



Trauma-informed support for survivors rebuilding after abuse

What Is Gaslighting?

Gaslighting is a form of emotional and psychological manipulation that causes someone to question their memory, feelings, instincts or sense of reality.

Over time, gaslighting can create confusion, self-doubt and emotional exhaustion.

It often happens gradually through repeated denial, blame-shifting, minimising or manipulation.

Many people experiencing gaslighting begin to second-guess themselves so often that they stop trusting their own judgement.

Gaslighting can happen in romantic relationships, families, friendships or workplaces.

1. Common Signs of Gaslighting

Someone using gaslighting may:

- Deny things they previously said or did
- Twist conversations or rewrite events
- Make you feel “too sensitive” or irrational
- Minimise your feelings or experiences
- Blame you for their behaviour
- Laugh off concerns or make you doubt yourself
- Change the focus of conversations to avoid accountability
- Tell others you are unstable, dramatic or difficult

Example:

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You clearly remember a conversation or situation, but after discussing it with them, you leave feeling confused and unsure of yourself.

2. Subtle Forms of Gaslighting

Gaslighting is not always obvious.

Sometimes it happens through small repeated comments or behaviours that slowly affect confidence and self-trust.

This may include:

- “That never happened.”
- “You’re overthinking again.”
- “You always make things bigger than they are.”
- “You’re imagining things.”
- “I was only joking.”
- “Everyone else agrees with me.”

Over time, these responses can make someone feel emotionally unsafe expressing concerns or trusting their instincts.

3. The Emotional Impact

Living with gaslighting can affect mental and emotional wellbeing in significant ways.

People experiencing gaslighting may:

- Constantly question themselves

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- Apologise even when they are hurt
- Feel emotionally confused or drained
- Struggle to trust their own memory
- Feel anxious before conversations
- Over-explain themselves to avoid conflict
- Lose confidence in decisions
- Feel dependent on others for reassurance

Example:

A person may repeatedly seek validation from others because they no longer trust their own perception of events.

4. Why Gaslighting Can Be Hard to Recognise

Gaslighting often happens alongside love, attachment, shared history or emotional dependence.

Many survivors do not immediately recognise the behaviour because:

- The manipulation develops gradually
- Positive moments create confusion and hope
- The person alternates between kindness and criticism
- Survivors are made to feel responsible for the conflict
- There may be no physical signs of abuse

Gaslighting is designed to create uncertainty.

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The confusion itself is often part of the manipulation.

5. Gaslighting & Trauma Responses

Long-term gaslighting can place the nervous system under constant stress.

Over time, survivors may experience:

- Hypervigilance
- Emotional overwhelm
- Anxiety and overthinking
- Shutdown or emotional numbness
- Fear of conflict or confrontation
- Difficulty trusting themselves or others

Many survivors become emotionally exhausted from constantly trying to explain, defend or prove their experiences.

6. Rebuilding Self-Trust

Healing from gaslighting often involves reconnecting with your own instincts, feelings and sense of reality.

This may include:

- Learning to trust your emotional responses again
- Reducing self-blame and shame
- Rebuilding confidence in decision-making

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- Recognising unhealthy patterns
- Accessing supportive and validating environments
- Allowing yourself to take your feelings seriously

Understanding gaslighting can help survivors recognise that confusion and self-doubt were not personal failings.

If This Feels Familiar

You are not “crazy”, weak or overreacting because you feel affected by emotional manipulation.

Gaslighting can deeply affect confidence, emotional wellbeing and self-trust over time.

Recognising these patterns can be an important step toward clarity, healing and support.

Support & Further Resources

You deserve support that validates your experiences and helps you reconnect with your sense of self.

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Turning silence into understanding through lived experience.

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