

# Gaslighting in the Workplace

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# Acknowledgment of Country

I begin today by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we meet today for this training and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging leaders.

I would like to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution First Nations people make to the life of this region as well as their contribution to the mental health industry in the care, spirit and compassion they show to all peoples.

# Webinar overview

**1.** What is gaslighting

**2.** Gaslighting in the workplace

**3.** Historical forms of gaslighting

**4.** How to address gaslighting and provide support to employees experiencing it?

**5.** The future – how can organisations be proactive in reducing gaslighting?

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# What is Gaslighting?

- Takes its name from the 1944 motion picture Gaslight
- Short-listed for the Oxford English Dictionary word of the year – 2018
- Psychological manipulation of a person in order to erode their sense of self and sanity
- Used as a method of power and control

# Gaslighting as a form of DFV

- Perpetrators manipulate the truth to gain power over their victims in an attempt to emotionally, physically or financially control their victim.
- A gaslighter will lie and eventually turn others against the victim by telling them the victim is lying or delusional
- Increases victim's isolation and vulnerability
- Recognised as a technique of abuse by groups such as the Domestic Violence Resource Centre of Victoria and Safe Steps

# Benefits of language

- The use of the word has reframed the problem away from the victim to question the motivations of the accuser
- “Gaslighting” as a word has become quite broad.
- Eg: many news articles have been written about Donald Trump’s so-called gaslighting behaviour towards the American public, in which he has tried to manipulate people into “doubting their reality”.
- Onus not just on organization to address gaslighting, but also on employee to recognize behaviours within themselves.
- According to Merriam-Webster, the definition of accountability is: “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions.”



