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ESCAPING THE DRAMA TRIANGLE PRACTICE SHEET

UNSKILLFUL

SKILLFUL

Shields others from the consequences of their actions. Feels needed, responsible, *attached*, powerful, or superior.

RESCUER PERSECUTOR

VICTIM

Aggressively blames, criticizes and dominates. Feels self-righteous, threatened, defensive, or angry.

Is unwilling to take responsibility. Feels powerless, overwhelmed, or hopeless.

Supports others in tapping their own capabilities. Feels supportive, optimistic, *non-attached*, and a sense of contribution.

Evokes or provokes the will to create in others. Feels clear, confident, centered, and committed.

COACH

CHALLENGER

CREATOR

Accepts responsibility and makes choices. Feels capable, confident, resourceful, and resilient.



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The Drama Triangle, is a widely acknowledged psychological model of human interaction that grew out of transactional analysis (“TA”) by Dr. Stephen Karpman. The work of David Emerald, author of *The Empowerment Dynamic (TED)*, introduced a revision of Karpman's work that describes antidotes to The Drama Triangle. The practice described below helps professionals intentionally shift their mindsets and behavioral approaches in order to optimize their performance. When identified with any of the three “unskillful mindsets,” a person can find themselves trapped in the Drama Triangle. These unskillful mindsets are closely correlated with unskillful emotional states. The opposite, when a person shifts into one of the three “skillful mindsets” associated with The Empowerment Dynamic, greater awareness & choices are available. These “mindsets” are fluid orientations or attitudes, not fixed personality traits.

MODE	EXAMPLE	MODE	EXAMPLE	
Victim		Creator		
The chief characteristic of the Victim mode is the unwillingness to take responsibility for oneself and/or one’s circumstances. When identified with this mindset, one feels “acted upon” by some outside force, powerless, overwhelmed, or hopeless.	Poor me... I’m not responsible...I can’t do anything about it...I don’t know what to do...Why is this happening?	VS	When in the Creator mode one accepts responsibility for themselves and/or their circumstances and becomes a self-determining agent. When identified with this mindset, one feels capable, confident, resourceful, and resilient. A Creator considers new ideas to solve problems.	
Persecutor			Challenger	
The chief characteristic of the Persecutor mode is the aggressive assigning of blame. When identified with this mindset, one feels self-righteous, threatened, defensive, or angry. A Persecutor may attempt to control by shaming, coercing, interrogating, lecturing, or being critical.	It’s all your fault... I do everything around here! What’s the matter with you? What were you thinking? Why did you do that?		When in Challenger mode, one provokes in others the inspiration to create. One feels clear, confident, centered, and committed. A Challenger often spurs others to make difficult decisions that cultivate new insights or take action that will lead to the development of new skills.	
Rescuer		Coach		
The Rescuer shields others from the consequences of their own actions. When identified with this mindset, one feels needed, responsible, attached (to outcomes), powerful and/or superior. Failing to see others as capable, a Rescuer thinks he/she must “fix” things, robbing others of the opportunity to learn from the consequences of their choices.	Let me help you...I’ll make it okay...Let’s not fight...I feel bad for you...	VS	In Coach mode one supports others by encouraging them to learn from their own experience and actions. When identified with this mindset, one feels supportive, non-attached, optimistic, and a sense of contribution. Rather than providing answers or trying to “fix” the issue, a Coach finds ways to help others tap their inherent capabilities and resourcefulness.	
				What is it that you really want? What do you see as your options? What might you be missing here? What can you choose to do to improve this situation?

PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Be sufficiently mindful of your own orientations in order to quickly recognize when you are involved in a “drama dynamic.”
2. Recognize which mindset you are identified with.
3. If you are identified with an unresourceful mindset, make the shift into the corresponding resourceful mindset using the action inquiry questions listed below:

MINDSET		
Victim	»»	Creator
Persecutor	»»	Challenger
Rescuer	»»	Coach

THE SHIFT
From reacting to choosing
From tearing down to building up
From telling to asking

THE QUESTION
What is it I really want?
What new skills is this situation calling for?
What can I do to support them in their own learning?