

## What to do when you have a gas lighting manager

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It is a Friday afternoon. You have had a long working week and you are very much looking forward to a deserved weekend. Your manager calls you into his office and announces that your company has just bagged the client you have been pitching to for years. This news excites you, you have been putting in the work and you're glad you have finally caught your big break. Your manager also informs you that unfortunately, you have to work through your weekend, as your new client has an urgent report they need.

This news dismays you, but your boss says, "not to worry Karen, I will even throw in a big bonus for all your hard work, how does that sound?" The offer sounds good to you, and you agree to work flat out through your weekend. First thing on Monday morning, you submit the client's report and your boss is very much pleased with your work. As the weeks go on, the promised bonus fails to come through, and you wonder if your boss has forgotten? You politely ask him about this, to which he responds, "Do you realize we actually pay you much more than the average auditor is making today?"

You are stunned by this response but you immediately apologize and leave his office. After you leave you start to wonder if you are being a little ungrateful and under-appreciative of your manager's efforts. By doing this, your manager has successfully manipulated you into believing you are wrong for wanting what is due to you and has ultimately played the victim in this instance. This is a concept known as gaslighting and it may unknowingly be happening to you.

### What is gaslighting?

Gaslighting is an abusive form of behavior, specifically when an abuser manipulates information in such a way as to make a victim question his or her sanity. Gaslighting intentionally makes someone doubt their memories or perception of reality. The term originates from the 1938 play and 1944 film adaptation *Gaslight*, where the protagonist's husband slowly manipulated her into believing she's going mad. The name comes from a part in the film where the husband is using the gas lights in an upstairs flat, causing them to dim in his own. His wife brings this up, and he convinces her she's imagining it, which is characteristic of gaslighting. Essentially, the abuser uses persistent denial, misdirection, contradiction, and lying to make the victim feel unsure of their own sanity. They may use this tactic to make the victim feel that they 'imagined' other abuse, or simply to disorientate the victim as a form of abuse on its own.

Gaslighting is a common phenomenon in the corporate world. The manipulator uses it to make you question yourself all the time and to gradually accept what they say as reality. As they do this, you gradually start to think that maybe you are actually wrong, and they could be right. A gaslighter plays on your cognitive abilities and makes you question what you believe.

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## Why is my boss gaslighting me?

Gaslighting is a concept most managers in the workplace use to gain control over their subordinates. According to Sarkis (2018) Often, a gaslighter at work is attempting to get someone else fired or in trouble. This is a power move in which if your manager accuses you of doing something you know you did not do, you end up apologizing even though you know you are not in the wrong. They may threaten you with consequences like dismissal over insubordination even though you are not in the wrong. As in the example of Karen and her manager, gaslighters use promises to extract time or work from you, only to renege once it's time for them to pay up. By denying the promise in the first place, they get out of their obligation and make you doubt your version of events.

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## Can your boss gaslight you?

The answer to this question is yes, your boss can gaslight you. An instance of this is a situation where your boss told you something and then they later tell you they said something completely different. This could be in the form of a project that your boss said was due the next week, only for him to start threatening to fire you because you have not yet completed it yet. Below are a few instances of scenarios that may happen every day in the workplace that may be deemed normal. But are actually examples of gaslighting

### 1. The gaslighter tells obvious lies

Your boss may give you an instruction, even in the presence of other co-workers. However, he may, later on, shift his position on this, insisting that he said something different. If you attempt to highlight to him that he said something to the contrary, he may end up lashing out at you and accusing you of undermining his authority. In the end, you yield to him and admit that what he is saying is accurate, in some cases you may even start to believe that he is in fact correct and that you are wrong. Your boss has successfully gained power over you and made you believe their reality instead of yours.

### 2. They tend to play on your emotions

“You’re being so irrational!” “Don’t you think you’re overreacting?” These are common statements that are likely to come from a gaslighter. With these responses, the gaslighter not only dismisses your emotions but deflects their own responsibility for their behavior. You start to feel bad for speaking up for yourself, making it more likely that you’ll let it slide in the future.

## Can Gas lighting be cured?

People who gaslight other people may have a psychological disorder called narcissistic personality disorder. People with narcissistic personality disorder believe they're extremely important and that the world revolves around them. Gaslighters typically use manipulation as a way to control others, however,

in some instances, they may not actually be aware they have a problem. People with this problem may suffer from an inferiority complex that may only be satisfied when they have control over others. In the case of a person who has a personality disorder such as narcissistic personality disorder, they are born with an insatiable need to control others and deep-seated anxiety. They tend to feel good about themselves once they perceive that they are in a position of control.

Gaslighting can be cured by psychotherapy. The person suffering from it may seek therapy to uncover the reason behind why they feel the need to exert control over others and how they can recover from it. Gaslighting may be resultant of some childhood traumas for example growing up in an abusive household. The gaslighter may feel the need to take control of the situation in their lives and with time this may become a part of their personality. By seeking therapy they may be able to overcome this problem and find different ways of coping with the trauma in their lives.

## References

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