

The Three Faces of Victim

An Overview of the Drama Triangle

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http://www.lynneforrest.com/html/the_faces_of_victim.html

Whether we know it, or not, most of us react to life as victims. Whenever we refuse to take responsibility for ourselves, we are unconsciously choosing to react as victim. This inevitably creates feelings of anger, fear, guilt or inadequacy and leaves us feeling betrayed, or taken advantage of by others.

Victim-hood can be defined by the three positions beautifully outlined in a diagram developed by a well respected psychiatrist, and teacher of Transactional Analysis, named Stephen Karpman. He calls it the "**drama triangle**", I will refer to it as the **victim triangle**. Having discovered this resource some thirty years ago, it has become one of the more important tools in my personal and professional life. The more I teach and apply the victim triangle to relationship the deeper my appreciation grows for this simple, powerfully accurate instrument.

I've sometimes referred to the victim triangle as a "shame generator" because through it we unconsciously re-enact painful life themes that create shame. This has the effect of reinforcing old, painful beliefs that keep us stuck in a limited version of reality.

I believe that every dysfunctional interaction, in relationship with other or self, takes place on the victim triangle. But until we become conscious of these dynamics, we cannot transform them. And unless we transform them, we cannot move forward on our journey towards re-claiming emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

The three roles on the victim triangle are Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim. Karpman placed these three roles on an inverted triangle and described them as being the three aspects, or faces of victim. No matter where we may start out on the triangle, victim is where we end up, therefore no matter what role we're in on the triangle, we're in victimhood. If we're on the triangle we're living as victims, plain and simple!