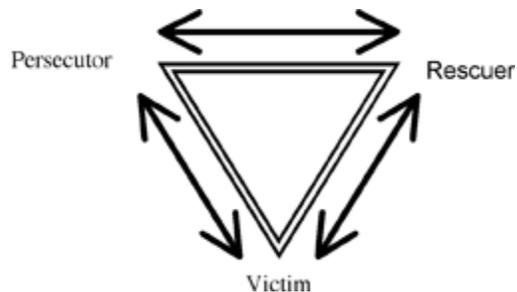


## Playing the Victim

One of the things that stops people making good choices is that they end up playing roles when they're interacting with others. If you're in a role, you can feel yourself falling back into ways of behaving that you don't really like - but somehow you do it anyway.

I want to tell you about three roles people end up playing - Victim, Persecutor or Rescuer. This is the Karpman drama triangle - when you're playing one role, you're in a "drama" with someone who's playing one of the other roles.



These roles are hard to avoid. First, because we've all been practicing the roles since childhood and it is very easy to automatically slip into them. And second, because they're seductive - each role seems to have a short-term pay off, even though in the long-term none of them serve you. Most people have a "default role"- the one they're most comfortable playing (for me, it's the rescuer) - and also a second role that they will commonly switch to (for me, it's victim). The "left over" role is the one people are most afraid of, and the one they get most easily manipulated by.

Which one strikes the strongest chord in you?

### VICTIM

Victims live in the "poor me" and "I can't do anything about it" space. They feel powerless and weak - and part of them loves that, because it means that they don't have to do anything. They feel persecuted and picked on, which means they can feel like martyrs and wallow in their suffering. For people with differences, this can be a common role to play. Victims attract rescuers and persecutors.

### RESCUER

Rescuers jump into "let me help you" and "I'll make it OK". They try and smooth everything over and keep things calm, which means there's no uncomfortable conflict. Doing all that rescuing makes you feel good - all those people really need you. They are often meddlers, but justify it with their "good intentions." Carers and parents of people with differences can play this role. Rescuers love to save victims.

### PERSECUTOR

Persecutors love to waggle the finger - "it's all your fault" and "you're no good, stupid." They use orders and threats, and often vent their anger - and of course they have to do everything because no one else is good enough to get it done. They use anger and shame-and-blame as tactics to stay in control. Persecutors love picking on victims.

Knowing about this role-playing can be the first step in breaking out of the "drama triangle." The goal is to be authentic and to choose how you want to be - in other words, not to be reactive and get sucked into playing a role that you don't really want to play. Authenticity means getting clear about how you want to be and as a result getting clear about what you will say "yes" to and what you will say "no" to... (and then, of course, saying them!)

Whatever role you slip into most easily, there are ways of stepping out of them:

- \* Victim: Begin problem solving. Understand that there are options for you to choose from
- \* Persecutor: Disengage! Step away from situation, and let others sort it out
- \* Rescuer: Take no action until requested. Don't be tempted to jump in and "just help out"