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The Slow Poison of Gaslighting

When reality becomes a question



Elena Byron

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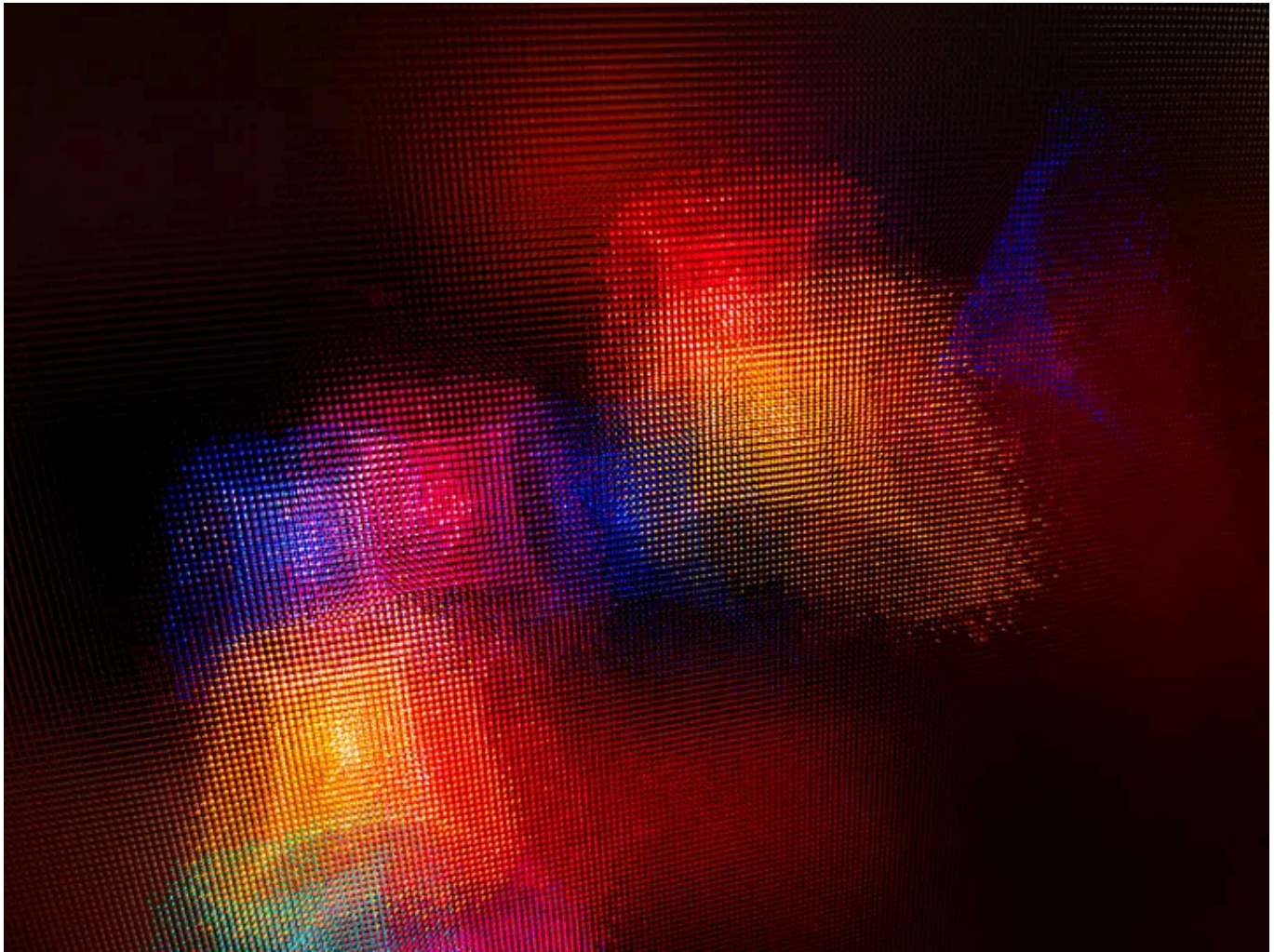


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But over time, it became a pattern. He'd make a cutting remark, then say it was a joke, brushing it off with a laugh.

I began to wonder — was I really being too sensitive? Maybe I was overreacting. Perhaps I just wasn't familiar with this kind of "sharp" sense of humour.

Slowly, and almost without realising it, I started to accept the idea that I was the problem. He always seemed so confident, so convinced that no one else would ever take offence — so I convinced myself that I was the one who needed to toughen up.

Gaslighting is one of the most insidious pillars of narcissistic abuse. It's not just lying. It's psychological manipulation so subtle, yet so destructive, that it makes you question your own reality. You start doubting your memories, your actions, your emotions — until eventually, you even doubt yourself.

It's like sitting on a train, stopped at a station. Another train is beside you, motionless, until suddenly, one of them starts moving. If you're only looking at the other train, you'll feel as if you're the one in motion — even if you're completely still. Your sense of movement depends on a frame of reference. To know the truth, you have to look outside, at something solid — buildings, tracks, the ground — to anchor yourself.

Gaslighting works the same way. But in an abusive relationship, the person you trust becomes your only frame of reference, and they are constantly shifting the ground beneath you.

