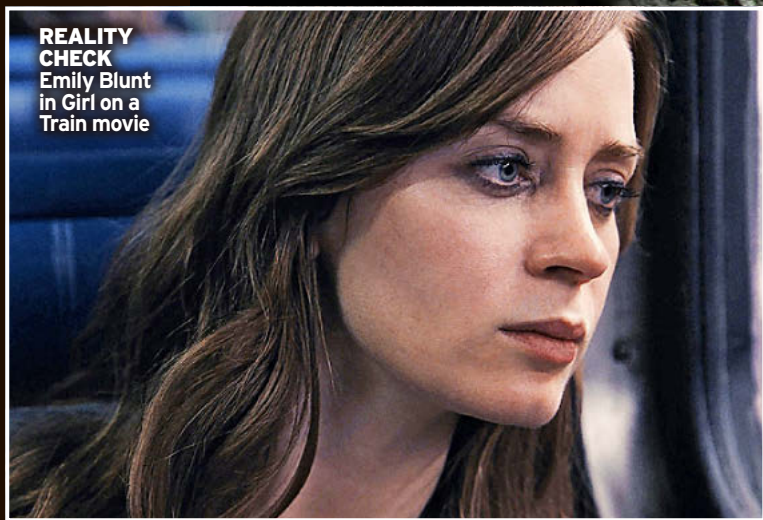


# MISERY BEHIND 'THE WORD

# Gas spite



**REALITY CHECK**  
Emily Blunt in *Girl on a Train* movie



» Sinister signs that show you are a victim of gaslighting

» An expert gives tips on how to free yourself from an abuser

BY MICHAELA BRADY

**GASLIGHTING** is the 'go to' phrase voted Word of the Year by the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

It defined it as: "The psychological manipulation of a person, usually over an extended period of time, that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories."

"It typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator."

Gaslighting is a subjective experience, so can be difficult to identify. It was in the spotlight this month when American actor Jonah Hill was accused of it by his ex, surfer Sarah Brady. She claimed Hill – who has just

had a baby with his new partner Olivia Millar – gaslighted her in texts.

It originated from the 1940s classic movie *Gaslight*, starring Ingrid Bergman, about a husband's devious and deliberate intent to drive his wife demented.

Celebrities today fling it at each other, from Kayne West and Kim Kardashian to Prince Harry, who accused his relations of being part of "a gaslighting institution".

But it's also frequently misused to describe obnoxious behaviour, or differences of opinion. So how do you recognise it? Here's what to watch for and tips to recover if someone is out to make you doubt your reality.

**GETTING TO KNOW GASLIGHTING**

In the movie *Gaslight*,

the husband's initial love bombing is quickly replaced by accusations, criticism and angry outbursts.

His ultimate cruelty manifests itself in manipulating her reality by hiding objects and dimming the gaslights.

When she questions this, he convinces her it's all a figment of her imagination.

The 2016 film *Girl on the Train*, star-

ring Emily Blunt, depicts an unemployed, separated solicitor who is plagued with alcoholism, blackouts, rage and guilt over destroying her marriage. As events unfold, we discover that she is actually the victim of psychological and physical abuse.

Her ex abused her to the extent that her reality was completely aligned to his version of events.

The characters in these movies lost their minds before reclaiming their sanity. To maintain yours, it's vital to be able to recognise a gaslighter's tactics.

These include denying and lying, even when untruths are exposed, and refusing to take accountability, which may be combined with blame shifting and anger when challenged.

Other strong

contenders include trivialising thoughts and feelings, stonewalling, silent treatment, ongoing criticism and fluctuations between cruelty and kindness.

It's important to note that a person may not be intentionally gaslighting. We are looking for ongoing repeated patterns and recurring phrases such as: "I never said that, that's crazy, you are imagining things/over exaggerating/paranoid/too sensitive."

Other statements to watch are: "How can you be like this after everything I do for you? You need help."

**THE EFFECTS OF GASLIGHTING**

As a psychotherapist, I have supported many survivors of gaslighting and its effects can be devastating.

**TEXTS**  
Jonah Hill and his ex Sarah Brady

