## How to stop gaslighting in relationships: examples, signs & cure

The Feminine Woman | 20 September, 2020 | by Renee Wade

#### What is gaslighting in relationships?

Gaslighting is a form of toxic abuse that is based on control and power trips.

The gaslighter attempts to exert their control and power over you, in order to undermine your sense of certainty and to distort your perception of reality.

The term  $\hat{a} \square \square gaslighting \hat{a} \square \square$  originated from a play called gas light (1938), and two subsequent film adaptations (1940 and 1944) titled  $\hat{a} \square \square gaslight \hat{a} \square \square$ .

The story of this film centres around a woman whose husband successfully manipulates her into thinking that sheâ $\square$  s going insane, in order to distract her from his criminal activities.

Gaslighting is basically a low value way for people to get their needs met inside of a relationship. It can occur inside of almost any relationship, including parental relationships, romantic relationships, or business relationships.

Gaslighting is often an effective tool that is used not only by individuals, but by governments and organisations as well.



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## What is Gaslighting in relationships?

Answer: it is not just one type of behaviour...

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In other words, it doesn $\hat{a} \Box t$  always manifest in one particular way. It involves all kinds of toxic behaviour such as blaming, guilt tripping, any blackmailing any type of abusive or violent behaviour, and manipulating you.

A gaslighter will try to keep you chained to them and their (often changing) narrative through a twisted form of  $\hat{a} \Box fake \hat{a} \Box \Box$  attachment.

He or she does not know what a healthy relationship looks like. They usually couldn $\hat{a} \Box t$  care less. They also have no idea what healthy, secure attachment in relationships is.

Instead, these people, who are often narcissists and sociopaths, will try to make you feel desperately attached (read: shackled) to them using sick and twisted methods.

## Gaslighting is relationships can be easy to fall for

Gaslighting in relationships can be so easy to fall for if youâ □ □ re unfamiliar with the term, and what

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gaslighting behaviour actually looks or feels like.

Unfortunately, since gaslighters are seasoned at what they do, itâ one always easy for the average person to â opickâ on their behaviour immediately.

Gaslighters have likely had their behaviour reinforced over and over again by people who couldn $\hat{a} \Box t$  pull them in line.

As such, their bad behaviors are usually **positively reinforced by people who have already become attached to them in the past.** 

Or, their behaviours have been reinforced by people who fall for their games and superficial charms.

You see, once one or two people 'go along' with the gaslighting, the gaslighting person thinks that their behavior is okay.

They also likely see that it works for them.

So why change what works? I mean, if it's serving your manipulative ends, why not keep it up?

#### Who tends to be a victim of gaslighting in relationships?

The people who fall for gaslighting are often people who are already susceptible to gaslighting in abusive relationships. For example...

- It could be a child, who is simply powerless and doesn't know any better.
- It could be people with a traumatic history. What trauma can do is it can make us numb. When we're numb, we're 'checked out' from the wisdom of our bodies.

Essentially, we cannot feel what others are actually doing to us. And so since we cannot perceive the abuse emotionally and intellectually, we are more likely to 'tolerate' gaslighting behavior.

- It could be a man or woman <u>with already low self esteem</u>, so they buy into the gaslighter's story about their lack of worth (because it matches their own story about themselves).
- It could be people who are very lonely, desperate or disconnected, and therefore will take anything they can get.
- It could be people who are susceptible to approval seeking.

#### And, if it's the right environment, it could be any of us.

Here's what that means. If *a government* were to gaslight its people, or if *a workplace (employer)* were to bully, abuse and gaslight its employee(s), not much is needed to create a victim of their gaslighting.

All you really need in order to fall for gaslighting in this context, is to see that the people around you implicitly or explicitly approve of what the government or organisation is doing.

It's easy to think...

"Oh yeah. Well, all my work colleagues/friends agree with their perspective. I'd be silly to go against the grain.

