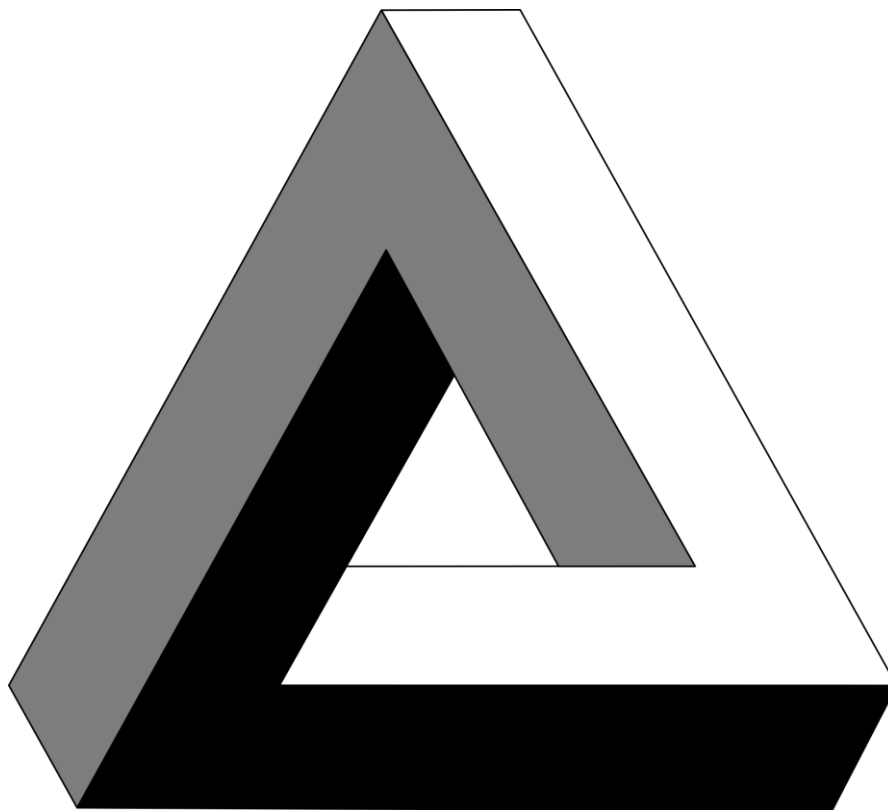




## Hand-out:

# From Drama Triangle to Winner's Triangle

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## Introduction

This handout describes the drama triangle, a concept developed by Steve Karpman in 1968 (Karpman, 1968). The drama triangle is a simple yet effective diagram from Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1957) that analyzes how people react to each other. The drama triangle shows what happens when our interaction is not effective or solution-oriented. We then get stuck in old patterns that we once learned. This can lead to situations in which we want to be right, get caught in a power struggle or where unconscious negative patterns come into play.

A solution for this can be found in the winner's triangle, which describes an efficient way of interaction. Acey Choy (Choy, 1990) developed this concept that offers an escape route from the drama triangle!

## Psychological games

A psychological game is a way of interaction based on unconscious patterns and automatism. This game is based on misapprehensions, misjudgments and the lack of personal responsibility. With this form of communication, you end up in a dysfunctional communication pattern in which no win-win situation is possible. The reason for this can often be traced back to the past when we were under the influence of parents, educators and other important people and events. Even then, we made certain choices that affected our personality. Most of those choices have done us good, but some of those choices get in the way of our authenticity. We adapted to the requirements of the world around us, to still get our pluses, love, appreciation and recognition. This happened on a subconscious level, which led to the formation of our character structure and behaviour. We take this with us into adulthood, allowing us to adapt well but also unintentionally adapting to our internal frameworks of the past, showing masks and not our true selves.

We ignore rather than acknowledge this and play our own game. With our favourite outcome: the one we recognize. That often equates to what we have learned about ourselves, the other, and the world. In this way, we maintain what is known to us and repeat the same patterns, pitfalls and results. We don't do that for fun, even if it sometimes seems like it. Most of the time, you are not aware of your behaviours and their effects. Often the present lacks the knowledge or trust to make contact from your authentic self.

