

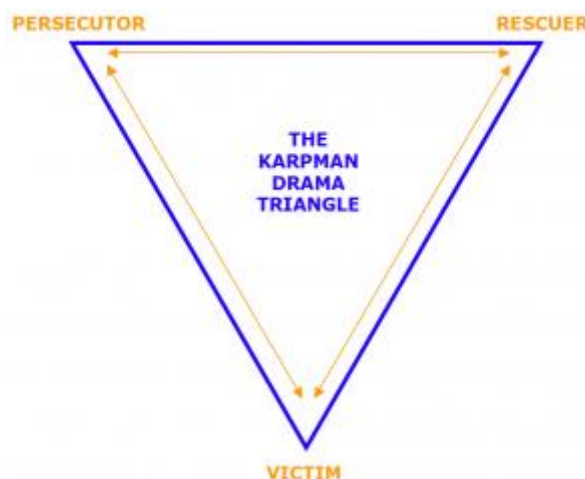
Breaking Out of The Drama Triangle

By Sharie Stines

Using the Karpman Triangle (also known as the Drama Triangle) as my guide, I have summarized a process of “recovery” from manipulative relationship dynamics.

In case you aren't familiar with the Karpman Triangle, it represents the dynamics of unhealthy and manipulative relationships. Each corner of the triangle depicts a role that people play in the game of a dysfunctional relationship. One corner is the victim (please help me); one corner is the rescuer (the over-responsible, controller); and the third corner is the persecutor (the villain, the bully, the superior one).

The victim usually “hooks” the other person into becoming a rescuer and if the victim role fails, the individual may switch roles into becoming the persecutor as a more overt means of accomplishing the goal. People often switch roles, playing each part, all in one dramatic interaction. You will often find these relationship dynamics in families with addictions and abuse.



(Karpman Drama Triangle; Source: www.choiceconflictresolution.com)

Here are some steps to take to avoid contributing to unhealthy interactions with others:

1. Realise that you are **repeating a pattern**. Stand back and observe your pattern. Most likely you are being triggered in some way, or manipulated by someone close to you. In order to change the pattern, you need first to identify it. Once you are aware of your part, play a different tune. Sing a new song. Don't do the same thing you have always done. Take a contrary action.
2. Under any circumstance, do not become defensive. **Keep a neutral attitude**. Even if you feel defensive (*especially* if you feel defensive) do not act from that mental state. Use a non-reactive, non-emotional, easy-going tone. Make statements that stop the conflict, for

instance, use terms such as, “Perhaps you’re right.” “That could be.” “Interesting point.” “Nevertheless...” Remind yourself to not get “hooked” into the drama.

3. If you find yourself feeling like a victim, learn to take responsibility for yourself instead of blaming others for how your life is turning out. Even if you truly are the victim, do not conclude that you are powerless to take care of yourself under the circumstances. Take the energy you feel about being victimized and convert it into **determination**. Resolve to yourself that you will figure out how to solve your problem without the other person’s assistance. This will help you develop your own personal power.
4. If you find yourself feeling like you’re taking on **too much responsibility**, back off, allowing others to take on their own responsibilities, even allowing others to fail if that happens. Sometimes others need to face consequences for their own decisions. Remind yourself that you are not responsible for other people’s choices – even if that person is your child. Also, realize that everyone has a right to **personal agency** – that is the right to determine their own destiny (God-willing). It is more healthy for a parent to let children learn the hard way than to jump in and fix everything for them. This goes for other types of relationships as well. Allow others the dignity to figure out their own lives. Remember that when you rescue others: you are sending them the implied message that they are not sufficiently competent to handle the matter themselves.
5. Refrain from the following: blaming, criticizing, accusing, lecturing, scolding, monitoring, threatening, preaching, obsessing, over-reacting, or under-reacting. Instead, focus on being neutral. Ask yourself, “How can I bring a blessing to this situation? Or, how can I be a soothing presence right now?” If the other person is unwilling or unable to participate in a healthy interaction, figure out a way to remove yourself physically from the encounter until a better time.
6. Remember the term **FOG**. **FOG** stands for *Fear, Obligation, Guilt*. If you feel any of those feelings, consistently, in a significant relationship, you are most likely dealing with a manipulator. You need to remember to **get out of the FOG**. Do not allow yourself to be manipulated. On the other hand, if you are trying to make another person feel consistently Fearful, Obligated, or Guilty, you are the manipulator and are not operating with emotional health. Be direct, honest, and live with integrity.
7. Realize that when a person is living in active addiction and abuse, you will not be able to have a healthy relationship with the person until he or she, too, is in a real process of recovery. If the person is a recovering alcoholic, he or she will be sober and working an actual program. If the person is a recovering abuser, he or she will be seeking help from accountability partners and will actually be introspective and thoughtful. If your loved one is not healthy, don’t think you can have a healthy relationship with that person. The best thing you can do is focus on your own emotional growth. Remember, **recovery is for those who want it, not for those who need it.**