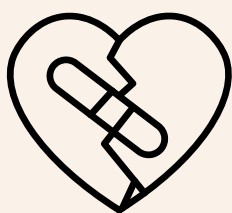


# BUILDING TRUST AFTER MEDICAL GASLIGHTING: A PROVIDER'S GUIDE

A SPARK Advocacy Collective Resource



## UNDERSTANDING MEDICAL GASLIGHTING TRAUMA

Patients who've been dismissed, minimized, or told their symptoms are "all in their head" carry specific trauma responses into new medical relationships. Recognizing these patterns helps providers respond appropriately.

## COMMON TRAUMA RESPONSES IN PATIENTS:

- Over-documentation (bringing excessive records/symptom logs)
- Apologizing repeatedly for "taking your time"
- Minimizing their own symptoms after sharing them
- Visible anxiety when describing past medical experiences
- "Testing" providers with partial information
- Difficulty making eye contact or appearing "shut down"

## TRUST-BUILDING STRATEGIES

- Acknowledge Their History : "I see you've been seeking answers for a long time. That must have been incredibly frustrating."
- Validate Before Educating. Instead of: "Your tests are normal, so..." Try: "I hear that you're experiencing these symptoms. Let's talk about what the tests show and what they might not capture."
- Make Your Process Transparent "Here's what I'm thinking and why. Does this match what you've been experiencing?"
- Honor Their Expertise "You know your body best. Help me understand what you're feeling."

## PHRASES TO AVOID → TRAUMA-INFORMED ALTERNATIVES

- "Have you considered anxiety?" → "How has this been affecting your emotional well-being?"
- "Your labs are fine" → "Your labs are within normal ranges, but I can see that you're still experiencing symptoms"
- "Let's try this and see" → "Here's my recommendation and why. What questions do you have?"
- "You need to..." → "I'd recommend... What are your thoughts?"

## CREATING SAFETY IN 5 MINUTES

- Open with curiosity: "What's your biggest concern today?"
- Reflect their words: Use their exact symptom descriptions
- Share your thinking: Explain your clinical reasoning
- Invite collaboration: "What would feel most helpful?"
- Close with validation: "Your symptoms are real, and we'll work through this together."

