

The Gaslighting Phrase Guide

Five patterns, in words you may recognize

One phrase doesn't make gaslighting. Anyone can misremember or disagree. The defining feature is the *pattern*: the same moves, repeated over time, that leave you doubting your own memory and judgment. Read this to find words for what happened, not to diagnose anyone.

Pattern	What it can sound like	What it does
1. Denial	"I never said that." · "That didn't happen." · "You're making things up."	Flat denial of what you clearly remember, said with total confidence.
2. Countering	"Are you sure? That's not how I remember it." · "You always get things mixed up." · "Your memory is terrible."	Questions your memory even when you're confident. Repeated, it plants real doubt.
3. Diverting	"You're only saying that because you're insecure." · "Why are you bringing this up now?" · "Where did you even get that idea?"	Changes the subject or attacks your credibility, so the original concern gets buried.
4. Trivializing	"You're so sensitive." · "It was just a joke, relax." · "You're overreacting."	Makes your feelings seem exaggerated, so you learn to shrink your reactions first.
5. Forgetting	"I never agreed to that." · "I don't remember promising that." · "You must have dreamed it."	Conveniently forgets commitments, especially ones that would require accountability.

Reality-test: three questions to ask yourself

- 1. What did I actually observe?** (What did I see or hear, in plain facts?)
- 2. What did I actually say I needed?**
- 3. Does this keep happening, or was it once?** Patterns matter more than moments.

Three tools that help

- **Journal in the moment.** Write down what was said and what you observed, as close to real time as you can. It becomes a record you can return to when doubt creeps back.
- **Talk to a trusted outside person.** A second perspective is protective, which is exactly why isolation is such a common tactic.
- **Record a voice memo to yourself** after a hard conversation. Hearing your own voice describe it can help you trust it.

A note for you

Your memory was likely working fine the whole time. What was under attack wasn't your grip on reality. It was your *confidence* in it, and confidence can be rebuilt. **You were never the problem.**

A lens for noticing patterns, not a diagnosis or a verdict on any person. Coaching is not therapy or crisis care. If you're in crisis, call or text 988 (US).

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