Maybe I'd even be ostracised from the group if I were to go against the grain, so I'll just trust

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If you feel unsure of what you should or shouldn't tolerate in your relationship, here are <u>6 behaviours you</u> should never tolerate in a man.



## Gaslighting examples

My mother used to cut down and badmouth all of my dadâ $\square$ s friends and family to his face. And then, she'd turn around and accuse my dad of having no friends, and of not being worthy enough to have any friends.

Sheâ $\Box\Box$ d say negative things to him about his friendsâ $\Box\Box$  intent towards him, their lifestyle, the way they look, and even their life choices.

Then, sheâ □ □d do a 180 and tell my dad he was a loser for having no friends in his life.

Not only that, she'd specifically say to me...



Not only would she badmouth him. Sheâ $\square$  d make a big deal out of the time dad spent away from her whenever he did spend time with his friends.

This made him feel like there was always a massive cost to seeing any friends or family (for any length of time). At the same time, it was like if he didn't see his friends, then she'd call him a loser and cut down his worth.

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This is what we call a **double bind**, which is a very common experience of people people on the receiving end of gaslighting in abusive relationships.

Typical gaslighting behaviour: twisting other people's intent
There was another thing my mother would do. She would twist other people $\hat{\mathbf{a}} \square \mathbf{s}$ positive gestures negatively.
This is so typical of gaslighting behaviour.
Additionally, this is the same woman who, when I got all excited about an ex boyfriend having flowers personally sent to my door the <i>before</i> valentine $\hat{a} \Box s$ day, told me that his gift and gesture was pathetic.
She said that the flowers didn $\hat{a} \Box t$ mean anything. She said that he was a terrible boyfriend and never had any interest in me, because he had them sent to my house the day <i>before</i> Valentine $\hat{a} \Box s$ day.
If he was interested, he would've sent them on the actual day.
It had to be the day OF Valentine $\hat{a} \square \square s$ day, she said. (It turns out that he couldn't organise them to be sent on the day.)
(He was 18 at the time!!)
Here's another Gaslighting example: Outrageous lies!
She paid accomplices to secretly â□□keep tabsâ□□ on meâ□¦
There was also that time in 7th Grade when I did badly on a couple of my tests one semester.
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### Stupid enough to believe her lies?

Was I stupid enough to believe this lie?

Even at the tender age of 13, no. I wasnâ□□t.

But do you know what the lie *did* make me do?

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It made me feel uncertain of myself, my safety and my own reality. The confusion and disbelief I felt was second to none.

## This is the feeling you get when you're being gaslighted. You will question your own sanity, morality, feelings and judgement.

But, to be honest, I was used to the lies. So I could actually pick the lie, like many people around her could...but I was still at the mercy of the uncertainty she created.

#### This uncertainty is the exact intended effect of a gaslighter.

It was kind of like, my gut says she $\hat{a} \square s$  lying, but my mind wonders if it could possibly be true? The lie is just so ridiculous...what if it *is* true?

This is all gaslighting at its finest!

Remember. If a person, organisation, group or government wants to to serve their own ends, they will intentionally keep you confused and fearful.

#### There's nothing like fear and confusion to keep a human being under control.

The less you can think for yourself and the lower your self esteem, the easier you are to manipulate.

### **Examples of gaslighting in relationships**

<u>A gaslighter</u> will do anything they can to put everything onto you, so that they can deflect any responsibility away from themselves.

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Disclaimer: NOT all of these things <u>have</u> to be said with the intent to abuse or gaslight. Something like "You're so sensitive" can be said out of love and protectiveness. It's up to us to feel the other person's intent (good or bad).

Here are some gaslighting examples...

#### 1: They never take responsibility for their words, actions or intent.

Accountability and responsibility is simply *too clean* for a gaslighter.

They $\hat{a} \Box \Box d$  much rather rely on their flawed narrative and controlling tactics in order to get results inside of the relationship.

If you try to hold them accountable, they will bring it all straight back onto you.

If you try to discuss how their behaviour isn $\hat{a} \Box t$  quite right, they will deflect that discussion straight back onto you.

