



Breaking Through Bias

Gaslighting Tip Sheet

What do you do when someone gaslights you to challenge your judgment of what is or has actually happened? Here are two examples of actual gaslighting:

- In a meeting considering promotion candidates, a senior man tells the group that a woman up for promotion did not need to be considered at that time because she was pregnant. When a woman at that meeting later confronted him in private to tell him that his comment was “actionable,” he denied making the comment, calling her a “liar.”
- Before her presentation to a sizable group of other professionals, a woman asked the audience about the extent of their experience in the subject matter. After her introduction, a man said to the group that she would have made a great kindergarten teacher. When the woman took him aside to tell him his comment was insulting to her, he told her he did not mean anything disparaging because “kindergarten teachers are the backbone of America.”

What to Do

There are two things you should not do: automatically second-guess yourself, or get visibly angry due to what you thought you saw or experienced. Instead, consider doing the following:

- Take a reality check and assess the objective facts. Depending on the situation, this might include:
 - Counting the number of women in senior management;
 - Assessing who consistently gets good assignments;
 - Thinking about who has been promoted over the past five years.
- Compare your views and reactions with trusted colleagues.
- Discuss this with a close friend to provide you with a reality check.
- When your perceptions don't match up with what the gaslighter is telling you, politely challenge her or him.
- Never let gaslighting hold you back, make you afraid, or prevent you from taking the risks you need to advance in your career.
- Have a more in-depth conversation with the gaslighter. Is she or he being disingenuous, ignorant of the facts, or simply naïve?
- Don't let gaslighting wear you down. Keep raising your hand, asking for leadership opportunities, and pointing out instances of gender discrimination.
- Gaslighting often happens over time, so that it chips away at your confidence and your sense of reality.
- Build, use, and contribute to a network that will support you.

Have a gaslighting story? Share it with us at info@andieandal.com.