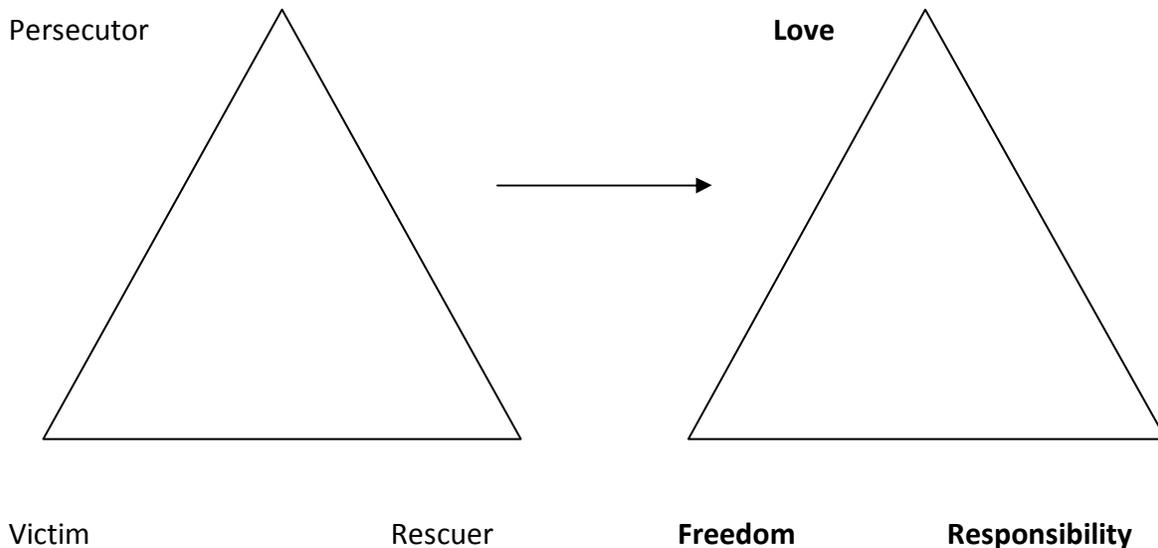


## Shifting Shapes: From Drama to Freedom



### The Drama Triangle by Stephen B. Karpman

The Drama Triangle helps us to recognize when we are living with unhealthy behaviors and undefined boundaries. Although we may change roles, usually we have a dominant role that is driven by our child part, the part of us that is largely led by emotion, reacting to what others are thinking, saying, and doing.

“People living within the drama often learned as children that the only way to get their needs met and to have some sense of control in their lives was to use their behaviors to manipulate others’ responses or reactions. These behaviors carry over into adulthood and are often practiced on a subconscious level” (Lifestar Workbook 4, p. 19).

“One of the best indicators that a person is in the drama is all-or-nothing thinking and all-or-nothing language, such as ‘You never...,’ ‘My whole life...,’ ‘You always...,’ ‘Our entire marriage...,’ etc. These comments are often emotionally driven and will usually fit into one of the three roles of the drama” (Lifestar Workbook 4, p. 20).

**Victim belief system:** I need someone to think for me, take care of me, solve problems for me. I am powerless and incapable. I feel defective and picked on and will prove to you that I need help. I will defer my responsibility to a persecutor or rescuer.

**Rescuer belief system:** There is goodness in caretaking and I am providing a useful service. I can’t stop helping even if I tried....they wouldn’t make it without me. I’m afraid of being abandoned so I work at being indispensable. I stay “one up” so as to hold onto my esteem. I can’t have needs.

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**Persecutor belief system:** I need someone to blame for my problems. I cannot be weak and am not responsible for... I have power over others and feel justified in my sarcasm, criticizing, or ridiculing. I'm afraid of feeling powerless.

### **The Triangle of Boundaries by Dr. H. Cloud & Dr. J. Townsend**

“Three realities have existed since the beginning of time: freedom, responsibility, and love. God created us free. He gave us responsibility for our freedom. And as responsible free agents, we are told to love Him and each other. Something incredible happens as these three ingredients of relationship work together. As love grows, spouses become more free from the things that enslave: self-centeredness, sinful patterns, past hurts, and other self-imposed limitations. Then they gain a greater and greater sense of self-control and responsibility. As they act more responsibly, they become more loving. And the cycle begins all over again” (Boundaries in Marriage Workbook, p. 22-23).

“The three legs of the triangle work when spouses are free to not react to the other, they take responsibility for their own issues, and they love the other person even when he or she does not deserve it. Free from each other, they give love to each other freely, and that love transforms and produces growth” (ibid).

“Love can only exist where freedom and responsibility are operating. Love creates more freedom that leads to more responsibility, which leads to more and more ability to love.” (ibid).

**Which leg of the triangle can you start to strengthen to day? Be specific about what you will do toward that goal.**