



Rescuer | Persecutor | Victim

“There is a balance—we are here to help others, AND we are also here to take care of ourselves. When we become off balance by only focusing on others’ needs, and when we believe we are responsible to “fix” others’ problems, we begin a destructive pattern.” This pattern is called the Karman Drama Triangle. It is a “warping” of the Thinker, Feeler, Doer God created us to be.*

The three corners of the Drama Triangle are labeled “Rescuer,” “Persecutor” and “Victim.” In this [Rescuing] pattern, we often rescue people from their responsibilities, then we move to the “persecutor corner”; we feel angry at the people we tried to help because we have given beyond our capacity. We then move to the “victim corner” because we feel used and unappreciated. We rescue people when we believe they are unable to take responsibility for their own feelings or problems—these people are often in the “victim corner” of the triangle. After we try to “fix” their problems, victims may become angry with us (moving to the “persecutor corner”) when their problems are not resolved, or if they feel we are treating them as incapable. And so, the dance around the triangle continues, and it only becomes worse over time.*

There are other situations or “social games” involving rescuer, persecutor, and victim. We may be a rescuer in one situation, a victim or persecutor in another situation. We may have different roles outwardly with others than we have inwardly with ourselves.

Drama comes from switching of roles, thus avoiding clarity or being slippery. A person defends, denies and protects using Three Rules of Chaos: 1. Make a game out of everything 2. Deny everything and 3. Immediately put you on the defensive (talk fast, don’t listen).

The list below can help you detect that you are in a triangle:

- Ask God in prayer if you are causing or receiving a triangle position, be soft to receiving the truth about your or someone else’s actions and/or attitudes.
- If you are thinking: “I’m ok if I: Be Perfect, Be Strong, Hurry Up, Try Hard, or Please People.”
- If you are in a feelings-only environment inside yourself: “Now I’ll beat myself over this” (punishing), “It’s everyone else’s fault” (protecting), “I can never do things right.” (pitying)
- If you find you are doing too much: you feel obligated to fix others’ feelings or problems for them. Or you end up feeling angry, resentful, used and unappreciated for what you have been doing for someone.
- If we “think it is cruel and heartless to do something as cold-blooded as allowing a person to work through or face a legitimate feeling, suffer a consequence, be disappointed by hearing ‘no’, be asked to respond to our needs and wants, and generally be held responsible and accountable for him or herself in this world.”**

- Notice what is said and unsaid and evaluate why those things are said and unsaid, especially in light of the above.
- You or someone else is saying things like: “Don’t tell our special secret”, “Don’t tell or else!!”, “You can’t get along without me.”

Escaping/Changing the Triangle (Moving from Rescuer, Persecutor, Victim to Doer, Thinker, Feeler):

- Receive God’s grace and forgiveness for whatever way you have been perceiving, receiving or acting as your part in a Drama Triangle. Ask for His help in moving forward toward healthy relationships, right believing, and appropriate action.
- Acknowledge the role you are playing, and how you may have switched roles, acknowledge how and why you got there, acknowledge the consequences of staying.
- If you’re Persecutor, escape through the “I’d rather be mad than sad” path. If a Rescuer, escape through the “I’d rather be smarter than martyr” path. If a Victim, escape through the I’d rather be getting than fretting” path.
- Avoid slippery places, slippery people, and slippery thinking.
- When you sense a new drama triangle beginning, you can say “no” to the drama.
- Keep in mind the 10% Rule: every idea spoken has at least 10% truth in it, 10% of the population would react the same way, 10% of what you are saying is not true anyway.
- Think through possible negative corners in advance to prepare for a discussion, also explaining oneself in the process: “I know this may not be the right time for this (to avoid P) but I need to know if....” (my V).
- Use true positive self-talk/scripture.
 - Persecutor: talk through self-determination by Philippians 4:13, 1 Cor. 3:16, John 15:1,5, Ephesians 2:6; direction, discipline, goals and strength of character
 - Rescuer: talk through self-stroking by believing Romans 8:1-2, Romans 8:36, Colossians 3:3, 2 Timothy 1:7; protective, belief in health and self, giving appropriate permissions
 - Victim: talk through self-acceptance by believing John 1:12, John 15:15, Ephesians1:5, Colossians 2:10; open, humble, flexible, receptive
- Ask yourself three questions, one for each corner, to move toward how God intended:
 - Victim, ask “How did/do I feel at the time?” to move toward Feeling.
 - Rescuer, ask “What did/do I believe about the world from that?” to move toward Thinking.
 - Persecutor, ask “What did/will I decide?” to move toward Doing.

**The Equality Workbook: Freedom in Christ from the Oppression of Patriarchy*, by Helga and Bob Edwards, 2016

***Codependent No More*, Melody Beattie. p. 90

The rest compiled from: “The New Drama Triangles” USATAA/ITAA conference lecture, August 11, 2007. Free download worksheet for the DVD, Stephen B. Karpman, M.D.