha-young/>

9. Simon G. Gaslighting as a Manipulation Tactic: What It Is, Who Does It, And Why (November 8, 2011). <https://counsellingresource.com/features/2011/11/08/gaslighting/>

10. Sarkis SA. 11 Warning Signs of Gaslighting (January 22, 2017). Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/here-there-and-everywhere/201701/11-warning-signs-gaslighting>