MODULE OVERVIEW

The drama triangle: Victim, persecutor, and rescuer

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Cy Wakeman estimates the average employee spends nearly 2.5 hours a day on “workplace drama”: tensions, complaints, and conflicts that go in circles. The Karpman Drama Triangle is its best-known mechanism: three roles (victim, persecutor, rescuer) that everyone takes on in turn, sometimes all three in a day, each with a hidden payoff. This module teaches learners to recognize the vicious circle in others and in themselves, especially since email and messaging speed it up.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Recognize the three roles by their signs: the victim’s complaints, the persecutor’s judgment, and the rescuer’s unsolicited help.

02 Understand the hidden payoff that draws people into each role: to matter, to be right, to feel useful or loved.

03 Follow the circle of roles (the exhausted rescuer becomes a victim, the irritated victim a persecutor) to spot it in time.

04 Stay especially alert in writing, where tone gets harsher and speeds up psychological games, and name the game to stop being its pawn.

WHO IT’S FOR

Anyone who wants to decode the tensions that keep coming back at work, including their own role in them.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1 **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.

2 **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.

3 **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.

4 **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.

5 **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Karpman Drama Triangle (victim/persecutor/rescuer) – Stephen Karpman, transactional analysis
- Hidden payoff of the roles – Afthonios method
- Written communication as an accelerator of psychological games – Afthonios method

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Stephen Karpman – drama triangle (victim/persecutor/rescuer), formalized in the late 1960s within transactional analysis, now a classic
- Cy Wakeman, “No Ego” – the average employee spends nearly 2.5 hours a day on workplace drama
- Acey Choy (1990) – The Winner’s Triangle, alternatives to the roles of the drama triangle
- Eric Berne (1961) – Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy

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