

What Does Gaslighting Mean?

You have probably heard the term gaslighting before, but what does it really mean and where did the term come from? The American Psychological Association defines gaslighting as manipulating another person into doubting his or her perceptions, experiences, or understanding of events.

The term “Gaslighting” stems from a 1930’s play called Gas Light. In it, the main character is ultimately trying to convince his wife that she’s going insane by dimming the gas lights in their home ever so slowly while convincing her the darkening house is all in her imagination.

Below are some of the most common tactics that gaslighters use so you can identify them and try to avoid them in the future.

Denial

The gaslighter will tell you that the conversation never happened or that it didn’t happen the way you remembered it.

Distraction

The gaslighter may interrupt you or change the subject. Not giving you a chance to clarify the situation

Projection

The gaslighter will blame you for behaviors that they are actually doing themselves like accusing you of cheating or telling lies.

Making light of Serious Situations

The gaslighter will minimize serious situation or accusations telling you it is not that big of a deal or they don’t know why you are taking it so seriously



Insults and Degrading Comments

the gaslighter will tell you hurtful things to put you down and doubt your worth.

Sabotage

The gaslighter will do things to make you feel stupid like hide the mail or car keys and make you feel like you lost them.

Silent Treatment

The gaslighter refuses to engage in conversation or respond to your concerns. They may leave the room or take off for hours and never come back to talk about your concern. They can also turn up the volume on the tv or radio to tune you out.

Threats

The gaslighter tells you that negative things will happen to you if you don’t do what they say. Like they will end the relationship or take your kids from you.