

# AN ADAPTATION OF THE VICTIM TRIANGLE

## (KARPMANN'S DRAMA TRIANGLE)

Adapted by Diane Clare, Mind Business Consultancy

The Victim Triangle is a means of understanding how we are invited every moment of everyday to feel victimised by situations as we interact with others. The triangle is shown on its point, suggesting it is in a state of flux as are our responses to others whereby we either remain mindful and present as adult to adult or we respond from a place that is likely to belong in old learned ways of responding, possibly from childhood. The bad news is that we are likely to find ourselves in this triangle just about any day of the week and at any time!



The 3 positions of the Victim Triangle:  
These are VICTIM, RESCUER or PERPETRATOR/ABUSER.

From early in life the person learns that they are not okay to be themselves so they adapt to the pressures placed upon them in the environment and cease to behave as their authentic self.

As a VICTIM we feel vulnerable and helpless and may respond in ways that elicit a negative response from others, which may perpetuate some unhelpful beliefs we have about ourselves.

The RESCUER feels like a more acceptable place to be for many of us while we are taking care of others, but often at our own expense, by absorbing the needs of others. I have renamed this position that of CARETAKER (taking care which is important to distinguish from feeling free to genuinely give care as the CARE GIVER).

The PERPETRATOR (or abuser) position seems powerful and may use power over the other but is still coming from a victim place, where the person taking this stance only feels better by getting one up on the other. This may lead to violence in a relationship or negating or invalidating the other person.

All 3 positions of the triangle are however those of victim: overtly helpless as victim or disguised as a care taker needing to feel better or disguised as a perpetrator or abuser who comes across as in control but is clearly out of control.

### ***EMOTIONS that lead us to this triangle:***

The primary emotions that drive us to fall into this entrapping triangle on a daily basis are:

**FEAR, GUILT AND SHAME.** These emotions have a function to protect us in various ways when the situation merits it. However very often when engaged in the triangle our fear or guilt or shame are old feelings that are not relevant to the present moment.

### **The good news is that there is a way out of this triangle & it takes just 2 steps:**

Step 1. Recognise and reject it as not relevant to the moment. Saying NO is a key skill to learn when mindfully noticing that you are drawn into the triangle due to emotions that are old feelings or old thoughts perhaps.

Step 2: Ask yourself 'what do I want right now?' This is a mindful question about the current moment and not about your entire life! So the skill is to notice, label the emotion as old and not relevant and refuse to accept the invitation to feeling a victim. Then you will need to identify & act in your present authentic adult self! This includes choosing to be a CARE GIVER but refusing to be a CARE TAKER.

