

Online Therapy for Women in African Cities



THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

See how we slip into the Victim, Persecutor and Rescuer roles to play seductive high energy drama games in order to avoid attention on our own personal accountability and vulnerability. This resource will help you:

- Understand the counterproductive dynamics of game playing
- recognize when games are being played
- identify your preferred role

WHAT IS THE DRAMA TRIANGLE?

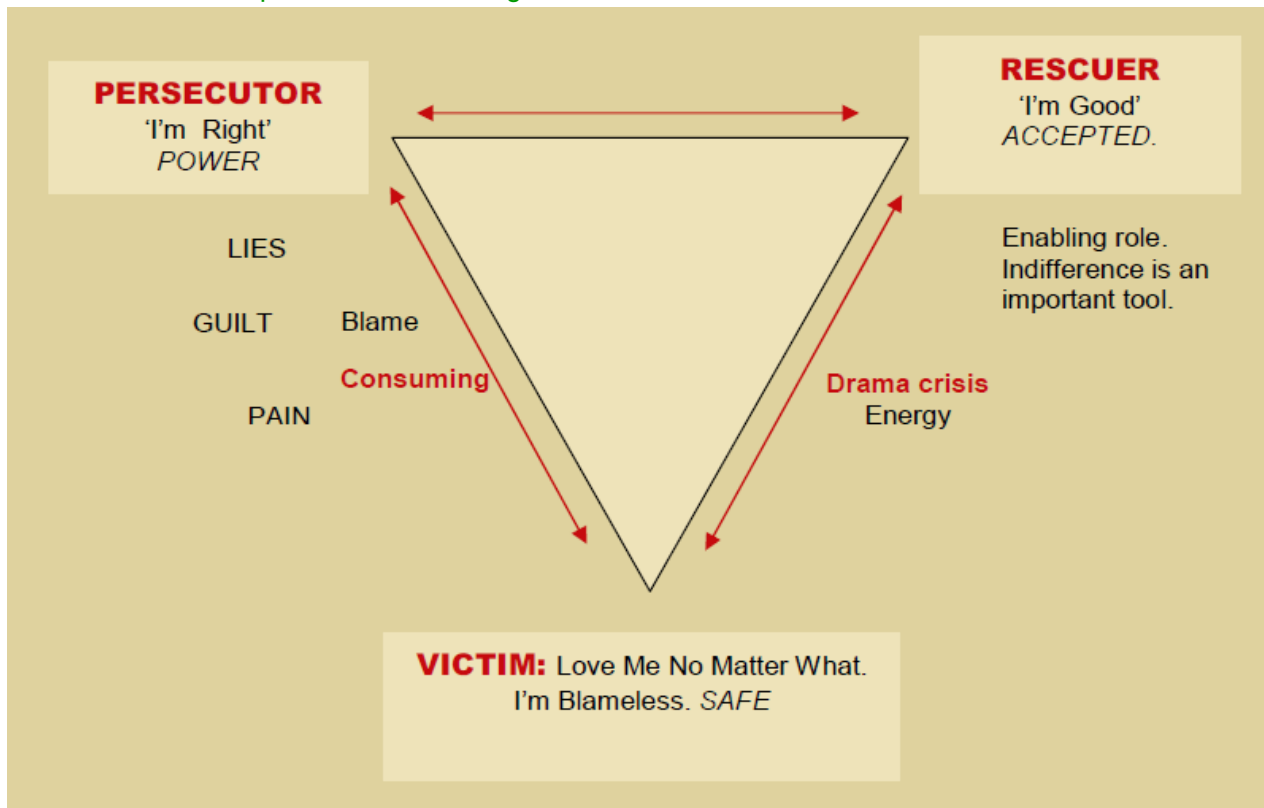
The Drama Triangle is a well-known model taken from the area of psychology known as Transactional Analysis (TA) to spot common relational dysfunctions and manipulative interactions. In your day to day dealings with others this model can help you identify and avoid what is known as 'game playing', i.e. engaging into the seductive and high-energy dynamics of blame, defense and rescue to discard attention on personal accountability and vulnerability.

Focused on manipulation, game playing by nature is counterproductive as it obscures real issues and prevents any real problem solving. Many of us will have found ourselves trying to help someone solve a problem, only to hear them repeatedly say, "Yes, but..." to our every idea.

The Drama Triangle developed by Karpman, a TA psychiatrist, affirms that there are three habitual roles which people often take when interacting with others:

1. The person who is treated as, or accepts the role of a victim
2. The person who pressures, coerces or persecutes the victim
3. The rescuer, who intervenes to help the situation or the underdog

You can see this represented in the diagram below:



THE PURPOSE OF THE VICTIM, RESCUER, PERSECUTOR GAME

1. Keeps responsibility out there.
2. There is a lack of internal conflict within the individual. It's all created in others.
3. Players lack empathy, are very self absorbed in their own role of the moment.
4. Patterns of game prevent problem solving — the drama rules.
5. Maintains bad boundaries.
6. The game provides identity and fills emptiness, because two people can jump around in all three roles.

HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

A: I am so unhappy at work. I had another argument with B today. I just feel that it's never going to work out. (Victim)

C: Why don't you speak to your supervisor? She could help. (Rescuer)

A: Yeah, but it's not her problem, is it? (Victim)

C: OK, well you could try. (Rescuer)

A: Yeah, you can see me doing that...She's one of the problems. (Victim)

C: How about writing to the MD? I'm sure he'd like to know what's going on in the workplace. (Rescuer)

A: You don't get it, do you? If I did that, my supervisor would make my life a misery. (Victim)

C: Well, why the hell are you talking to me about it then? You're obviously not in the slightest bit interested in actually solving the issue. You just want me to make all the concessions. You're always moaning. (Persecutor)

A: You just don't pull your weight around here. You've never worked in all our years together. I don't know why I even bother talking to you about my problems.(Persecutor)

C: That's not my fault. You know how difficult things have been for me since my mother died(bursting into tears).(Victim)

A: Sorry, I didn't mean to upset you... lets...(Rescuer)

C: Oh go to hell. I cannot stand the way you always criticize me.(Persecutor)

Participants in a drama triangle create misery for themselves and others.

The goal is to transform this lose-lose situation and create a more positive outcome for everyone. Each player in this particular mind game begins by assuming one of three archetypal roles: Victim, Rescuer, or Persecutor.

THE VICTIM

Victims are helpless and hopeless. They deny responsibility for their negative circumstances, and deny possession of the power to change them. They do less than 50%, won't take a stand, act "super-sensitive", wanting kid glove treatment, and pretend impotence and incompetence. Victims can be manipulative, particularly if they are operating on a "love me no matter what" basis.

Being loved no matter what is not something two honest adults should expect from each other. After the age of 18, love me no matter what should be hard to come by. Victims are trying to remain blameless.

Remember an unhappy relationship is always created by two people. Blame may be distributed 60/40 or 70/30, however it always takes two. The more blaming and finger pointing someone does, the more fragile the point of view.

Noise simply creates smoke and mirrors, and it is less likely that an honest reality is being addressed. If you've been loving the victim role over many years it is time to face the truth - One key to interrupting this pattern would be to relocate your imagination, to find other ways of conducting your life.

THE RESCUER

Rescuers get caught up in enabling. They see themselves as good and have to learn to back up. Doing too much for someone else is rationalized because "I care so much." Rescuers are often unaware that pity and disrespect are the fuel for this role. "I know what's best for you.". They are constantly applying short-term repairs to a Victim's problems, while neglecting their own needs. They are always working hard to "help" other people. They are harried, tired, and often have physical complaints. They are usually angry underneath and may be a loud or quiet martyr in style. They use guilt to get their way. The reality is that backing up from the rescuer role means learning that indifference can be a useful tool. Wait and see if the person you're trying to rescue steps forward for themselves or how they do it differently.

THE PERSECUTOR

Persecutors love the power of moving people around on the chess board of life. Everything is win or lose, with very little ability to be a part of a team. There is a desperate need to be right at all costs and you can end up doubting yourself even about the facts of what happens.

They are critical and unpleasant and good at finding fault. They often feel inadequate underneath. They control with threats, order, and rigidity. They can be loud or quiet in style and sometimes be a bully.

Players sometimes alternate or “switch” roles during the course of a game. For example, a Rescuer pushed too far by a Persecutor will switch to the role of Victim or counter-Persecutor. Victims depend on a savior, Rescuers yearn for a basket case and Persecutors need a scapegoat. This can be clearly seen in the example.

While a healthy person will perform in each of these roles occasionally, pathological role-players actively avoid leaving the familiar and comfortable environment of the game. Thus, if no recent misfortune has befallen them or their loved ones, they will often create one. In each case, the drama triangle is an instrument of destruction. The only way to “escape” the Drama Triangle is to function as an “adult” and not participate in the game.

Playing in this drama triangle can ultimately lead to a very stressful and lonely life . Over and over again the game is repeated, and there are never any solutions. Nobody grows as all the players are very stuck in the cycle of repeating their tired lines, all for drama.

FINALLY

Mental health is about growth, taking responsibility for how you affect others, recognizing choices, and being willing to risk mistakes. The Karpman Drama Triangle is a game played all too often in relationships.

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RELATED ITEMS

- **Getting Out of an Abusive Relationship**

Leaving an emotionally abusive relationship, needless to say, is very hard. However, as you embark on this difficult journey, keep in mind that it is not only necessary but also very rewarding. Whilst the first step to getting out is recognizing that you are in fact being abused, the second starts with a decision and a concrete practical plan on how you're going to do it. **This resource will help you:**

- think your situation through and help you draw a map for the journey of regaining your life.

- **How to Tell if You are in an Abusive Relationship**

Are you thinking you might be either on the abusing or abused end of a relationship? If you're *thinking* you might be, then you probably *are*! **This resource will help you:**

- understand the dynamics of abusive relationships
- recognize the signs of a potentially abusive relationship
- identify types of abuse