



Issues in Coaching

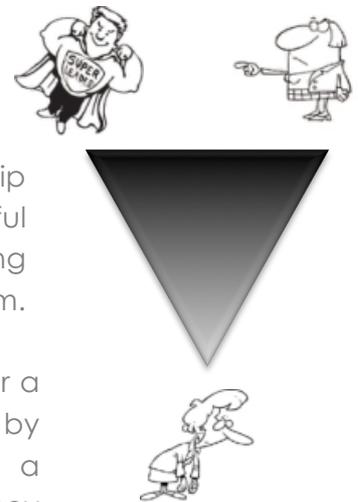
THE KARPMAN DRAMA TRIANGLE

The 'Drama triangle' is a common interpersonal dynamic where people unconsciously take up different roles in relationship to each other—Victim, Rescuer, or Persecutor. We can often see these roles played out at home and at work. These roles are defined in more detail over the page.

In coaching, the coach needs to be aware of this often dysfunctional dynamic and it can provide a useful lens for understanding the client's relationship issues. Additionally the coach needs to be careful not to step in the client's drama, particularly avoiding taking the role of Rescuer to the client's Victim.

Roles can switch rapidly and it is not uncommon for a Victim to become a Persecutor, often bolstered by the support of their 'Rescuer'(coach). Similarly a Victim can turn on their Rescuer (coach) when they feel they have been let down by them in some way.

A common sign that you have become a Rescuer-coach is that you are taking more than 50% of the responsibility in the coaching relationship and doing a disproportionate amount of the work.



The Victim



A "Victim" is someone who usually feels overwhelmed by their own sense of vulnerability, inadequacy or powerlessness, and does not take responsibility for themselves or their own power, and therefore looks for a Rescuer to take care of them. At some point the Victim may feel let down by their Rescuer, or perhaps even persecuted by them. At this stage the Victim will move to the Persecutor position, and persecute their erstwhile Rescuer. They may even enlist others in this. However, the Victim will still experience themselves internally as being the Victim. Ultimately the only way out of Victim role is to reclaim a sense of power and take personal responsibility for their situation and issues, e.g. by giving direct feedback to a Persecutor

The Rescuer



A "Rescuer" is someone who often does not own their own vulnerability and seeks instead to "rescue" those whom they see as vulnerable. The traits of a Rescuer is that they often do more than 50% of the work, they may offer "help" unasked rather than find out if and how the other person wants to be supported, and what the Rescuer agrees to do may in actual fact not be what they really want to do. This means that the Rescuer may then often end up feeling "hard done by" or resentful, used or unappreciated in some way. The Rescuer does not take responsibility for themselves, but rather takes responsibility for the perceived Victim whom they rescue. The Rescuer will often end up feeling the Victim.

The Persecutor



The position of "Persecutor" is synonymous with being unaware of one's own power and therefore discounting it. Either way the power used is negative and often destructive. Any player in the "triangle" may at any time be experienced as the Persecutor by the other player/players. However their own internal perception may be that they are being persecuted, and that they are the Victim. There of course are instances in which the Persecutor is knowingly and maliciously persecuting the other person.

Untangle and Grow