



## MANIPULATION AND GASLIGHTING: A LEADER'S COVERT UNDERSTANDING OF BEHAVIOR

### GOALS

1. Define manipulation and gaslighting.
2. Compare manipulation and gaslighting.
3. State the history of the term "Gaslighting."
4. State some behaviors related to manipulation and gaslighting.
5. Give reasons why recognizing manipulation and gaslighting is important to the nursing leader.

### KEYWORDS FOR APPLICATION

1. Manipulation
2. Gaslighting

One of the most common practices of humanity is manipulation. Manipulative behaviors occur in two forms—"Manipulation" and a more specific form of manipulation called "Gaslighting."

### DEFINITIONS

Manipulation, in general, is a harmful deliberate attempt to influence or elicit a desired response or behavior from another person that is not explicitly communicated to the other person.

Gaslighting is a form of manipulation colloquialism. Specifically, it is a *psychological manipulation* by verbally questioning a person's *sanity or twisting their sense of reality*. Some words infer unfit mental fitness or that the person is too sensitive. By manipulating in such a manner, the gaslit person starts questioning their validity, thoughts, truth, perception, and memories—the person performing the gaslighting is attempting to gain power over another person by spreading false doubts. The doubts often cause the person who is the recipient of gaslighting to experience disorientation, distress, and distrust of others. It is covert emotional abuse.

### "GASLIGHTING" AS A WORD AND CONCEPT

As a newly identified Merriam-Webster Dictionary Word of the Year (2022), the access to the word "Gaslighting" in the dictionary spiked to 1,740% in 2022. Gaslighting originates from a 1938 play called GASLIGHT by Patrick Hamilton set in London. The play was about a middle-class marriage based on lies and deceit. The husband, in the play, seeks to convince his wife that she is going insane because she imagines the dimming of the gas light in their home. The concept became popular again in the 1950s and 1960s, describing a masterful attempt at psychological manipulation.

Gaslighting is now used to increase the vastness and techniques used to mislead people, especially in personal and political contexts. It is a way to describe manipulative emotional abuse used by a

Gaslighting manipulator to cause a person to question their sanity. The Gaslighter's behavior includes lying or withholding information, pitting people against each other, and always placing blame elsewhere while attempting to gain control over those they are Gaslighting. When the behavior is used, it is not dependent on the situation or stature of the person receiving the Gaslighting behavior. Politicians have sometimes been accused of Gaslighting their constituents—that is, telling them something that isn't true when all evidence points to the opposite. Coworkers who attempt Gaslighting often try to convince the boss that another coworker should be fired.

## **RECOGNIZABLE NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS RELATED TO MANIPULATION AND GASLIGHTING**

To deceive and use emotional behaviors are the most common attempts to manipulate another person—confusing and undermining the best of any relationship. A Merri go-round of unpredictable maneuvers keeps the receiver of these behaviors off balance. One minute the manipulative person is cold, aloof, and angry—the next minute, warm and charming. Unpredictability, the result of manipulation efforts, is a threatening attempt to make a person feel guilty and diminish personal feelings of control and worth. The manipulator's unpredictable behaviors often catch the unsuspecting person off guard. The attack occurs when the perpetrator feels the internal glee of disruption while the recipient's gut-retching awareness increases. Also, it is common to see and recognize evidence of exploitation, deception, abuse, and devious behaviors.

Manipulation is not always bad, however. Attempting to talk someone into something good or for their best interest is positive. Physicians try to convince patients toward a certain positive behavior to improve health.

In general, are you being negatively manipulated? A few signs of the manipulator are:

1. A person is wearing you down by using guilt and shame to get their way.
2. Discouraging or refusing to allow you to have healthy relationships with others.
3. Spreading false information about you and others.
4. Feigning ignorance.
5. Never taking the blame for anything.
6. Second-guessing your memory—"There is something wrong with you beyond repair."
7. Expecting you to apologize because "It is all your fault."
8. Trying to make others happy at your expense.
9. Attempting to cause you stress and make you feel overwhelmed.
10. Stating you are weak—or weaker than you used to be.
11. Expressing that your feelings do not matter.

Additionally, are you being "Gaslit" by someone? A few signs are:

1. Denying and scoffing at your recollections.
2. Calling your recollections "crazy" or "insensitive" when your needs or concerns are mentioned.

3. Expressing doubts about your feelings, behaviors, and state of mind.
4. Shifting blame to your mental state by retelling and twisting events to blame you for the happening.

### **IF YOU ARE FEELING MANIPULATED, ABUSED, OR GASLIT, DO THE FOLLOWING**

1. Increase your awareness of what is happening and understand the impact of the behavior on your decisions.
2. Learn to say “NO” when manipulation of any sort is recognized or attempted by others.
3. Speak honestly to the manipulator that the manipulation is recognized as such, and tolerance is non-existent on your part.

### **CAN YOU TELL GENERAL MANIPULATION FROM SPECIFIC GASLIGHTING? IDENTIFY GASLIGHTING FROM THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES**

1. You are crazy!!
  2. He cannot remember and has no idea what you are saying!
  3. I know it is your fault, and you must apologize!
  4. How should I know?
  5. Shame on you for not remembering!
  6. She never thinks about what she is doing!
- (Numbers 1, 2, 5, and 6 seem likely to be psychological manipulation—gaslighting.)

### **AS A NURSING LEADER**

You will make many decisions that are/will be questioned. Learn to be aware of the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of employees. Words expressed are important and reveal a hidden truth! However, actions often speak louder than words.

You will know your supporters and adversaries by increasing your awareness of potential manipulative attempts. Learn to reward positive and supportive non-manipulative behaviors. Watch your words to others carefully to support positive behaviors by others. Be open and honest in your communication with no attempts to manipulate. If you identify a manipulative behavior, state the recognition of the behavior only—letting the perpetrator recognize that you “pick up” on such behaviors. Then--let the employee draw judgment on their chosen behavior. Listen carefully--An employee’s attempt at personal introspection reveals a great deal!

*INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE PROVIDES THE POWER TO EVALUATE OTHERS BEHAVIOR AND INTENTIONS CORRECTLY. BEING ABLE TO DISCERN MANIPULATIVE BEHAVIORS IN OTHERS WILL HELP TO ADVANCE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.*

## **REFERENCES**

Medium.com/an idea/manipulative behavior types  
<http://www.betterhelp.com>

## **AUTHOR**

Carolyn R. Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.