

Gaslighting

The McInnis Method Definition

Gaslighting is an organized pattern of interfering with another person's perception in a way that evades responsibility.

It is not disagreement. It is not misunderstanding. It is not a different memory. Gaslighting organizes another person's perception around the gaslighter's protection so responsibility, repair, or limits no longer have to be faced.

◆ Necessary Conditions (All Must Be Present)

- 1. Perception Interference** - Undermining confidence in what was seen, heard, felt, or remembered.
- 2. Responsibility Evasion** - The distortion protects the other person from accountability, repair, or consequence.
- 3. Pattern Over Time** - The behavior repeats, especially as stakes or consequences increase.

If responsibility is owned, gaslighting is less likely.

If responsibility repeatedly disappears while the other person's perception is undermined, look closely at what the confusion is accomplishing.

◆ Common Statements

“That never happened.” • “You're too sensitive.” • “You're remembering it wrong.” • “Everyone agrees with me.” • “Why are you making this a problem?”

The sentence is not the evidence by itself. Watch what happens to responsibility afterward.

◆ What Gaslighting Is Not

Disagreement • Misattunement with repair • Defensiveness with ownership • Different meaning-making

Clinical Shortcut

Ask yourself: After the conversation, did both people's understanding become clearer, or did only one person's responsibility become less visible?

Therapeutic Implication

Gaslighting is not resolved through validation alone. It requires reality anchoring and responsibility restoration. If responsibility cannot be restored, the task shifts from understanding the relationship to organizing your life around reality.



McInnis Method Guardrail

Gaslighting is not defined by confusion. It is defined by what the confusion accomplishes. **The goal is not to win the argument. It is to recover confidence in your own perception and make decisions from what you can actually observe.**