

How to avoid being the queen of drama

By Mandy Lacy



With the seasonal pressures of money, family, the festive season, extra people around you and travelling, things can unravel.

When this happens we are likely to fall into role of 'victim', 'persecutor' or 'rescuer'. Actually, we are likely to take on each of these roles or patterns of behaviour at some time or other, whether it is with our loved ones, friends and family or our work colleagues, in different situations and dynamics.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Have you ever gone to help someone by doing something extra, being practically helpful or thinking they needed

something only to be told, "I knew you wouldn't do it right" or "I knew you couldn't help"? You then find yourself thinking or saying; "But I was only trying to help". This is a very good example of what is called a drama action. This situation starts by you trying to rescue a situation and/or someone but ending up in the victim role.

Or, have you ever noticed that if someone is critical (persecutor role) that you either feel picked on because you are somehow involved (victim role) or want to defend (rescuer role) the case?

At home have you experienced a situation where it seemed obvious to you that you

needed a hand and expected another person to help you (by reading your mind or interpreting the situation because you haven't actually asked for help)? When that help is not forthcoming you either launch into the persecutor role of, "you are no help at all" or the victim role, "poor me I am so tired, can't you see I need help?"

At work there are numerous similar situations between managers and staff. Managers typically start taking the persecutor and rescuer role, and staff taking the victim role. From this starting position the roles eventually get switched. For example, a manager offers to be lenient about the due report date because of the staff member's situation (rescuer role), only to end up being criticised by the staff member or their own direct report (persecutor role), leaving the manager feeling very negative or thinking that they were only trying to be helpful and considerate (victim role).

Most of us, whether we realise it or not, react to life as the victim at some time or another. Whenever we refuse to take responsibility for ourselves, we are unconsciously choosing to react as a victim. This creates feelings of anger, fear, guilt or inadequacy and leaves us feeling betrayed or taken advantage of by others.

Stephen Karpman drew what he describes as the Drama Triangle to show us that as the drama is played out people change roles and tactics and others in the drama also then switch to match this.

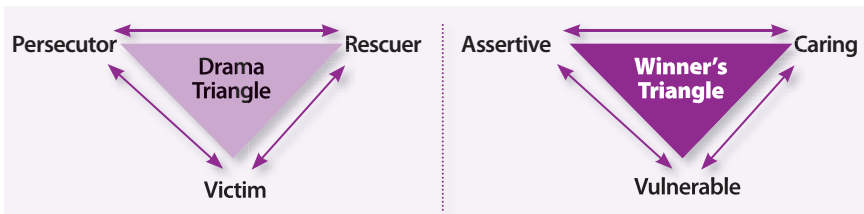
Overview of the Drama Triangle roles

The persecutor puts other people and situations down and has a 'better than you' attitude. This person can be active or very passive in response to the victim role.

The rescuer also has a 'better than you' attitude. They do more than their fair share, and doing things they don't really want to do.

The victim doesn't take responsibility for themselves, will often be overwhelmed by their feelings or even numb to them. They take a 'you are better than me' stance.

It isn't all doom and gloom, however. There is light at the end of the tunnel in the form of the Winners Triangle which gives us excellent strategies and actions to get out of drama situations.



Acey Choy developed the Winner's Triangle using the same structure as the Drama Triangle.

The roles of the Drama Triangle each have their equivalent role in the Winner's Triangle. Each of the three roles in the Winner's Triangle requires the development of a different set of skills.

The magic word and the difference is 'I' and it will move you from losing to winning situations. This may sound too simple to be true yet it has the most profound effect. Give it a go and see for yourself.

If you relate to the rescuer role think about and practise this approach: instead of assuming that someone or a situation needs your help and going ahead and just doing it, check it out by saying something like this; "I noticed that you are really busy, would you like me to help by doing ... ?"

Winning situations can be created. Any technique for when someone is feeling

vulnerable that encourages that person to get themselves thinking about options and consequences is valuable.

For those in the caring role the development of listening skills and asking for permission rather than assuming the person needs help will produce fantastic results.

Being in the assertive role is about using 'I' statements – asking for and getting what you need in an OK way.

Here are some strategies for keeping out of drama.

Be aware: if you feel you are being put down, put off, or are confused about what is going on, it is probably a drama situation. Often just being aware will change the situation.

Refuse to be part of the drama: it takes two for a drama situation to happen. If necessary excuse yourself and leave.

Steer clear of three person dramas: avoid

being in the role of persecutor, rescuer, victim. If you are out to get others, sooner or later you will be treated in kind.

Convert negative into positive: the ultimate pay-off for any drama situation is a put-down, whether to yourself, to another or to the organisation. Practise constructive ways of correcting problems and problem people.

Practise and see what happens. These techniques will help you enjoy the summer and those you are spending it with.



Mandy Lacy runs the Wellington company, Star Potential Ltd (www.starpotential.co.nz). She specialises in individual and group professional development,

professional supervision, training and organisational development. Mandy is qualified in the organisational psychology of transactional analysis (TA) specialising in the organisational field. She provides TA training and supervision throughout Australasia and runs a monthly training and study group based in Wellington. She is a certified PCM trainer for stress management and motivational behaviour.



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