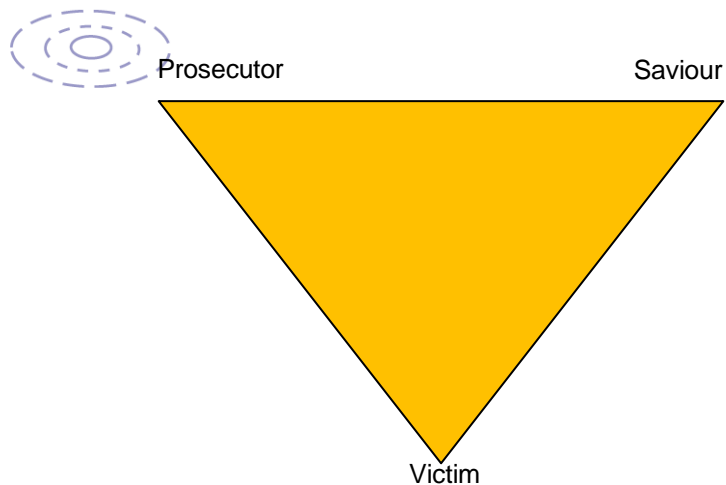
## The Drama Triangle

The drama triangle is thus a concept that can be placed over miscommunication, unpleasant relationships or interactions, in which two or more people participate.

When people get tangled in a drama triangle, they are in one of three positions:

1. Accuser
2. Saviour
3. Victim.

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These positions are capitalized to distinguish between real saviours, prosecutors and victims.

The three roles of the drama triangle are inextricably linked. Someone who is involved in this game usually starts from a certain position and will later end up in (or switch to) another role.

## Features of the drama triangle

- The roles depend on each other, the contact is not equal
- There is always a change of role
- You play the game with at least two people
- It has an improper character, every corner implies some form of disregard
- The contact does not lead to real solutions but to an "I told you so"
- The start can come from all three angles and someone often takes turns in multiple roles

## The roles

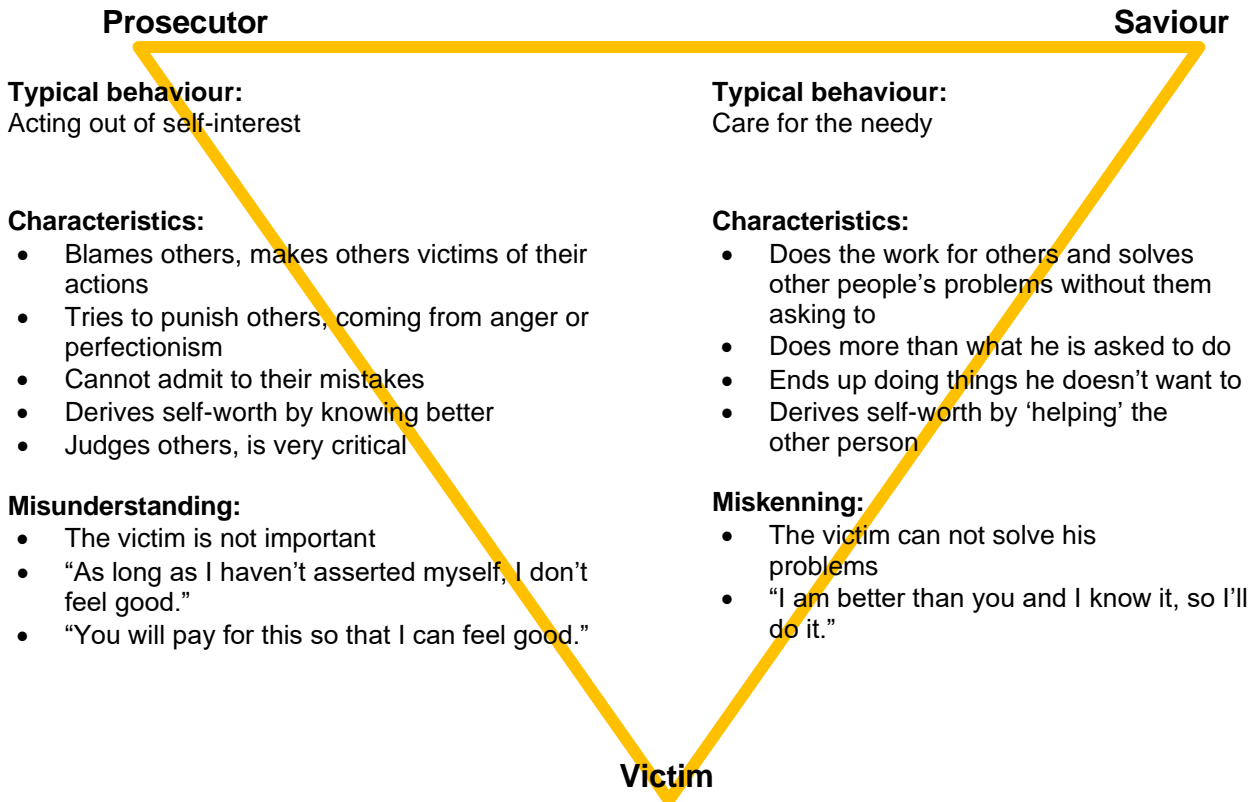
The Prosecutor does not take into account the needs of others and aims to provide for his own needs. The well-known know-it-all, who thinks that everything should be done the way he thinks it should be, and puts others in a bad light to have more power himself. A Prosecutor is someone who belittles the contribution of others and considers others to be inferior. To express his indignation or anger, he seeks a scapegoat and creates a Victim. He ignores the value and dignity of others and believes that what he thinks or invents is better or more important than what others do.

