

KARPMAN TRIANGLE OVERVIEW

The Karpman triangle, a.k.a. the drama triangle, was developed by psychiatrist Stephen Karpman. It is a model of dysfunctional interactions. All roles have ulterior motives and payoffs. The journey round the triangle can be done with self or another, i.e. spouse, child, friend, co-worker, etc. or within organizations.

Victim (Martyr)

Thinking/cognition

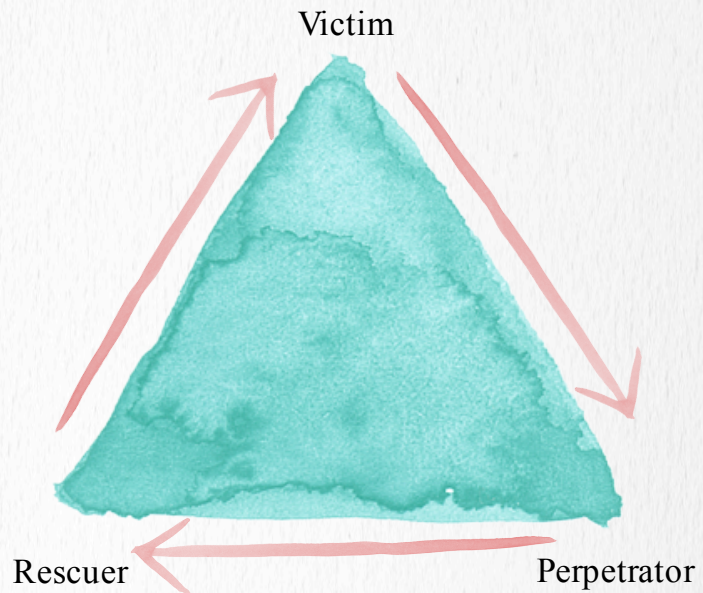
- I'm not OK, but you are, so fix me

Doing/behavior

- Uses guilt, sympathy seeking, pity to get needs met
- Acts out of a sense of powerlessness

Feeling/Affect

- Feels cared about, loved
- Avoids responsibility by blaming
- Feels helpless and trapped



Rescuer (Caretaker)

Thinking/cognition

- I'm OK, but you're not, so I'll fix you

Doing/behavior

- Seeks approval through helping
- Enable, care-take, people-please
- Fail to confront or set boundaries
- Be a SUPER-parent/spouse/worker

Feeling/Affect

- Feels saintly, superior
- Feels/seeks connection through helping
- Feels unappreciated
- Consumed with resentment

Perpetrator (Offender)

Thinking/cognition

- I'm OK, but you're not, so you need to do what I tell you

Doing/behavior

- Acts out of anger, resentment, revenge, sense of entitlement, shame
- Abuse: emotional, mental, physical, sexual
- Passive aggressive behaviors
- Criticism, teasing, shaming, patronizing, etc.

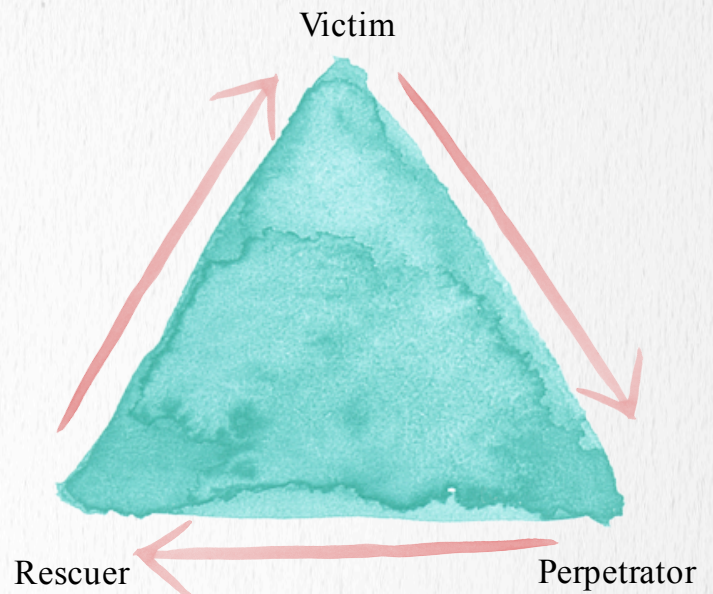
Feeling/Affect

- Feels sense of worth/power through offending
- Feels a sense of pseudo power and self-esteem by scaring victim
- Feels lonely
- Lacks respect from others and self

KARPMAN TRIANGLE DISCOVERY WORKSHEET

Questions to explore

- Decide on a relationship you want to explore
- What position are you in? Are you in all 3?
- Where are the other people in that relational dynamic?
- What story are you making up?
- Fill out your beliefs, actions and feelings for the position(s) your in
- Use another copy of this template to do the same for the other people involved in this relationship. Where are they? From what beliefs do they operate? How do they act? How Do (you think) that makes them feel?



Victim (Martyr)

Thinking/Cognition

Doing/Behavior

Feeling/Affect

Rescuer (Caretaker)

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Feeling/Affect

Perpetrator (Offender)

Thinking/Cognition

Doing/Behavior

Feeling/Affect

KARPMAN TRIANGLE THE WAY IN & OUT

The Way In – Through Shame

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience, that “I am flawed and unworthy of belonging”. Shame can cause us to enter the drama triangle at every point

Rescuer entry point: shame says “I am not enough, so

- Let me care for you
- Do for you
- Bake you cupcakes
- Etc

This correlates with shame shield of “moving towards”

Victim entry point: Shame says “I will never belong, so

- If someone doesn’t love me or like me than i must not be likeable or loveable
- I will never have what I need or want
- Why me? Poormee! It’s not fair!

This correlates with shame shield of “moving away”

Perpetrator entry point: Shame says ““I am unloveable, unlikeable, but

- If he only loved me then he would

This correlates with shame shield of “moving against”

The Way Out – Through Rising Strong

The Reckoning

- Walk into your story
- Recognize emotions and get curious about our feelings and how they connect with the way we think and behave

The Rumble

- Own our story
- Get honest about the stories we are making up about our struggle
- Then challenge these confabulations and assumptions to determine what’s truth, what’s self protection, and what needs to change if we want to lead more wholehearted lives

The Revolution

- Write a new ending to our story based on the key learnings from the rumble
- Use this new braver story to change how we engage with the world ultimately leading to transformation