Alternatively stated, they play the blame game. And they play it to win it.

#### 2: They lie. A lot.

Sometimes outrageous lies that you know logically couldnâ □ t be true.

Yet the lies are so outlandish that you start to question if they could *actually* be true!

A good example is what this lady in <u>our facebook group</u> went through. She met a guy online who, shortly after they met, accidentally sent her a text meant for another woman (and proceeded to put everything

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back into her!?).

She dealt with it beautifully though, as you can see from the text conversation she shared with us. Have a look at this example of gaslighting in dating:

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I met a really nice man. We hit it off immediately. He told me straight away that he was off online dating. Slight problem...he matched and communicated with a friend of mine. He denied being online, so I gave him a pass thinking it was early days.

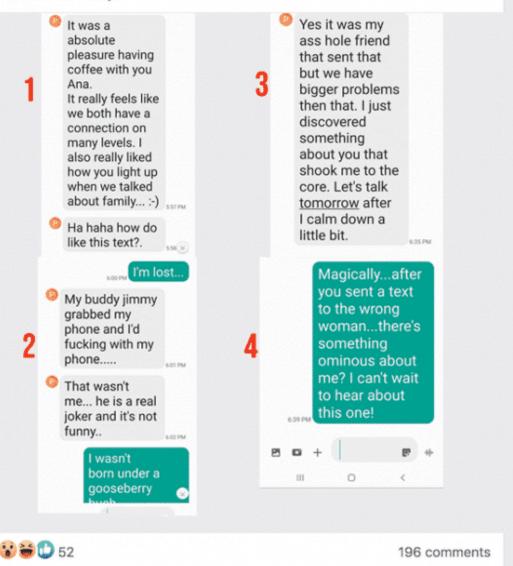
This week, he's hardly texted. I was supposed to see him this Friday, but then yesterday he accidentally sent me a text meant for another woman. I love how 15 minutes after I called him out on it, he 'found out something about me. Lol.

Is this narcissism? When someone can't admit wrong doing. I ended up apologizing to him for accusing him of still being online...how crazy is that? I had the screenshot to prove it.

Yesterday, he clearly goofed. If indeed his friend had constructed this elaborate detailed text why did he not right then and there call me to apologize, or better still get his friend to apologize?

Personally I think he needed overnight to figure a plan to get out of his error.

Any clever responses I should give him when he plucks up the courage to contact me today?



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#### 3: They will make out that the people you care about are the bad guy

They will forcibly make out that the people you care about (& who care about you) all have ill intent towards you.

So what this means is that they will claim that everyone else in your life has bad intent, is bad quality, or not worthy.

The only people in your life who are  $\hat{a} \square \square$  worthy  $\hat{a} \square \square$  are the people whom the gaslighter feels are unthreatening to them or their attempts to control you.

#### 4: They use your attachment to the people you care about, to control your self esteem.

In other words, they use other people as ammunition.

For example  $\hat{a} \square s$  sake, let  $\hat{a} \square s$  just say a gaslighter wants to make you believe that you are an embarrassment and are worthless.

To dominate you and force you to share their narrative, they may claim that your favourite auntie and uncle are just as ashamed of you as *they* are.

 $\hat{a} \square A$ untie Peggy and uncle Yianni don $\hat{a} \square t$  even want to speak to you anymore. They  $\hat{a} \square t$  so disgusted and embarrassed by you.  $\hat{a} \square t$ 

#### 4: They guilt trip you.

Due to the guilt tripping, you find yourself being very apologetic to them, and you develop a hypersensitivity to the emotion of guilt in that relationship.

Take a look at this example from a lady in our <u>facebook group</u>, with a guy she dated.



#### 5: They deny the things they $\hat{a} \square \cup ve$ said, even though *you know* they said it.

Remember that gaslighters never take responsibility.

So rather than owning up to their own statements, they will try to make you out like you $\hat{a} \Box ve$  got a poor memory, or that you don $\hat{a} \Box t$  have good listening skills.

