

“Have you ever felt like you were going crazy? Does someone -- maybe it's your partner -- keep telling you you're crazy. You hear over and over, 'are you crazy?' 'You are really paranoid. You need to get your head checked!' Hear that enough times and you probably believe it.

## Are you being Gaslighted?

### What is Gaslighting?

Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse where one individual attempts to get another individual to believe they are 'crazy' as a form of maintaining control. This is most often done through the denial of facts, events, or what one did or did not say. It is an abusive tactic that can take the form of environmental manipulation or it can be entirely verbal or emotional.

The gaslighter might also directly or indirectly imply that the individual is unstable, crazy, or suffers from a mental illness. When this technique is used on someone, they may initially become frustrated that one is being told their memory or perceptions do not match reality. While it is happening, gaslighting often lacks an apparent motive, which adds to the person's confusion and self-doubt.

### Do any of these signs sound familiar?

- A partner snaps, 'I'm not angry, why are you starting a fight?'
- You are constantly second-guessing yourself.
- You ask yourself, "Am I too sensitive?" a dozen times a day.
- You often feel confused and even crazy. You receive puzzling responses to ordinary actions.
- Your reactions are labeled wrong or unreasonable.
- You are always apologizing to those around you.
- You frequently make excuses for your partner's behavior to friends and family.
- You find yourself withholding information from friends and family so you don't have to explain or make excuses.
- You know something is terribly wrong, but you can never quite express what it is, even to yourself.
- You start lying to avoid put-downs and reality twists.
- You have trouble making simple decisions.
- You have the sense that you used to be a very different person- more confident, more fun-loving, more relaxed.
- You feel as though you can't do anything right.
- You say something like, "I had \$20 what happened to it?" and the response is, "You didn't have \$20."
- You hear, "I never said that," when you clearly remember hearing it.

### What's wrong with me?

When one doubts their perceptions of reality, the gaslighter is able to control that person; they become completely dependent on the gaslighter for the 'truth.'

The gaslighting abuser will also use denial, leading the survivor to ask themselves if they should take further steps because the gaslighter listened to their logical, understandable, completely answerable question, and simply said, "Nope. Not me. I didn't do it."

The gaslighting survivor is also left to deal with the fact that the gaslighter knowingly denied this, and wonder what else could possibly be unknown.

Over time, it can often become increasingly difficult for gaslighting survivors to trust their own instincts and the survivor may feel they need to be careful when relying on their own perceptions of life.

---

For support or information, contact  
SafePlace any time day or night.

**We are here to help.**

---



*Gaslighting is an insidious form of emotional abuse and manipulation that is difficult to recognize and break free from.*

---

#### Seek out support and learn more

Talking to an advocate can help as you rebuild self trust. Over time, your boundaries will begin to heal and the effects of gaslighting diminish.



**SafePlace 24-hour helpline**  
**(360)754-6300**  
**TTY 711**

One psychological definition of Gaslighting is:

“an increasing frequency of systematically withholding factual information from, and/or providing false information to the victim – having the gradual effect of making them anxious, confused, and less able to trust their own memory and perception.”

### Why is it called 'Gaslighting?'

The term derives from the 1938 stage play Gas Light (known as Angel Street in the United States), and the 1940 and 1944 film adaptations.

The plot concerns a husband who attempts to convince his wife and others that she is insane by manipulating small elements of their environment, and subsequently insisting that she is mistaken or misremembering when she points out these changes.

The title stems from the dimming of the house's gas lights which happens when the husband is using the gas lights in the attic while searching there for hidden treasure. The wife accurately notices the dimming lights, but the husband insists she is imagining the change.



#### Resources:

Ann Weiser Cornell, The Power of Focusing

[www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/gaslighting](http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/gaslighting)

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/>

<http://traumahealed.com/articles/repair-your-reality-after-gaslighting/>

## Need Help?

**Call anytime day or night.**

24-hour helpline (360) 754-6300  
TTY 711

**SafePlace  
Community Service Center:  
521 Legion Way SE  
Olympia, WA 98501**

Business Office phone: (360)786-8754  
Fax: (360)786-6377

Email: [SafePlace@SafePlaceOlympia.org](mailto:SafePlace@SafePlaceOlympia.org)  
[www.safeplaceolympia.org](http://www.safeplaceolympia.org)

WSECFD #0316-227 CFC #29429

SafePlace is committed to non-discriminatory employment practices and to non-discriminatory delivery of services.



“Am I crazy?”

## Gaslighting

Understanding a form of psychological abuse.