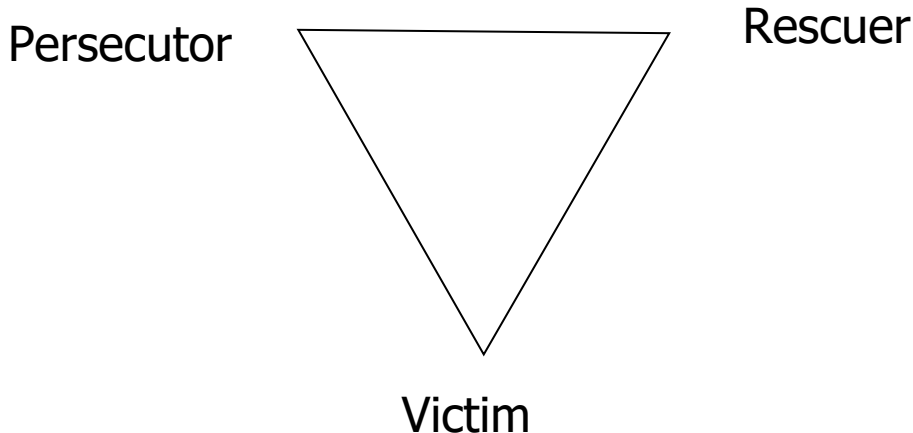


# The Drama Triangle

Created by Stephen Karpman in 1968 the drama Triangle identifies three roles present in many human exchanges. They are internalized, learned behavior patterns ; habits and ways of exercising control that establish a secure but destructive bond among people in families and other systems, including work organizations.



The two positions at the top are considered the “one-up” positions where the people feel superior while the Victim is at the “one-down” position feeling looked down on and helplessness. The positions often shift as people change emotions to protect the ego which feels threatened. The Victim may become angry at the injustice of being persecuted, thereby shifting into the Persecutor role. The Abuser may become tired with his angry barrage then feel guilty and shift into the rescuing role.

The Drama Triangle positions are largely unconscious in nature and kept in place by denial, arrogance, helplessness and collusion (tacit agreement from all players to keep the status quo.) The Drama Serves as a training ground for powerlessness; it’s impact is to prevent psychological equality in relationships.

If anyone in this triangle changes roles, the other two roles change as well. We enhance the Drama by reversing roles.

## The Persecutor

- Stuck in a false sense of superiority and defense mechanisms keep people in denial.
- Addictive role—feeling the adrenalin rush during anger and rage. Getting high from fighting and witnessing fights.
- Unconsciously uses anger as an energizer to keep depression at bay.
- Needs to be in control and uses verbal or physical force to stay in power.
- Deals with threat, new ideas and conflict with anger to stay safe in the role of being the dominant person.
- Uses blame, criticisms, attacks and then venting to release stress.
- Is highly judgmental of others and angry when others do not do what they say.
- Self righteous judgments about others weaknesses subtly allows the weakness to continue.
- Strong sense of entitlement—“you owe me” and willing to use verbal or physical force to get it.
- Feelings of frustration trigger the right to get angry rather than deal with own uncomfortable feelings.
- Unable to feel vulnerable and denies own weaknesses.
- Shame based and uses negative behaviors to cover up/deny own problems.
- Strong need to be right and not have their authority challenged.
- Finds reasons to make others wrong and scapegoats them.
- Believes others deserve the abuse and punishment the Perpetrators dishes out.

## The Victim

- Stuck in a false sense of being unworthy with defenses of feeling sorry for self and passive aggressive behavior.
- Deals with threats by giving in, in order to feel safe and is submissive when others act inappropriately.
- Unable to stand up for self and avoids confrontation.
- Believes his/her needs do not count.
- Can be overly sensitive, wish-washy and unable to make and stick to decisions.
- Doesn't take responsibility for own feelings.
- Feeds off of the beliefs of Perpetrator and rescuer that he/she cannot take care of self.
- Has shame base for being irresponsible and inept.
- Is anxiety driven and makes excuses for staying stuck in Victim-hood.
- Blames Perpetrator for problems in the family.
- Anger, resentment and retaliation through manipulation and refusal to act as a responsible adult.
- Moves between "Poor me" and anger with blaming others "He/she is bad."
- Angry when goes along with what the Perpetrator or Rescuer says to do.
- Feels stuck and unfulfilled in life but does not risk moving forward.
- May have had a lenient or overly-protective parent who set up expectations of helplessness
- May have had a parent who feels anxiety when the child has to suffer natural consequences from mistakes

## The Rescuer

- Stuck in a false superiority with defense of acting unselfishly to help others.
- Addictive role—feeling good at the expense of others rights to take care of themselves.
- Good guy beliefs, such as takes the "high moral ground" of rescuing and enabling others.
- Needs to be in control of others to avoid own feelings and problems.
- Garnering self-esteem by being seen as unselfish for someone else's own good.
- Uses rescuing and enabling to connect or to feel important.
- Highly judgmental of others and angry when others do not do what he/she says.
- Blames Perpetrator for problems in the family while refusing to address one's own problems.
- Is anxiety driven and uses rescuing to reduce feelings of anxiety.
- Guilts self when not involved with other's problems.
- Has shame about loss of self to meet others needs.
- Super caretaker role can create sense of giving own self away and create depression.
- Strong sense of entitlement with the Victim of "You owe me because of all I've done for you."
- Can become a martyr/Victim when he/she feels that he/she has been taken advantage of by others.
- Parents the child though meeting his/her own needs of shame and guilt rather than meeting the needs of the child to be a responsible person who is allowed negative consequences and learns from them.
- May feel guilty and try to make it up to a child because of a divorce or due to choosing a lousy spouse who abuses, scapegoats or neglects the child.
- May feel guilty and try to make it up to a child because of drinking or using drugs when the child was small, neglecting the child or being a single mom.
- May feel guilty and try to make it up to a child because of a handicapping condition or a perceived weakness in the child.