

Are You Experiencing Gaslighting in Your Relationship?

Objective

To identify if you are being gaslighted.

What to Know

Gaslighting is a form of manipulation and psychological control. If you are being gaslighted, someone is deliberately and systematically giving you false information that leads you to question what you know is true. You may end up doubting your memories, perception, and even your sanity!

Gaslighting can occur in personal or professional relationships, and the victim's identity and self-worth are targeted. Manipulative people who engage in gaslighting often want to control their victim emotionally, physically, or financially.

The process of gaslighting happens gradually in seven stages.

- 1. Lie and Exaggerate.** A negative narrative based on generalized false presumptions and accusations is created. The victim may experience disbelief and get defensive or try to explain away the behavior.
- 2. Consistent Repetition.** Lies are repeated to stay on the offensive, control the conversation, and dominate the relationship. The victim begins to have serious doubts.
- 3. Escalate.** When called out, the gaslighter escalates by doubling down on their attacks, refuting evidence with denial or blame, creating more false claims, and injecting doubt and confusion into interactions.
- 4. Wear Down the Victim.** The gaslighter eventually wears down their victim, who becomes discouraged, resigned, pessimistic, fearful, and self-doubting. The victim begins to question their own perception, identity, and reality.
- 5. Codependence.** The gaslighter grants (or takes away) acceptance, approval, respect, safety, and security. The relationship is based on fear and vulnerability. The victim feels insecure and anxious.
- 6. False Hope.** The gaslighter will occasionally "love bomb" or show superficial kindness or remorse. The victim might think, "Maybe things are going to get better." This temporary behavior or love bombing is often a calculated maneuver to increase complacency and remove the victim's defenses, further reinforcing the codependent relationship.
- 7. Dominate and Control.** The ultimate objective is to control, dominate, and take advantage of the victim. By maintaining and intensifying lies and coercions, the victim is in a constant state of insecurity, doubt, and fear.

This worksheet will help you identify if you are being gaslighted.

What to Do

Check off any of the statements that apply to you. You:

- constantly second-guess yourself.
- frequently wonder if you are too sensitive.
- feel confused most of the time.
- frequently apologize to your parents, partner, boss, or others.
- are unhappy and fail to find joy and pleasure in life.
- frequently make excuses for your partner's/boss's/friend's behavior.
- withhold information from loved ones.
- know something is wrong, but you can never quite express what it is.
- lie to avoid the putdowns and twists in reality.
- have trouble making simple decisions.
- know that you used to be a different person—more confident, fun-loving, and relaxed.
- feel hopeless.
- feel as though you cannot do anything right.
- wonder if you are a “good enough” partner/employee/ friend.
- sometimes think you are going crazy.
- apologize for other peoples' behavior.
- are overly focused on your character flaws.
- lack confidence.
- feel like a failure.
- feel detached from the person you used to be.
- rationalize the conduct or behavior of the gaslighter.

If you checked off more than eight statements, you are probably a victim of gaslighting.

Who is/are the gaslighter(s) in your life?

How long has this been happening? _____

Once you are aware of what is happening, you can work toward changing the dynamic or ending the relationship. Over the next month, use the following chart to identify gaslighting situations (at work, with your parents or other family members, in your romantic relationship, and so on). Write down who was involved and what happened.

Date	Situation	Who was involved?	Outcome

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
