

Victim to Victor

Part 1: The Victim Triangle and the Roles We Play

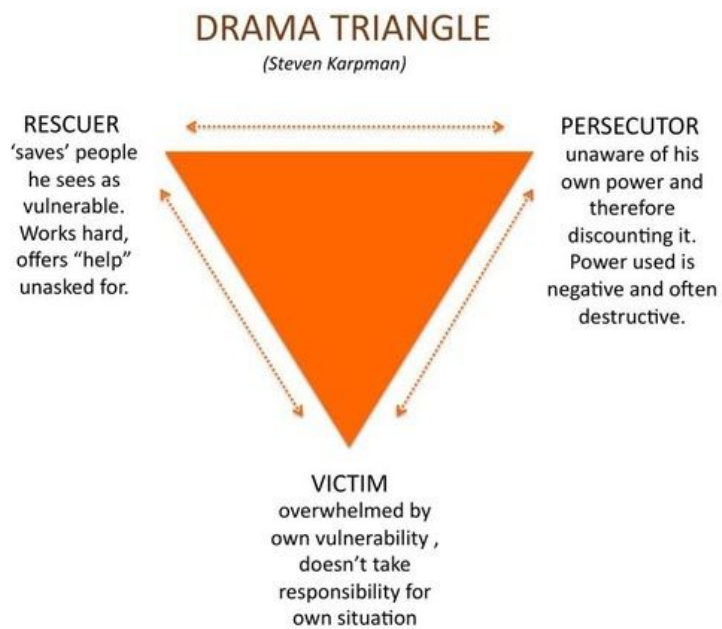
The Hero's Journey, Episode 24

April 26, 2020

Notes	
Summary	In this episode we talk about the victim and victor within each of us. We explore the victim triangle and the roles we all play. We learn about conscious actions to move out of the victim triangle and begin the journey of victim to victor.
Introduction:	It is a valuable truth to recognize that we all have within us both the victim and the victor. Experiences can trigger one or the other, but the bottom line is the one that ultimately rises is largely dependent upon our choice in perspective and our conscious, focused actions.
Main Points:	<p>How We Become a Victim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is actual victimization, in which to no fault of their own, someone can become victim to something or someone. We must first always recognize and validate that experience. Moving from victim to victor is not about denying that we were a victim, but about making the conscious choice not to stay one.• We may have experiences in life in which we are victimized. And yet, even without those experiences, we can move into the victim role simply because of our perspective. Because we have both the victim and victor within us, we have to consciously choose which one we will act from.• It is challenging to come out of the victim role, especially if we've had an experience in which we were victimized. It is difficult, but not impossible. <p>The Victim (Drama) Triangle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One of the reasons why it is so difficult was identified and explained by Dr. Karpman with his dynamic model of social interaction and conflict known as the drama triangle.• The Karpman Drama Triangle models the connection between personal responsibility and power in conflicts, and the destructive and shifting roles people play.^[3] He defined three roles in the conflict; Persecutor, Rescuer (the one up

positions) and Victim (one down position). Karpman placed these three roles on an inverted triangle and referred to them as being the three aspects, or faces of drama. Karpman, who had interests in acting and was a member of the Screen Actors Guild, chose the term "drama triangle" rather than the term "conflict triangle" as the Victim in his model is not intended to represent an actual victim, but rather someone feeling or acting like a victim.^[1]

- It has since been referred to as the victim triangle. It is such a powerful image to help us come to a full awareness of the roles involved and how we might play them.



(The information below on the roles in the drama triangle is taken from Linda Graham's (2017) work.)

- **Victims:**
 - The stance of the victim is "poor me!" Victims see themselves as victimized, oppressed, powerless, helpless, hopeless, dejected, and ashamed, and come across as "super-sensitive," wanting kid glove treatment from others. They can deny any responsibility for their negative circumstances and deny possession of the power to change those circumstances.
 - A person in the victim role will look for a rescuer, a savior, to save them (and if someone refuses or fails to do that, can quickly perceive them now as a

persecutor.)