Saviours want to satisfy their own need to be superior by rescuing Victims. The Saviour likes to help others and gets a sense of 'being valuable' from it. The Saviour also sees the other as needy and inferior. He responds by offering help from a superior position. He thinks he has to help others because they are not competent enough to do something themselves, so he ignores the competence(s) of others.

Victims think that because of their inability to act properly, they are incapable. The Victim considers himself inferior and is not satisfied with himself. He behaves helplessly and insecurely and asks for confirmation or (un)consciously for rejection. Even though he does ask for help, he often does not want to be helped. He ignores his abilities and overestimates the abilities of others. A 'yes, but' is not unknown to him, so that what is offered disappears.

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## Drama triangle



**Typical behaviour:**  
Suffering and struggling, thus seeking attention

**Characteristics**

- Doet alsof hij niet in staat is om problemen op te lossen.
- Doet alsof de problemen onoplosbaar zijn.
- Gebruikt eigen capaciteit en eigen, volwassen denken niet.
- Doet alsof hij de middelen niet heeft.
- Vindt dat anderen hun houding moeten wijzigen om zelf tevreden te zijn.
- Hulpeloos, onvolwassen, kiest niet zelf is afhankelijk van de Redder.

**Miskenning:**

- “Ik kan het niet zelf, het lukt me niet, ik ben echt zielig.”



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## **Interdependence**

Sometimes a Victim will seek a Prosecutor to bring him down and have him messed with. Other times, he seeks a Savior to be helped, a person who confirms him in his own belief that he is not capable. He will then feel smaller and smaller because helpless help does not solve problems.

A Savior can only save someone if there is a Victim. A Savior creates a Victim by suing someone or can find a Victim near someone who is suing. These examples clearly show the interdependence of the different positions.

Usually, someone starts the game at one of the three positions and then switches to another. Examples of this role change are described below.

### 1. Prosecutor becomes Victim

The criticism of the Prosecutor becomes too much for the recipient, as a result of which the Prosecutor receives a hefty rejection, which reveals his defects. This changes his role from Prosecutor to Victim. "If it weren't for you, I would..." consists of the disregard for taking personal responsibility. The person who keeps shouting can suddenly turn out to be afraid and then become a Victim. Another option is the situation where the Prosecutor is on his own, the Savior will consider this "pathetic" and give him Victim-making feedback, such as "It's not easy for you either, you're lonely in your own way, I understand you". This turns the Prosecutor into a Victim.

