

A clarity tool to help distinguish manipulation from healthy disagreement and growth.

Gaslighting vs. Conflict vs. Accountability

How to use this grid: 1) Look for patterns, not one-time moments 2) Pay attention to how you feel after the interaction 3) Notice whether there is space for dialogue, repair, and change

Area	Gaslighting	Conflict	Accountability
View of Reality	Your reality is denied or rewritten	Multiple realities can coexist	Reality is acknowledged, even when uncomfortable
Communication Style	Dismissive, minimizing, or manipulative	Tense, emotional, or imperfect but honest	Direct, respectful, and reflective
Pattern	Repeated and ongoing	Situational or circumstantial	Consistent and intentional
Response to Evidence	Evidence is denied or distorted	Evidence may be debated	Evidence is considered and integrated
Emotional Impact	Confusion, self-doubt, anxiety	Frustration, irritation, discomfort	Growth, clarity, repair
Responsibility	Shifted onto you	Shared or unclear	Owned by the person who caused harm
Power Dynamic	Unequal, controlling	Relatively balanced	Balanced and repair-focused
Openness to Repair	Low or nonexistent	Possible but inconsistent	High and action-oriented
Typical Phrases	“That never happened.” “You’re too sensitive.”	“We see this differently.” “I’m frustrated.”	“I see how my actions affected you.” “I’ll do better.”

Conflict can be uncomfortable, accountability can sting, but gaslighting leaves you questioning.

