



INTEGRATE TO LIVE

Restore Resilience. Cultivate Community. Impact your World

Week 26 Transcript: Karpman Drama Triangle

This week, we continue our exploration of the Victim mentality as we do the deliberate work of becoming our empowered selves.

To help us deepen our understanding, I want to share with you a diagram developed by psychiatrist, Stephen Karpman, called the Karpman Drama Triangle. According to this dynamic tool there are Three Faces of Victimhood: the Persecutor, the Rescuer and the Victim.

Karpman places these three roles on an inverted triangle with the Persecutor and the Rescuer on each top point and the Victim on the bottom. His theory is that no matter which role we are playing on the triangle, they all will eventually lead to becoming the victim.

In other words, as long as we are on the triangle, and playing out these relational dynamics, we are being some version of our disempowered selves. Let's look at these three faces of victimhood.

Firstly, the Persecutor's motto is "it's all your fault". These are the blamers, criticizers and attackers.

When questioned about their behaviors they respond aggressively, claiming that their actions were warranted given the unsafe nature of the situation and they are justified to protect themselves. A lot of people who believe they are self-empowered are actually in the Persecutor role.

When we take a deeper look at blame it's often rooted in shame and is a way to release victimized feelings of helplessness through over-powering others. Persecutors need a victim, someone they perceive as weak, so they have a place to dump all their disowned feelings.

Next we look at the Rescuer whose motto is "let me help you". These are the caretakers and helpers. They get their self-worth from saving others.



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Because they are doing so much good for the betterment of all, rescuers often can't see they are taking power away from others in this role. They believe they are encouraging and empowering others, but are actually manipulating and controlling the situation for selfish gain.

When the rescuer moves into the Victim role they become the martyr. No one appreciates all they've done for them and they feel helpless to make things better for the other person.

Lastly, the Victim's motto is "poor me". These are the helpless, hopeless, oppressed ones. They need someone to rescue them, or someone to overpower them, to prove that they are weak and can't care for themselves.

They believe they don't have a choice, and that it's pointless to try, because nothing will work for them, anyway. What's ironic is the thing they resent the most is being reminded, by rescuers and persecutors, that they are inadequate.

This is when the Victim rotates into the persecutor role, but often through passive-aggression. They manipulate others into taking care of them or blame them for not taking care of them right.

We each have a specific primary role, but once we enter the triangle we'll rotate our way around it and play out every aspect. Persecutors and Rescuers believe they are better, righteous, have the answers, and may even judge the Victim.

Pretty soon the Victim resents being treated this way and retaliates in the role of the Persecutor. And, the person they're in dynamic with feels attacked and becomes the Victim in that moment. And, so the unhealthy triangle dance ensues.

An example of a common rotation around the triangle looks like this: From the rescuer position, I say "I was just trying to help", then I move to the victim position and say, "but they were rude and didn't appreciate me", so I become the persecutor and say, "so I had to defend myself and fight back."



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As it relates to the Power Structure of Self we've discussed previously, the Persecutor and the Rescuer are expressions of the Power Identity and the Victim is an expression of the Disempowered Identity.

The Persecutor and the Rescuer are in a power over position and have a one-up dynamic to the Victim. But, because of the misuse of power and unhealthy dynamics, all three aspects are operating from a place of victimhood.

So, the solution is...get off the triangle! Disengage from the dynamic. Take responsibility for your actions and reactions. Identify where you are operating in your power identity and your disempowered identity and practice relational connection from a place of empowered and resilient choice.

As you determine your primary role, know that you're not alone. It's important to understand that most of us relate on the triangle at many points throughout our day. The way to step off the triangle is to accept that we're not the victim in our story.

Be sure to download the action guide to support your process this week. I'm certain you'll have some new discoveries and I look forward to connecting with you around it all.