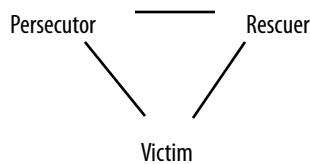


“THE DRAMA TRIANGLE”



Drama Triangle: Do You See Yourself?

Stephen Karpman invented the drama triangle to give people a tool for realizing when they are engaged in an ineffective series of communications. He identified the three corners of the triangle as persecutor, rescuer, and victim, with victim at the bottom, because the ineffective dance around the triangle will go on only as long as someone is willing to be victimized.



Let's look at an example. Charlie, our group leader feels victimized by the frustrating events in the group's interaction (victim position). He then considers criticizing (persecutor position) but instead bides his feelings and becomes extra helpful (rescuer position). Soon he was feeling victimized again.

How do we get off the triangle?

The first step is to recognize that we are in this vicious triangle. We then are better able to see the clues that help us to get off the triangle and make a plan of what to do instead. Using the example of Charlie, if group member Ryan interrupts repeatedly,

Charlie can choose the spot from which to move off the triangle.

P Persecutor position, move to clear structure.

Persecutor: "Your interruptions are intolerable! You don't have enough self-discipline to choke a fly!" Structure: "When people are interrupted, they don't get to finish their thoughts. Ryan, please state your position and then we will go around the circle, clockwise, and give our opinion or pass?"

R From the rescuer position, Charlie can move to clear nurturing – taking the needs of the individuals into account.

Rescuer: "I can tell it's too hard for you to wait 'til Martha finishes, Ryan."

Nurturer: "Ryan, if there is something you need from us, we will listen to you as soon as Martha finishes speaking."

V From the victim position, the leader can move to problem solving.

Victim thinks: "They are interrupting and we will never get this problem solved and there is nothing I can do?" Problem solver says: "Attention, please! Our group is supposed to end in twenty minutes, and we have not resolved the problem. Are you ready to vote on this point now (or determine possible solutions that would work for you)."

These ways of getting off the drama triangle were first identified by Gail Nordeman. Think about the last time you facilitated a group and recall how you related to different people within that setting. Did you find yourself playing any of the three dramatic roles – victim, persecutor, rescuer? Did you play one role more often than others?

Further information about the drama triangle can be found in the following books: *Scripts People Live* by Claude Steiner, *Born To Win* by Muriel James, TAJ, *Script Drama Analysis* by Steve Karpman. Portions of this handout were adapted from the book *Who, Me Lead a Group?* by Jean Illsley Clarke, Parenting Press Inc. 1984, pp. 82-85.