I remember the moment I realised I was lost inside that distortion. After months of being told I was overreacting, too sensitive, misremembering things, or even imagining them, I reached a terrifying place: I no longer trusted my own mind. I wasn't sure if my feelings were valid. I wasn't sure if

events happened the way I remembered them. I wasn't even sure if *I* was real anymore.

This is what gaslighting does. It makes you feel unsteady in your own skin, constantly seeking reassurance from the very person who is unravelling your sense of self. And by the time you realise what's happening, it's already stolen pieces of you.

When You Start Gaslighting Yourself

Gaslighting isn't just about being lied to. It's about being made to doubt yourself so profoundly that, eventually, you start doing it to yourself.

At first, I pushed back. But over time, I found myself explaining things more and more – long messages, detailed justifications, desperately trying to prove that my feelings were valid. They never were. It got so bad that I did something I never imagined: I started recording phone conversations, desperate for proof that I wasn't going mad. My own mind had become a courtroom, and I had become both the defense and the prosecution.

One time, he looked at me, exasperated, and said, "At least you could just pretend to be intelligent." It stung. But apparently, I was wrong to be offended. I was "too touchy," I was told. It was a *normal* comment. Couldn't I take a joke?

Another time, at a restaurant, he called me by his ex-girlfriend's name. It made me uncomfortable, but I knew it could be a genuine mistake. People slip up. But instead of apologising, he smirked and said, "I used her name because you say stupid things like she did."

I was shocked. But, of course, my reaction was disproportionate. That was the pattern — if I felt hurt, I was “too sensitive.” If I got upset, I “lacked a sense of humour.” If I pushed back, I was “creating drama.” And so, I started convincing myself: *Maybe I am too sensitive. Maybe I do take things too seriously. Maybe I don't have a sharp enough sense of humour.*

And when I shared something about my day that he didn't like, he'd snap, “Did anything good happen today?” in that exasperated, patronising tone. But of course, he was trying to make me more optimistic. *Right?*

Near the end, when I finally tried to hold him accountable for all the pain he caused me, he scoffed and said, “You're alive — what kind of hurt was I responsible for?” As if survival was the only measure of harm.

Rewriting Reality

Gaslighting isn't always a dramatic, outright denial of facts. Sometimes, it's a slow chipping away at your confidence, a constant shifting of the goalposts, a rewriting of events so subtle that you don't realise you're being rewritten too. And by the time you start to wake up, you barely recognise yourself anymore.

But here's the truth:

Your feelings are real.

Your memories are real.

And you — you are real.

You just need to find a new frame of reference.

I'm still piecing myself back together. But I no longer need recordings to trust what I feel. I believe myself now. I honour my memories. I've found new anchors — within myself, my friends, my truth.

That's how healing begins: not with a sudden epiphany, but with one quiet, defiant belief — **I am not crazy.**

If this resonated with you, follow me for more raw and honest stories on healing from narcissistic abuse. I'd love to hear your thoughts in the comments.

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We are a community of women who share our personal stories about how we've survived and thrived in our lives. We share our messages to heal and help others learn from our experiences.



Written by Elena Byron

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What are your thoughts?



Naomi Shippen 
Mar 30



This experience sounds so familiar to me. I am glad you're out of this situation and have good support around you.




11



1 reply

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Naomi Shippen 
Mar 30



At least you could just pretend to be intelligent.

That is so out of order.




6



1 reply

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Naomi Shippen 
Mar 30



This is what gaslighting does. It makes you feel unsteady in your own skin, constantly seeking reassurance from the very person who is unravelling your sense of self. And by the time yo...

This is exactly what it felt like for me.



1 reply

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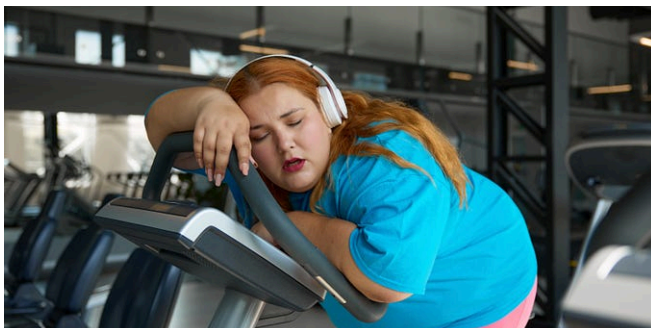


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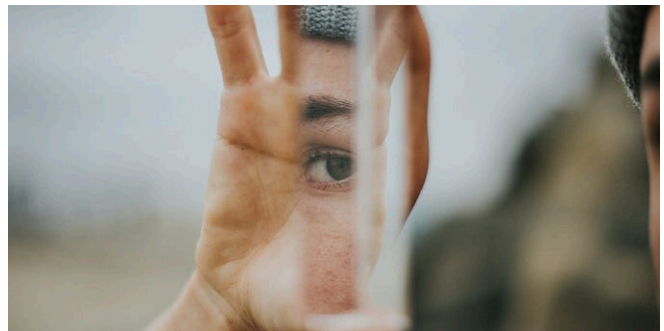


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