(As a side note, some gaslighters might actually do the opposite, *but with the same intent to gaslight you*. For example, they might momentarily say something like...

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$\hat{a} \Box \Box Oh$ yes, I did say that $I\hat{a} \Box \Box m$ sorry $I\hat{a} \Box \Box m$ so forgetful. $\hat{a} \Box \Box$ or something like $\hat{a} \Box \Box Yes$ , I admit what I said. $\hat{a} \Box \Box$ .
But their intent is never, ever sincere. They $\hat{a} \Box re$ only making these apparent $\hat{a} \Box re$ confessions $\hat{a} \Box re$ order to manipulate you even more.
They will immediately proceed to twist their own original intent so that they donâ□□t look like the
bad guy anymore.
6: They can be charming.
Not all gaslighters are charming, but many of them actually are, especially when you first meet them. This is so crucial. Do you wonder how you got yourself in a relationship with this person to begin with?
It could be partly due to their indisputable charm. They are so in control a dominant socially, that it produces a feeling of awe in you.
They are so extroverted, talkative, and they can seem so $\hat{a} \Box \Box capable \hat{a} \Box \Box$ socially.
As such, a typical gaslighter can lure you in with their superficial charm, making you feel like:
â□□Wow, how are they so confident?â□□
And you want to be around them, because you feel like you lack that same social $\hat{a} \square \square$ confidence $\hat{a} \square \square$ .
But what their charm and social $\hat{a} \square \square$ confidence $\hat{a} \square \square$ really is, is just a facade.
Sociopath, anyone?
It $\hat{a} \Box s$ a fake persona that they use to trick people into thinking that they $\hat{a} \Box r$ e a well intentioned, well-liked human being.
7: They throw in some support & positive reinforcement
just to keep you tethered to them and their agenda.
Gaslighters are calculating. They sense that if they do too much badmouthing of you or the people you love, that they wonâ $\Box$ t be able to maintain their image as â $\Box$ the good guyâ $\Box$ or â $\Box$ the superior and admirable oneâ $\Box$ anymore.
So in order to keep you attached to them and this codependent relationship you have together, they afford you a sense of elation or encouragement, just to give you the illusion of false hope.
Example
"Youâ $\Box$ $\Box$ re really a difficult person to deal with. But that gift you gave me today was great, and shows you can be kind <b>if you want to be.â</b> $\Box$ $\Box$
What they $\hat{a} \Box$ re praising you for, is just an action you took that <i>directly benefited them</i> .
See, gaslighters or narcissists, whatever you want to call them, they will consistently erode your sense of self esteem and/or confidence over time.
And then all of a sudden, they will praise you, just to jerk you around.
Isn't it lovely?

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## 8: They are completely unbalanced socially & relationally.

What does this mean? It means that in your gut, you recognise that their interactions in social situations seem $\hat{a} \Box \Box off \hat{a} \Box \Box$ .
Though often, you canâ □ t quite pinpoint why. And nobody else seems concerned by their behaviour. In fact, everyone else seems to just go along with their behaviours, rather than calling them out on it.
Moreover, you likely cannot pinpoint why they seem $\hat{a} \square \text{off} \hat{a} \square \square$ , because they $\hat{a} \square \square$ ve successfully used their superficially charming personality to distract you.
Actually, theyâ□□ve distracted not only you, but everyone else too!
The distraction is strategic in order to stop people from seeing exactly how unbalanced and out of control they really are inside.
9: They make you feel solely responsible for their happiness in the relationship.
Since theyâ□□re always telling you about how bad you are, they are able to put you in a position where you have to work hard to try to keep them happy.
Which, by the way, is anything but real happiness. They $\hat{a} \Box re$ just keeping you addicted to the drug of their approval.
If you want to learn more about approval seeking and pleasing behaviour, read my article on 'Why Please

Women Always Lose Out: The Difference Between Pleasing & Giving" right here.

So now letâ □ □s have a look at how you might feel if you were to be a victim of gaslighting.

