

Gaslighting

Age Range:

12+, Years 8+,
KS3, KS4

Topics Covered:

Gaslighting

Time:

20-30 minutes

Equipment needed:

Interactive whiteboard or
Flipchart stand and paper

Learning Outcomes:

- Young people have an increased ability to assess risk and identify abuses of power and control in relationships.
- Young people have an increased understanding of the term 'gaslighting'.
- Young people have increased empathy for people affected by abusive relationships including domestic abuse and teenage partner abuse.

This supports key concepts for PSHE education in personal wellbeing including:

- Personal identities
- Healthy lifestyles
- Risk
- Relationships

An exercise to increase understanding of gaslighting, and how it can affect people.

Introduction

This exercise uses creative thinking and reflective learning to explore the abuse tactic known as 'gaslighting', and the psychological impact it can have on victims.

Exercise

Use the instructions below on 'Create a Character'. Create a character called Jade. **Jade is female, 14 years old and in a relationship with a boy in her year, Karl.**

Explain to the group that the character is someone who they can imagine being a member of their school. Explain that the characters need to be realistic and consistent.

Once the character has been created, read out the following scenarios:

Jade and Karl make plans to meet up on Saturday. Jade forgets and doesn't turn up for their date. When Karl asks her where she was, she tells him that he was mistaken and that they were supposed to meet up on Sunday.

Jade wants Karl to change the way he looks, so she asks him to buy some new clothes. When Karl says no, Jade pretends that all of his friends talk about his 'crap style' behind his back.

Jade has been cheating on Karl with someone else, and Karl has seen flirty texts from this person on Jade's phone. When he confronts her, she says he's paranoid and that it's all in his head.

After each statement, ask the group the following questions:

Why might Jade have lied to Karl?

How might Karl be feeling?

Explain that there is a term that describes what Jade is doing which is 'Gaslighting'. This is a type of psychological abuse where an abuser attempts to make their victim question their own version of reality, which ultimately gives the abuser more control. Explain that any person of any age can be prosecuted for controlling or abusing their partner.

Summary

Recap that gaslighting is a common abuse tactic that can be used in lots of different types of relationships. Some abusers are not always aware that they are gaslighting their victim. Discuss where Karl or Jade could go for help and support, ensuring that trusted adults and ChildLine are mentioned.

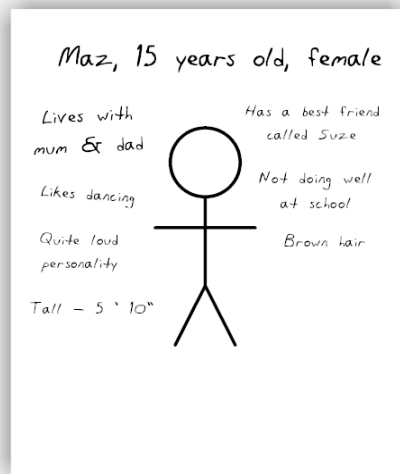
CREATE A CHARACTER

This very simple technique is a great way to engage learners into talking and thinking about an issue.

The learners work together to create a realistic character by each providing a suggestion on the character's appearance, interests, family etc. The aim is to work together to build a realistic and consistent character that can be used to discuss and explore issues.

On a sheet of flipchart paper or on the board, draw a stick figure. Draw this in the middle of the sheet with plenty of room around to write the groups' suggestions. Give the stick figure a name (not the name of anyone in the group!), age and gender and write these at the top of the sheet. Usually the character is similar in age and background to the group to allow them to connect quickly and relate to the character's situation and feelings.

This works best when the learners are in a circle. Go round the circle asking each person to give one fact about the character. The two rules are that the suggestions must be realistic and consistent. They must all follow on from what is already written so if someone has said that the character is very tall then someone else can't say that the character is short. The aim is to build and develop the character as a group. You should have something that look a bit like the illustration below.



Once everyone has had a chance to contribute (and you are happy that the character is realistic and there are no contradictions) then you can use the character to explore a situation. You could pick up on any issues that the group have added or simply add a new piece of information that places the character in a situation that focuses on the issue you want to cover. If we were using the character above we could add 'Maz's period is late, how might she be feeling and why?' and then explore the different feelings and reasons etc. You could follow a character's journey as they face decisions exploring different feelings the character might have and the different options and strategies available to them.

This technique can be adapted to work with many, many different issues and provides a safe and creative way to engage young people on an issue. Loudmouth run training courses that go into more depth and build confidence in using this and other interactive PSHE techniques. Ring 0121 4464880 for more details.