

# The Gaslight Game

Respectful Relationships

To help students understand the harmful effects of gaslighting and manipulation in relationships and practice healthy ways to respond or seek support.



## Learning Intentions

**Students learn to recognise manipulative behaviours like gaslighting.**

This builds awareness of how emotional abuse can be subtle but harmful.

**Students explore how emotional abuse impacts confidence and safety.**

This helps students understand the emotional toll of toxic communication and control.

**Students rehearse how to respond or seek support.**

This encourages healthy boundaries and protective behaviours.



## Success Criteria

**Awareness:**

Students can clearly identify phrases and patterns that reflect gaslighting or emotional manipulation.

**Empathy & Insight:**

Students can explain how these behaviours impact someone's confidence, reality, or self-esteem.

**Confidence:**

Students can rewrite, role-play, or verbalise assertive responses or safe exit/support strategies.



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## Objective:

To help students understand the harmful effects of gaslighting and manipulation in relationships and practice healthy ways to respond or seek support.

## Players:

Small groups of 3 - 5 students. Whole class engagement in debrief and reflection.

## Materials:

- Printed scenario cards with common gaslighting phrases (found in PDF resource tab)
- Paper or butchers paper for rewriting scenes
- Notebooks for reflections

## Setup:

Print and cut out the common gaslighting phrases/scenario cards

Alternatively as a class you could brainstorm and create a set of emotionally manipulative relationship phrases and situations such as:

- "You're being too sensitive."
- "That never happened, you're imagining it."
- "If you really loved me, you'd do this."
- "You're crazy, everyone else agrees with me."

Groups sit together in discussion stations with paper to brainstorm on.

## Activity:

### 1. Group chat

Before starting, discuss as a whole class what the term 'Gaslighting' means and unpack real life examples of when it occurs. Also discuss the different tactics people use to 'Gaslight' others (gaslighting, guilt tripping, isolating, shaming etc)

### 2. Read the scenario

Each group receives one or more gaslighting examples to read and unpack together. Ask:

- What's being said or done?
- How might the other person feel?
- Is this respectful or manipulative?

### 3. Identify the tactic

Groups name the tactic used (e.g. gaslighting, guilt-tripping, isolating, shaming).

### 4. Rewrite the scene

Students rewrite the interaction using:

- Truth and clarity ("Actually, I remember it differently.")
- Assertive boundaries ("I don't like how that makes me feel.")
- Outside support ("I think I need to talk to someone I trust about this.")



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## 5. Optional role-play

Invite groups to act out the harmful version followed by the revised respectful or boundary setting version.

## 6. Debrief discussion

- "Why is gaslighting so hard to notice?"
- "How does it affect someone's mental health and confidence?"
- "Who can we turn to if we feel manipulated?"
- "Why do you think people gaslight others, especially those they are close to?"

## Reflection prompts:

- Have you ever questioned your memory or feelings after someone dismissed them?
- What are signs that someone might be gaslighting you or a friend?
- Why is it important to speak up when something doesn't feel right?

## Winning the game:

This is not a competition. The goal is self-protection, emotional awareness, and learning how to respond to harmful behaviours with strength and clarity.

## Additional notes:

Use this session to reinforce help-seeking, self-trust, and the importance of surrounding ourselves with respectful and supportive relationships. It pairs well with activities like *Red Flag*, *Green Flag* or *Who's in Your Circle*?



# SCENARIO CARDS

PRINT AND CUT OUT THE CARDS FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS. STUDENTS READ THE SCENARIO, DISCUSS THE TACTIC USED, AND THEN REWRITE OR ROLE-PLAY A RESPECTFUL, ASSERTIVE ALTERNATIVE.

YOU TELL A FRIEND THAT THEIR JOKE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY UPSET YOU. THEY ROLL THEIR EYES AND SAY, "YOU'RE BEING TOO SENSITIVE. IT WAS JUST A JOKE."



YOU BRING UP A CONVERSATION WHERE YOUR PARTNER MADE A HURTFUL COMMENT. THEY DENY IT AND SAY, "THAT NEVER HAPPENED, YOU'RE IMAGINING IT."



YOU'VE BEEN WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND FOR MONTHS. AT A PARTY, HE PRESSURES YOU TO DRINK, SAYING, "IF YOU REALLY LOVED ME, YOU'D DO THIS FOR ME."



AFTER A DISAGREEMENT, YOUR CLASSMATE SPREADS RUMOURS AND TELLS YOU THAT "EVERYONE THINKS YOU'RE OVERREACTING."



# SCENARIO CARDS

A CLOSE FRIEND CONSTANTLY CRITICISES YOU BUT SAYS YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL THEY STILL HANG OUT WITH YOU AND SAY, "YOU'RE LUCKY I EVEN PUT UP WITH YOU."



YOU TRY TO TALK TO A FRIEND ABOUT FEELING LEFT OUT, BUT THEY ACCUSE YOU OF BEING DRAMATIC AND SELFISH SAYING, "YOU ALWAYS MAKE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU."



IN A CONTROLLING RELATIONSHIP, YOUR PARTNER SAYS THIS WHENEVER YOU TALK ABOUT TAKING A BREAK OR SETTING BOUNDARIES: "NO ONE ELSE WOULD WANT TO BE WITH YOU."



YOU EXPRESS DISCOMFORT ABOUT A CLASSMATE SHARING YOUR PRIVATE MESSAGES, BUT THEY SHRUG IT OFF AND MAKE YOU FEEL SILLY FOR CARING SAYING, "YOU'RE OVERREACTING, IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL."



# SCENARIO CARDS

A FRIEND SHARES YOUR PERSONAL STORY ONLINE "TO RAISE AWARENESS" WITHOUT ASKING. WHEN YOU CONFRONT THEM, THEY GUILT-TRIP YOU FOR BEING UPSET AND SAY, "I WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP. YOU'RE SO UNGRATEFUL."



AFTER A CONFLICT, SOMEONE IN YOUR FRIEND GROUP BLAMES YOU AND CLAIMS: "EVERYONE THINKS YOU'RE THE PROBLEM, NOT ME."



YOU TELL YOUR FRIEND YOU FELT HURT AFTER THEY IGNORED YOU AT LUNCH. THEY ROLL THEIR EYES AND SAY, "YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO START DRAMA," MAKING YOU DOUBT YOUR RIGHT TO SPEAK UP.



DURING CLASS, A FRIEND MAKES A COMMENT ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE THAT MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE. WHEN YOU CALL IT OUT, THEY LAUGH AND SAY, "EVERYONE JOKES ABOUT THAT, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CARES."