If you think you are being gaslighted, here are some signs you can look out for within yourself. And that is your own feelings; your own emotional state.

Are you a victim of gaslighting?

## Check these 10 signs you are being gaslighted

Are you a victim of gaslighting? The following 10 signs will help you discern whether you are being gaslighted or not.

#### Sign 1: Their extreme mixed messages pull you in all sorts of directions.

Consequently, you live in an almost constant state of confusion.

The gaslighting in the relationship has slowly eroded your ability to make decisions in your life. Not only that, it has worn down your own sense of identity.

From this place of uncertainty, you simply cannot have any power of your own inside of the relationship.

#### Sign 2: You tend to always think you must be the problem.

If you're in a relationship where you're being gaslighted, you'll think you are the problem.

Either you're the one with the mental issues, you're the â□□problem childâ□□ or the cause of all

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problems.
This can make you so anxious that you can $\hat{a} \Box t$ function properly in any relationship, as your self esteem will be shot.
I'm my case, I say thank goodness I got away young. Thanks to my early escape, $I\hat{a} \square ve$ been able to salvage my self esteem over time, and am now in a healthy relationship with my husband.
Being in a long term healthy relationship is also what taught me to <u>distinguish what is toxic and what is not.</u>
How do you know if you are being gaslighted (or if you have this particular issue)?
Well, you know youâ $\square$ ve been gaslit a lot when you always bring the focus back to yourself and how youâ $\square$ re â $\square$ too sensitiveâ $\square$ , partly because theyâ $\square$ ve told you that you are too sensitive.
You wrestle with thoughts like $\hat{a} \Box \Box$ am I crazy? There must be something wrong with me. Do I need to get serious help? $\hat{a} \Box \Box$
When the only thing you truly need help with, is getting away from this toxic person.
Hereâ □ s a scene from the 1944 film â □ □ Gaslightâ □ □ showing how a woman is being manipulated
by her husband into thinking she is insane.
Sign 3: You are always in a double bind.
And you feel like you have no power or control in the relationship.
The dictionary <u>defines</u> a double bind as:
A difficult decision in which, whatever action you decide to take, you cannot escape unpleasant results.
You know you may be experiencing gaslighting in your relationship when you feel like youâ□□re
damned if you do, damned if you donâ□□t.
A gaslighter is never going to give you a feeling of certainty. That would be the opposite of their intended objective, remember?
So to keep you small, they will ensure that you feel hopeless and powerless in the relationship.
If you do what they want, theyâ□□ll still find fault with you.
If you $don\hat{a} \Box \Box t$ do what they want, they $\hat{a} \Box \Box l$ still find fault with you.
Sign 4: Youâ□□re always seeking their approval.
Youâ □ re constantly seeking approval from them because you desperately want to hold onto any signs that they might just be loyal to you, love you or like you.
This is usually due to the fact that theyâ□□ve cut you down so much.
They $\hat{a} \square \neg ve$ so often been insinuating that you $\hat{a} \square \neg ve$ not good enough, that you want just <i>some</i> sign that you are an alright person, after all.
Sign 5: You live in a state of dread or depression.

# Since you are being dominated by your abuser, all hope and happiness you may have previously had seems to have disappeared.

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#### Sign 6: You feel like your feelings donâ□ t matter.

Gaslighting is a tool often used by <u>narcissists</u>. And narcissists have no space for *your* feelings in the relationship.

In fact, you will feel like your feelings do not matter. Additionally, your feelings will have no place inside of this  $\hat{a} \square \neg \text{relationship} \hat{a} \square \square$ .

The gaslighter simply doesnâ □t care about your feelings. They have no empathy for you.

