

It's a normal day in my middle school classroom. A student is talking to his neighbor during the lesson.

"Shh. Quiet, please." I say, then go back to the handout.

He answers back, "I wasn't talking."

I lean in and whisper, "I just saw you do it. Quiet, please."

He slams his hands down on the desk. "Oh, my God! I said it wasn't me!"

I sigh. "I was looking right at you. I saw your lips move, and I heard your voice."

His face turns red. "No, you didn't! You're picking on me again! Why do you hate me?"

I keep having the same conversation over and over. Someone insists that the truth is a lie, then they say I'm crazy for saying it. Other times, they tell me that something didn't happen when everyone in the room just watched it happen. This is called **gaslighting**, and it's a common weapon of bullies everywhere.

Why do people do this?

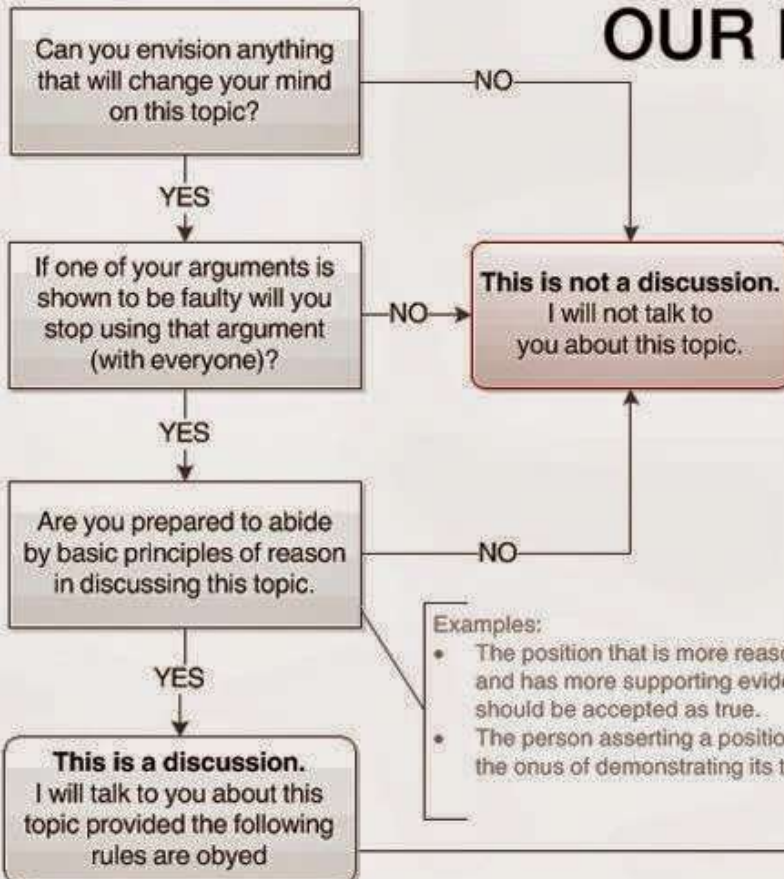
1. If they admit the truth, they will look bad.
2. They feel ashamed about something they are feeling, wanting, or doing, so they lie about it, or blame the other person instead of admitting they have a problem.
3. They are attached to a certain image of themselves as nurturing, as responsible and fair, and are not ready to believe it isn't true all of the time.
4. They have a high level of anxiety when talking about uncomfortable topics, so they smooth them over with excuses, and if someone else gets hurt, tough luck.
5. They may have grown up watching an angry parent behave that way. Many abused kids become abusers themselves. They think it will make them so tough that Mom or Dad can never hurt them again, but they soon start arguing with everyone, and become the thing they hate the most.

It's a strong value of mine to believe people when they say how they feel and what they see, because we are all experts on our own inner realities.

OUR DISCUSSION

Thank you for requesting to have a discussion with me about this topic. Discussions are a dialog between people in which the participants are willing to alter their position if it makes sense to do so. Sometimes, people confuse "discussion" with "sermon" or "lecture." These non-discussions are a waste of time since all parties are intractable in their existing views.

So that our time is not wasted please use this guide to determine whether we can actually have a discussion about this topic.



1. Do not introduce new arguments while another argument has yet to be resolved.
2. Do not move on to another argument if it is shown that a fact you have relied upon is inaccurate.
3. Provide evidence for your position or arguments.
4. Do not argue that you do not 'need' evidence.