### 2. Prosecutor becomes Saviour

The Prosecutor expresses his criticism and acts so unequally that it reinforces the inferior feelings of the Victim. The Prosecutor then turns into a Savior and agrees to solve the Victim's problem.

### 3. The Saviour becomes a Victim

The Saviour can turn into a Victim because he does not guard his boundaries. This can happen, for example, when he is constantly playing the following game: "I'm just trying to help you!". As a result, he becomes exhausted and goes down himself. Because the help is not accepted and the Saviour is rejected, the Saviour will feel unseen or unappreciated. He will fall short due to his urge to please others all the time, which will land him in the Victim role.

### 4. Savior becomes Prosecutor:

"Look how well I did my best for you, you are ungrateful". Rescuers turn into an accusing Prosecutor when an outrage comes along: "I've done everything for you and you still can't, what's in it for me?".

### 5. Victim becomes Prosecutor:

When a Victim is suddenly fed up, he can suddenly show a boundary from his pent-up anger. With a 'yes, but', the Victim first asks for advice and then dismisses all advice. If the Savior has run out of advice and no longer knows answers, the Victim sues his Savior. This changes multiple positions in the Game: the Victim becomes the Prosecutor and the Savior becomes the Victim.

### 6. Victim becomes Saviour

The Victim sues the other person and then goes to save that same person.

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## From drama triangle to winner's triangle

The Game stops when the misapprehension is refused, which can result in a solution, a clearly outlined situation or confusion. The lack of room for misapprehension is the essence of the problem. This can lead to an unpleasant situation where an appeal is made to the Game, but in which not all players play.

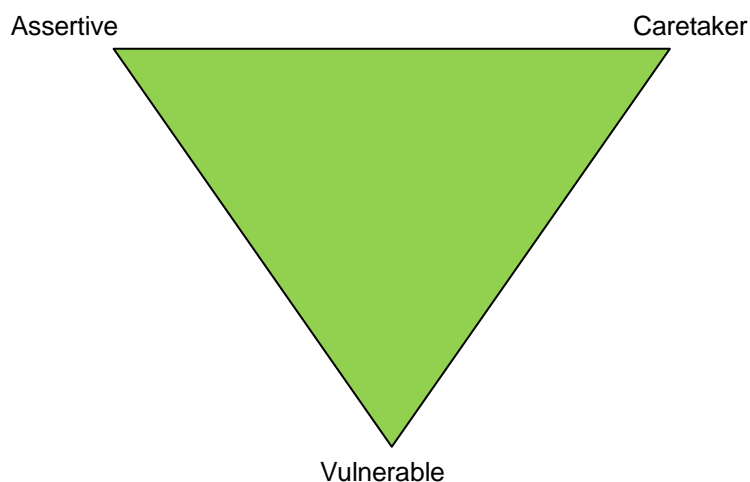
The answer to the drama triangle consists of taking responsibility for one's behaviour and confronting it with misapprehensions. Acknowledging what is and is not provides an opening and derails the Game.

The Psychological Game ends where the recognition of reality begins. Then there will be no more room for misapprehension. A way of good communication with each other and with yourself is shown in the winner's triangle of Acey Choy (Choy, 1990). There are three roles in the winner's triangle. Moving into other roles requires taking responsibility and developing skills. In the winner's triangle, you adopt a problem-solving and constructive attitude and work together. We'll go into that in more detail below.

## The winner's triangle

The winner's triangle again has three positions:

1. the Assertive
2. the Caretaker
3. the Vulnerable.





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## **Features of the winner's triangle**

1. The roles depend on each other, and the contact is equal.
2. You are with at least two people.
3. It has its own character, where each corner implies some form of recognition.
4. The contact leads to real solutions, to a pleasant or realistic result.
5. The start can come from all three angles.
6. Someone may be in multiple roles.

## **The roles**

The Assertive player is different from the Prosecutor.

The Assertive uses his energy to stand up for his own needs and rights. Even when this makes himself or others uncomfortable or confronts them. The Assertive sets boundaries and gives feedback to achieve the good. An Assertive is willing to fight for... instead of fighting against it.

The Caretaker is different from the Saviour.