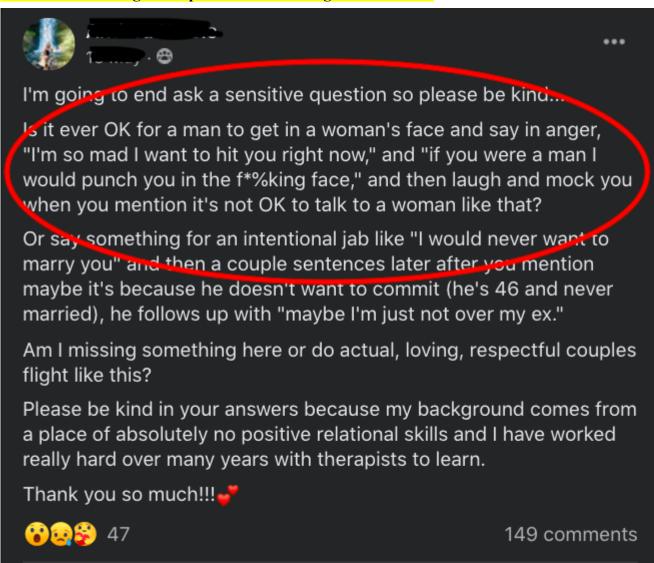
This is not what a healthy relationship looks like. Inside of a healthy relationship, both people should be able to have their feelings heard.

There is a term for this healthy behaviour, and it is called  $\hat{a} \Box holding space \hat{a} \Box \Box$  for each other. It is one of the typical signs of an ultimately healthy relationship.

If you want help in distinguishing what a healthy relationship is, <u>click here</u> to read these **10 ultimate** signs of a healthy relationship.

In keeping with the topic that your feelings donâ $\Box$ t matter to a gaslighter, hereâ $\Box$ s an example of a lady who was being mocked and verbally assaulted by her partner.

Note that her feelings in response to his mocking were shunned.



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Sign 7: You find yourself justifying their actions to other people (& yourself).
You say things like $\hat{a} \square \text{he/she}$ is not that $\text{bad}\hat{a} \square \square$ , or "see how nice he/she can be?" and $\hat{a} \square \square$ no, of course, they <i>do</i> care about me after all. They $\hat{a} \square \square$ re just a little bit unconventional in their ways. $\hat{a} \square \square$
Remember, they will throw in some praise here and there to keep you coming back. They have to build you up a little, or you $\hat{a} \Box \Box ll$ exit this abusive relationship too soon!
Sign 8: You are always in a wrestling match with your gut responses & your logical mind.
Your gut feelings and responses to this person say one thing.
But what your gut feelings say is different to your mindâ $\square$ s justifications for their actions.
Example: you oscillate between strong feelings of anger at him/her, and thoughts in your mind that attempt to ameliorate the strength of that anger.
Your body tells you exactly how their actions are making them feel.
Yet your mind talks you out of it, because this person is keeping you in a constant state of confusion and altered reality.
Sign 9: You donâ□□t know who you are anymore, or what to believe about whom.
Consequently, you are dependent on your abuser to direct your thoughts.
Also in keeping with this sign; is that you feel like you $\hat{a} \square \text{ve}$ lost your own sense of confidence and autonomy. You rely on the person gaslighting you to direct your decisions and actions.
Sign 10: You feel like youâ□□re a tool used by your abuser to serve their own ends.
Thereâ $\Box$ s no going around this fact, once youâ $\Box$ ve spent a bit of time inside of an abusive relationship where thereâ $\Box$ s lots of gaslighting going on, you start to feel like a means to an end. Youâ $\Box$ re essentially treated like the gaslighterâ $\Box$ s pet.
Also, youâ - re just an accessory for their own agendas in life.
If they want to give the world the impression that they $\hat{a} \Box re$ high status or high value, they $\hat{a} \Box ll$ employ you in some way to help them paint that picture.
And since you're their little sidekick looking to seek their approval or $\hat{a} \square \square$ make things up $\hat{a} \square \square$ to them, you will jump at the opportunity to help them look good in the eyes of others (paint the image they want to paint of themselves).
How to stop gaslighting in a relationship & what is the cure?
So the question now is, how do you stop someone form gaslighting you?
Step 1: Stop the double bind now.
You need to make a decision outside of the double bind that $you\hat{a} \Box \Box re$ experiencing in the relationship.
(If youâ □ □ re unsure what a double bind means read sign number 3 above under the section â □ □ here a