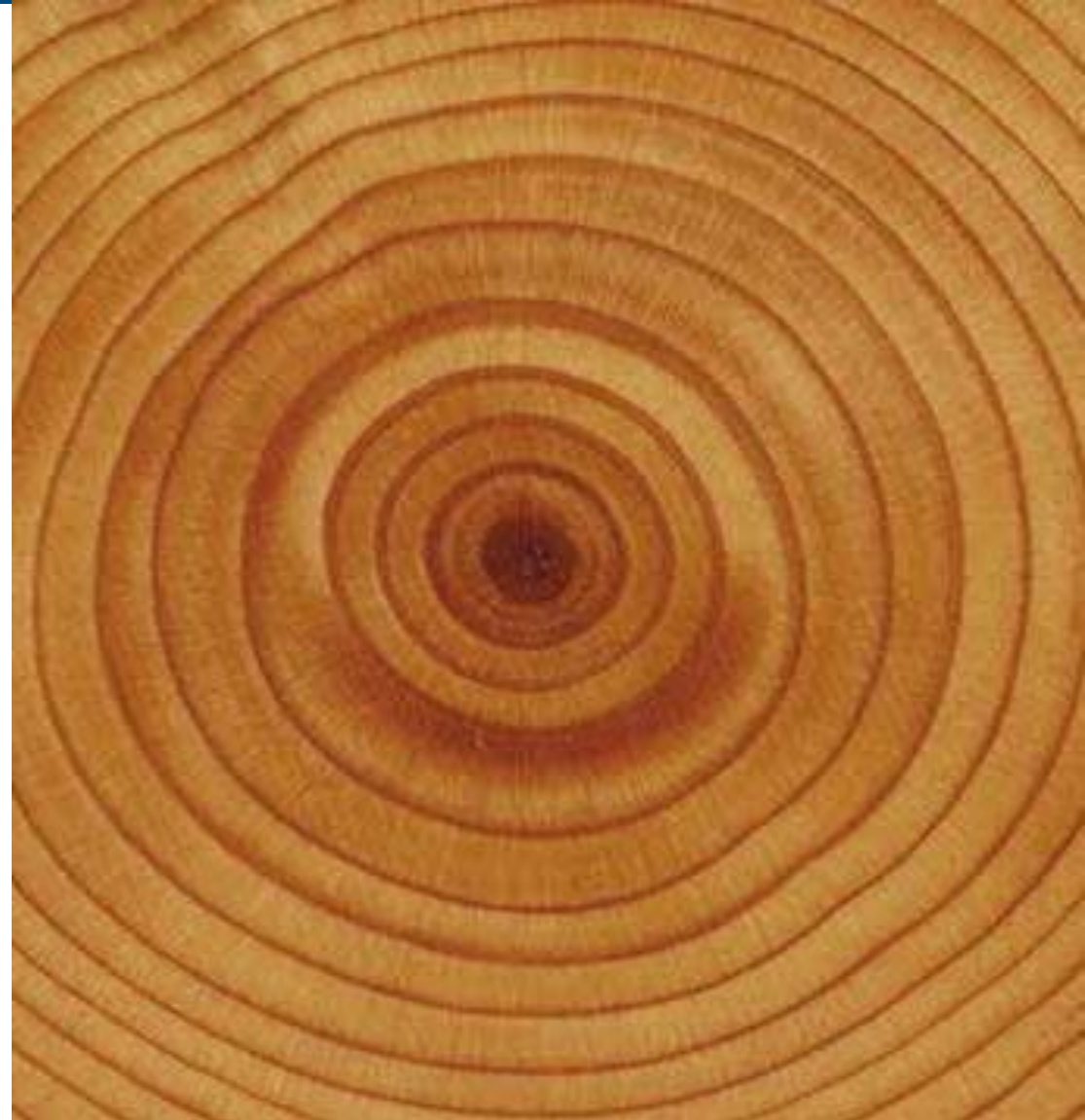


# Types of Gaslighting

- Countering: Refuses to acknowledge memory or event
- Withholding conversation
- Trivialising: Disregard/invalidate feelings
- Denial: Deny any behaviours
- Diverting: Deny your emotions through involving a 3<sup>rd</sup> party
- Stereotyping: judge you according to stereotypes

# Signs and Symptoms

- Constantly second-guessing yourself
- Asking yourself “am I too sensitive?”
- Feeling confused/crazy
- Always apologizing
- You know something is terribly wrong but you can't express what it is, even to yourself
- You have trouble making simple decisions
- You feel as though you can't do anything right



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# Gaslighting in the Workplace?

- Stealing credit for another's work
  - Throwing co-workers under the bus
  - Pitting co-workers against each other
  - Giving undeserved negative reviews
  - Harassing or intimidating co-workers
- Often perpetrators have a personality disorder; eg narcissistic personality disorder or psychopathy.

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# Challenging Behaviour - Individual

1. Rigid pattern of thinking
2. Inflexibility
3. Strong definition of right vs wrong
4. Manipulative
5. Strong sense of entitlement
6. Limited self awareness
7. Can presents with a victim profile

# Impact on Individual

1. Psychologically devastating
2. Violates trust and destroys a person's view that people are generally good
3. Destroy self trust, sense of self worth and belief in one's "goodness"

# Impact on Team

- Teams factionalised
- Sense of treading on eggshells
- Cycle of charming behaviour followed by bullying behaviour which leads to confusion, isolation and self distrust
- Distrust within the team

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# How to Address Gaslighting

1. Tight Boundaries
2. Clear and measurable job objectives
3. Manage negative behaviour/don't ignore it
4. Don't attempt to confront conflict without support
5. Naming the behaviour having a negative impact
6. Clear and direct communication
7. Consult with HR, Manager Support program and



# How to Address Gaslighting

- Collect evidence
- Walk away
- **A NOTE ON LEADERSHIP:**
- The importance of listening and gathering evidence.
- A positive culture is created through being heard, understood and acknowledged



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# How we can be Proactive?

- 01** Recruitment
- 02** Encourage self reflection
- 03** Build a culture of trust and transparency
- 04** Provide supportive structures



# Discussion and Questions





# Time for feedback

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