A Caretaker respects the possibility that the Vulnerable can think for himself and has the opportunity to solve problems. A Caretaker does not take over from the other. They remain aware of themselves and their own needs and do not go beyond their boundaries to help the other person. A Caretaker does not think another person is silly or pathetic, but shows compassion. Moreover, a Caretaker is more confident than a Saviour. As a result, there is a willingness to be equal and to ask questions and really listen, instead of "knowing for the other person".

The Vulnerable is different from the Victim.

Vulnerable people continue to have access to the adult logic and do not sit back. In doing so, they make use of the possibilities and options that are offered. They take into account their feelings as a source of data. Moreover, they also continue to think for themselves. They are willing to show themselves and dare new things, instead of hiding.

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## Winner's triangle

### Assertive

#### Typical behaviour:

Acting from one's own or common interest.

#### Characteristics:

1. Asks what he needs.
2. Thanks for what he doesn't want, can say no.
3. Provides feedback and negotiates.
4. Makes the necessary changes.
5. Is a go-getter.
6. Is critical, but fights for good outcomes.

#### Acknowledgement:

1. The vulnerable is struggling
2. I want to achieve something and I am committed to that
3. Equivalence

#### Skills:

1. Assertiveness, critical, constructive.
2. Direct, clear, gives feedback.
3. Negotiates.

### Caretaker

#### Typical behaviour:

Caring for the vulnerable person

#### Characteristics:

1. Thinks along with others.
2. Does not do the work of other people but supports them.
3. Does what he wants and is involved in what others want.
4. Is caring and good to others.

#### Acknowledgement

1. The vulnerable can think and act for themselves.
2. Equivalence.

#### Skills:

1. Listening skills, empathetic, self-aware.
2. Involvement.
3. Takes good care of others.

### Vulnerable

#### Typical behaviour:

Vulnerability, struggling, finding something difficult. Needing others (temporarily or in partial areas).

#### Characteristics:

- Uses own knowledge to solve problems;
- Is aware of his feelings and takes them into account.
- Dares to be vulnerable.
- Looks for a solution.
- Takes risks.

#### Acknowledgement:

- I find it difficult, but I can do it.
- I (may) need support, assistance or help.

#### Skills:

- Problem-solving skills.
- Self-awareness.



## Skills for the Assertive, Carer and Vulnerable

Assertive skills for the Assertive:

- Stand up for yourself without accusing or punishing the other person;
- Ask what you want instead of demanding it;
- Say no to things you don't want or don't like and explain;
- Provide feedback on behaviour that is causing a problem;
- Explain yourself and your boundaries;
- Indicate how and what you want differently;
- Negotiate a feasible plan;
- If the other person doesn't want to change, look for a problem-solving method;
- Recognize that the other person's needs and wants are also important, just like yours.

Listening skills for the Carer:

- Listen, let the Vulnerable speak;
- Ask open questions;
- Do not offer help or solutions;
- Go into what is being said and ask further questions;
- Mirror and reflect the essence;
- Together, clarify the underlying emotional meaning;
- Ask what the other person wants from you, what they need;
- Have respect and show it for revelations;
- Do not spend more energy on the Vulnerable than he spends on himself;
- Provide feedback according to the feedback rules;
- Provide information.

Problem-solving skills for the Vulnerable:

- Use problem-solving formulas;
- Define the problem clearly and briefly;
- Be clear in the objective;
- Start brainstorming about possibilities;
- Consult your feelings and be open about them;
- Gather data and facts and put them next to the (sometimes irrational) feelings;
- Be aware of the underlying needs;
- Ask for a round of suggestions after the problem is outlined;
- Be open about your inner conflict;
- Be vulnerable, provide information about yourself
- Ask for help and continue to behave and feel dignified;
- Reject Saviours kindly but clearly and indicate what you need.

## In conclusion

You always have the opportunity to change, there is always a choice. In this handout, you will be given several options to come to solutions that are satisfactory for multiple parties and in different situations. But change requires courage and perseverance, while people are more likely to crave the familiar. The support and appreciation of others contribute to the feasibility of desired goals. A precondition is your awareness and commitment.

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