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some signs you can look out for within yourself.â□□)
Your task is to find a third option outside of the double bind.
This third option should be an option that allows you to not be dictated by the consequences of doing something within the abusive relationship.
To accomplish this step, you can $\hat{a} \Box t$ allow yourself to be driven by the fear of the potential consequences from your gaslighter.
Remember, if you're in a gaslighting relationship, then your biggest problem will be the double bind (damned if you do, damned if you don't).
So, go ahead and make a decision outside of your fears of the consequences within that relationship.
Figure out exactly what you need to do for yourself first.
A question to help you do this would be:
$\hat{a} \Box \Box$ If I feared no consequences and did what I wanted to do <b>for myself</b> – what would I do? $\hat{a} \Box \Box$
Step 2: Find a completely different environment.
Take some time for yourself. If you stay stuck in the same old environment that lead you to be involved with someone who keeps gaslighting you, you $\hat{a} \Box ll$ never see change happen.
Go somewhere you don $\hat{a} \Box t$ normally go, in order to change your state. Spend the afternoon in a public library if you need to.
You need space for yourself. This is so that you can utilise the space in order to give your body time to feel, time to process and time for clarity.
Clarity may not come quickly. But the more you immerse yourself in taking time for yourself, the more likely it <i>will</i> come.
This is because you'll be able to feel yourself a bit more, rather than being distracted by the abuse.
Step 3: If things get worse, make a decision to leave permanently.

# There $\hat{\mathbf{a}} \square \mathbf{s}$ no mystery to this, really.

Things may not get better after you take step 1 (stop succumbing to the double bind now).

After you donâ  $\square \,\square\, t$  succumb to the double bind, your abuser has a choice.

## Their choice will be to either rise to the occasion and accept your new boundary, or to continue being a low life.

If your abuser has relied on the tactic of gaslighting for quite some time, donâ $\Box$ t expect them to change. If your gaslighter is generally a good-hearted person who just has the wrong idea about how to go about relationships, thereâ $\Box$ s a chance they might be forced to change. Due to your new boundary, that is. If they value intimacy in any way, and if they love you enough to change, they will recognise this new

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boundary of yours (not succumbing to the double bind) as a warning signal.

That warning signal will be the thing that causes them to step up their game and fight for your relationship the right way. Or, it will cause them to stoop low again.

The moment the gaslighting returns, is the moment you walk.

#### Alternatively, if by the end of reading this article you know youâ□□re done, good for you!

Skip along and reclaim your life, your health and your identity.

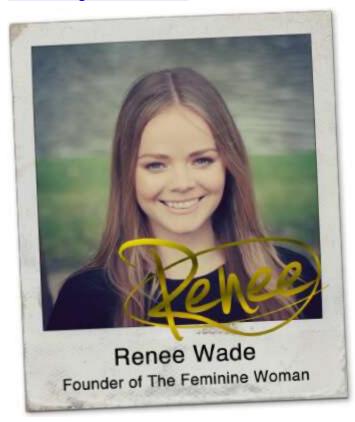
Now, I canâ □ t let you go before I point you to the ultimate resource on toxic relationships. If you want further help, read this article on the 10 seemingly harmless signs of a toxic relationship!

Also, if you want to stop the cycle of getting involved with abusive men, I recommend you have a read of the report '7 Common Signs A Woman is Low Value in The Eyes of Men'.

Why is this important?

Because abusive men, <u>low value men</u>, will prey on particular signals from women. Now, no woman is actually low value, but men see value differently to women.

Generally speaking, low value men men will pick up whether they can get away with manipulating you *very* quickly. And they will always be testing you for traits and signs that they can get away with using you. So, I recommend that if you always seem to attract narcissists, to have a read of this guide on the 7 common signs of low value.



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