



# Gaslighting

**For Prelims:** Gaslighting & It's Emergence

**For Mains:** Gaslighting & Its Impact, Common Signs of Gaslighting, Significance of Gaslighting

## Why in News?

Recently, **Merriam-Webster**, America's oldest dictionary publisher, has chosen "**Gaslighting**" as its **Word of the Year**.

- Searches on its website for the word have spiked by 1,740% in 2022, according to the company.

## What is Gaslighting?

### ▪ About:

- Merriam-Webster dictionary defines gaslighting as "**psychological manipulation** of a person usually over an **extended period of time**, that causes the **victim to question the validity** of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and **typically leads to** confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator."
- Gaslighting involves an **imbalance of power between the abuser and the person** they're gaslighting.
  - Abusers often **exploit stereotypes or vulnerabilities** related to gender, sexuality, race, nationality and/or class.

### ▪ Emergence of the Word:

- The term "Gaslighting" comes from the title of a **1938 play "Gas Light"** by Patrick Hamilton, and the movie based on that play, the plot of which involves a man attempting to make his wife believe that she is going insane.

### ▪ Impact on Mental Health:

- Gaslighting is meant to provoke uncertainty and self-doubt, which is often harmful to a victim's mental health.
  - A victim of gaslighting may experience Anxiety, Depression, Disorientation, Lowered self-esteem.

## What are Some Common Signs of Gaslighting?

### ▪ The "Twilight Zone" Effect:

- Victims of gaslighting often report feeling like a **situation is surreal**, it's happening on a different plane from the rest of their life.
- Being told that the victim is **exaggerating**.
- Feeling **confused** and **powerless** after leaving an interaction.

### ▪ Isolation:

- Many gaslighters make efforts to isolate victims from friends, family and other support networks.

- **Tone Policing:**
  - A gaslighter may criticize the tone of voice if the person challenges them on something. This is a tactic used to flip the script and make them feel that they are the one to blame, rather than the abuser.
- **A Cycle of Warm-Cold Behavior:**
  - To throw a victim off balance, a gaslighter may alternate between verbal abuse and praise, often even in the same conversation.

## What is the Significance of Gaslighting in Modern Time?

- **Gaslighting of Misinformation:**
  - In this age of misinformation—of “fake news,” conspiracy theories, Twitter trolls, and deepfakes—gaslighting has emerged as a word for Modern Time.
- **Gaslighting and Gender:**
  - **Gaslighting in Medicine:**
    - Some **women are gaslighted by their doctors**, who may use the stereotype that women are irrational and convince a female patient that nothing is actually wrong with her.
  - **Public or Collective Gaslighting:**
    - Many women experience the **effects of public gaslighting**, also called collective gaslighting, when statements by a public figure or an ordinary person that are widely shared on social media can lead women as a collective to second-guess themselves.
  - **Gaslighting of Transgender People:**
    - A gaslighter may try to **convince a transgender person** that they have a mental health disorder.
  - **Gaslighting in the Legal System:**
    - The legal system becomes a critical site of gaslighting when **abusers gain control of the narrative** and **‘flip’ stories**, drawing on stereotypes about women as irrational and aggressive.
- **Gaslighting and Race:**
  - The political, social, economic and cultural process that perpetuates and normalizes a **white supremacist reality through pathologizing those who resist** is the prime example of Gaslighting and Race.
- **Gaslighting in the Workplace:**
  - If a person in a **position of power** causes **one to question themselves** in a way that is negatively affecting their career or confidence in their abilities, they may be experiencing gaslighting.
- **Gaslighting in Politics:**
  - In modern times, it’s not uncommon for a politician or political entity to use **gaslighting as a tactic to divert public discourse and use manipulation** to garner support for or against a certain viewpoint.

[Source: IE](#)

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