- In terms of derailing resilience, victims have real difficulties making decisions, solving problems, finding much pleasure in life, or understanding their self-perpetuating behaviors.
- **Rescuers:**
 - The stance of the rescuer is “Let me help you!” Rescuers work hard to help and care-take other people, and even need to help other people to feel good about themselves, while neglecting their own needs or not taking responsibility for meeting their own needs.
 - Rescuers are classically co-dependent and enablers. They need victims to help and often can’t allow the victim to succeed or get better. They can use guilt to keep their victims dependent and feel guilty themselves if they are not rescuing somebody.
 - In terms of derailing resilience, rescuers are frequently harried, overworked, tired, caught in a martyr style while resentment festers underneath.
- **Persecutors:**
 - The stance of the persecutor is “It’s all your fault!” Persecutors criticize and blame the victim, set strict limits, can be controlling, rigid, authoritative, angry and unpleasant. They keep the victim feeling oppressed through threats and bullying.
 - In terms of resilience, persecutors can’t bend, can’t be flexible, can’t be vulnerable, can’t be human; they fear the risk of being a victim themselves. Persecutors yell and criticize but they don’t actually solve any problems or help anyone else solve the problem.
- “What gives the drama triangle much of its power and significance is the recognition that people will switch roles and cycle through all three roles without ever getting out of the triangle. Victims depend on a savior; rescuers yearn for a basket case; persecutors need a scapegoat. The trap is, people are acting out these roles to meet personal (often unconscious) needs rather than being able to see the picture as a whole and take responsibility for their part in keeping the triangle going” (Graham, 2017).
- When we have a need to keep the triangle going, even when persecutors and rescuers go out of our life, we will seek to find another to fill that role.
- Lynne Forrest (2008) believes that every dysfunctional interaction, with others and self, takes place in the victim triangle. Forrest (2008) stated that “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.”

- 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 in the triangle we're living as victims.
- “Our starting-gate position on the victim triangle is not only where we most often enter the triangle, it is also the role through which we actually define ourselves. It becomes a strong part of our identity. Each starting-gate position has its own particular way of seeing and reacting to the world. We all have unconscious core beliefs acquired in childhood, derived from our interpretation of early family encounters. These become “life themes” that predispose us towards the unconscious selection of a particular starting gate position on the triangle” (Forrest, 2008).
- If we are unconscious of the triangle, we re-enact these painful life themes that reinforce old, painful beliefs that keep us stuck in a limited version of reality.
- There is a way out of these roles and a way to live an expanded version of reality.

The Steps Out of the Victim Triangle:

- Step one is awareness and acknowledgement. Self-accountability is the only way out of the grid from any of the roles. In order to move forward we must take responsibility for our roles in the triangle and how we participate in the games.
- Step two is to consciously choose to stop participating in the triangle—to make a choice for change.
- Step three is understanding the cognitive distortions, unhealthy beliefs, and needy energy driving the unconscious playing of the roles.
- Step four is to begin challenging those cognitive distortions and beliefs and changing them.
- Step five is to practice the new thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.

Where to Begin:

- Start this week at just becoming an observer and identify the role or roles you might play. Look at how these have played out in your life. What are the negative consequences of maintaining the victim role? What are the benefits? (yes, benefits or payoffs that we will explore) And then move to step two to decide if you want to change this. We will dive into

	steps three and four in the next couple of episodes.
Lesson Summary	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. We all have both a victim and victor inside of us. At one time or another we have all reacted to life as a victim.2. Become aware of the victim triangle and the roles you play.3. Decide if this is something you want to change as the first step in moving from victim to victor.
Sources:	<p>Forrest, L. (2008, June 26). The three faces of victim – an overview of the victim triangle. <i>Lynne Forrest</i>. https://www.lynneforrest.com/articles/2008/06/the-faces-of-victim/</p> <p>Graham, L. (2017, July 24). The triangle of victim, rescuer, and persecutor – what it is and how to get out. <i>Linda Graham</i>. https://lindagraham-mft.net/triangle-victim-rescuer-persecutor-get/</p> <p>Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karpman_drama_triangle</p>