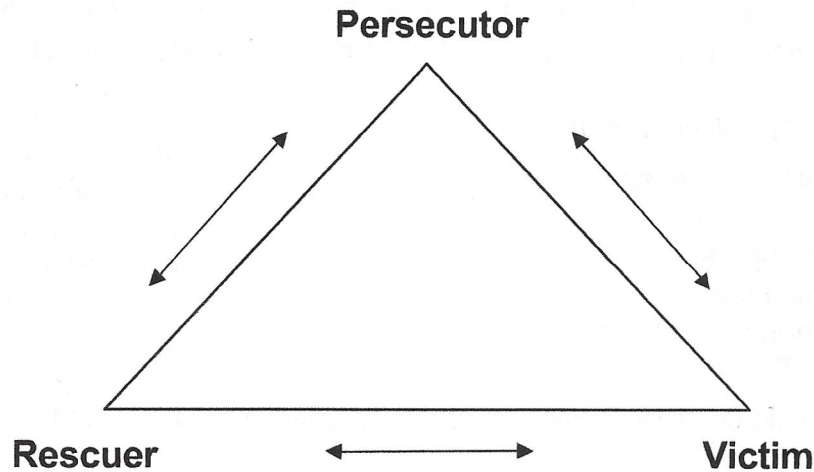


The Karpman “Drama Triangle”

The *Drama Triangle* shows the dramatic roles that people act-out in daily life that are unstable, unsatisfactory, repetitive, and *emotionally competitive*. Largely unconscious, these roles will generate misery and discomfort for all persons involved.



The *Drama Triangle*, first described by Dr. Stephen Karpman a pioneer in the field of transactional analysis, identifies 3 predictable (often unconscious) roles that people in problem situations can find themselves in. The 2-way arrows indicate that the roles can switch.

Example: Patty was staying with her friend Mary and Mary's daughter, Ann. One day a pair of Patty's earrings came up missing and she asked if anyone had seen them. Everyone said "no". Suspicious of Ann, Patty went into her bedroom and looked in her jewelry box. And, they were there! Patty took them back and announced where she had found them. Patty was clearly the **Victim** here (of Ann's obvious theft). And, the **Persecutor** was clearly Ann (the thief). Mary became the **Rescuer** by chastising her daughter, Ann. However, Ann denied taking the earrings and all the roles suddenly switched. Now, Patty was seen as the **Persecutor** (falsely blaming Ann who was now the **Victim**). Mary stood up for her daughter Ann, and became the **Rescuer**. Then, asked Patty to leave her home which made Patty the **Victim** and Mary the **Persecutor**..... and so the drama continues.

Such *Dramas* are so common in our society that we may not even notice we are in one, until the hurtful feelings occur. Karpman says you can tell when you are in such a *Drama* because you can see all three roles, how the roles can suddenly switch up on you, and how every person involved will feel upset. The *Drama* will continue as long as someone is willing to be "Victimized."

As Karpman puts it: "Win-lose always turns into lose-lose. A win in the *Drama Triangle* is always temporary". The (unconscious) purpose is to *act out* a person's Life-script, and maintain a psychological "advantage" in relationships. The switching that happens between the roles generates the *Drama* and the painful feelings that occur when people have hidden agendas and secrets, and then manipulate for dysfunctional personal advantage.

Without realizing it, a particular role can become a "*comfortable life habit*" for a person. For instance, someone who sees himself as a **Rescuer** may be drawn to become a nurse, doctor, or policeman. A person can learn to be comfortable with the *benefits* of being a **Victim**. A bully may feel a sense of power or security in his role as **Persecutor**, etc.