

FROM DOUBT TO CERTAINTY

My Five-Step Guide of how to deal with a gaslighting experience when you see one, and bring yourself to a place of clarity and empowerment

1 TAKE A TIME OUT More often than not, experiencing gaslighting causes a trauma response. When that happens, we go into fight/flight/freeze/fawn response. It's simply not possible to speak from a place of power and alignment with our true self when we are activated and in trauma. As much as you may feel desperate to be heard/seen, when you notice gaslighting behaviors, pause or stop the conversation as soon as you can. It's easy to get sucked into the "debate" - don't engage. Simply state, "I need time to think about what you are saying".

2 SORT OUT THE TRUTH This can be a tricky step. It takes time (and typically outside help from a professional) to unravel the effects gaslighting has had on us. And yet, the sooner you start trying to know your truth, the sooner you step into knowing yourself and being able to trust yourself. Start by asking yourself: "What do I KNOW to be true?", and then focus on the facts: What did you hear, see, feel? If need be, what were you touching, smelling, tasting? Ground yourself in the facts. This is NOT the time for your thoughts or feelings about the facts, just the facts. This will later help you sort out not only what your thoughts/feelings/perceptions are, but what thoughts/feelings/perceptions the other person may be trying to present as fact.

3 RE-ESTABLISH SAFETY The best, and fastest way to end a trauma response is to self-regulate through grounding exercises. Tapping, breathing, 5-4-3-2-1, name a color, "There's not a tiger in the room" - all of these are methods to reconnect your whole self: both sides of your brain AND your body (trauma responses cause parts of our brain to go "off-line"). Once you have re-established your brain-body connection, you are much more equipped and empowered to move into the next steps and getting your clarity.

4 FOCUS ON YOU Let curiosity set the tone. Do your best to dismiss any judgements you might have about what you SHOULD think/feel, etc (side-note, this is self-gaslighting). With all the gentleness, attentiveness, and determination you can muster, begin asking yourself what you think, feel, perceive, believe about the facts. Make sure you're starting from YOUR perspective, not the other persons. It's a good idea to have a journal where you can just let yourself go as you write the thoughts and feelings that come to you in this space.

5 GIVE PERMISSION TO LOVE YOURSELF With the lingering effects of gaslighting, this step might be hard, which is why we start by, "giving ourselves permission". You are not being selfish, controlling, over-reacting, etc. This next step is a beautiful, healthy act of loving yourself well... based on what you know to be true, and your feelings/thoughts about what you know to be true, ask yourself, "What do I need in response to my feelings?" You may or may not want to share that answer with the other person - this isn't about them; it's about YOU knowing your truth, and having clarity around what you need. If you decide not to share with the other person, make sure you note your need, as a way to keep yourself from making concessions around what you have now established as your need.

Ready to level up past "need"? Ask yourself, "If I could have my heart and soul's desire, what do I long for in response to my feelings?" "If my person could respond in the way that would feel best to me, what would that be? What would they say? HOW would they say it?" (Meaning, tone, with empathy/no resentment, et). Allow yourself to dream. This is the birthplace of stepping into raising the bar in your relationships, and not settling for less than you deserve.