The Drama Triangle
(Steven Karpman, 1968)

**RESCUER**

‘Saves’ people he/she sees as vulnerable. Works hard, offers ‘help’ unasked for.

**VICTIM**

Overwhelmed by his/her own vulnerability. Doesn’t take responsibility for own situation.

**PERSECUTOR**

Unaware of his/her own power and therefore discounting it. Power used is negative and often destructive.

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Stop the Drama

**PERSECUTOR**
(Bully) to Challenger

“Your fault”
“You are not OK but I am, so do what I tell you”

- Critical of others
- Puts others down
- Blames and finger-points
- Keeps victims down

Move to Challenger with Clear Structure

State boundaries:
“I am willing to listen to your story for ten minutes.”

Actively listen:
“I am willing to listen to your problem without making it mine to solve.”

Make exceptions clear:
“I want you to keep your agreement. Please have it done by Tuesday.”

Provide choices:
“You can either keep your agreement or I will no longer be involved. You choose.”

**RESCUER**
(Saviour) to Coach

“You need my help”
“You are not OK but I am nice and will fix you.”

- Provides support when doesn’t want to
- Feels guilty and anxious if doesn’t rescue
- Feels connected when victim is dependent
- Rescuing creates sense of being capable
- Often expects to fail in rescue mission.

Move to Coach with Clear Support

Give the message:
“I care about you and I know you are capable.”

Do nothing that the other can do for him/herself:
“I know you can do this.”

Actively listen:
“I am willing to listen to your problem without making it mine to solve.”

State boundaries:
“I am willing to listen for twenty minutes.”

Provide choices:
“I will listen for fifteen minutes now or you may call back next Tuesday. You choose.”

**VICTIM**
(Helpless) to Survivor/Thriver

“Poor me, I give up.”
“So I’m not OK and everybody else is.”

- Feels oppressed, hopeless, ashamed, powerless, incapable and misunderstood
- Seeks to hook up with a rescuer to validate the above feelings
- Refuses to make decisions, solve problems, get professional help, do self-care or change.

Move to Survivor/Thriver with Problem Solving

State what you want: and take action

Keep Agreements: if someone helps, do your part by following through.

Ask yourself: “How can I get what I really want in a healthy way?”

Count your blessings: Acknowledge your strengths and what is going well.

Remember: You make you! And You’re stronger than you think!