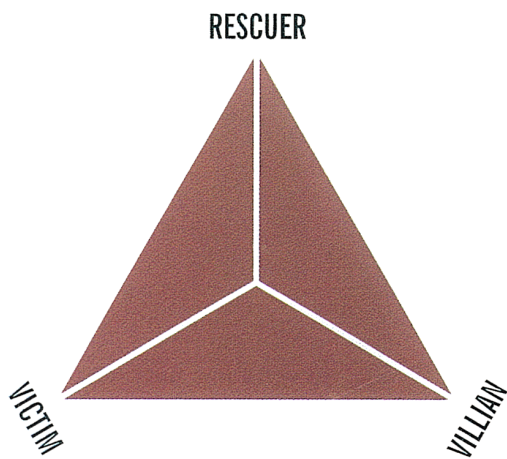


# Triangulation and the Misuse of Power:

## A Dance of Victims, Villains and Rescuers

Ted Dunn, Ph.D.



The purpose of this article is to identify ways in which all of us, especially leaders, can become “triangulated” amidst conflicts and what to do about it. We will explore the nature and composition of triangles as well as the conditions that lead to their development. We will look at the roles people play in forming triangles and how we might challenge these roles in order to minimize the development of triangles. Although this article is written primarily for those in leadership, all of us, as members of any work group, committee or organization, can profit from an examination of how well we manage boundaries while in conflict with other members of our organization, be it a health care or academic system, business or religious community.

When members of an organization fail to resolve conflicts in a direct manner, they often turn to one another or leadership for help. Sometimes, when we perceive we have been unfairly treated by someone, we seek relief by complaining to others, hoping that they might do something about it or at the very least be sympathetic. If we represent our injury as “unjust,” we will typically evoke an even more sympathetic response from our confidants. Indeed, when we portray ourselves as “victims” who have been unfairly treated by some kind of “villain,” would-be “rescuers” are all too eager to help as a result of their sympathy for us or outrage toward the villain.

If an organization suffers from an ever-increasing backlog of unresolved conflicts among its members and there exists a strong pattern of sympathy-induced side-taking, “camps” made up of victims, villains and rescuers may emerge. When members seek power and safety by joining camps where loyalties are tested along “we-they” lines, both the organization and its members are adversely affected. Conflict is a natural occurrence in any organization, and if it cannot be worked with directly, but is instead ensnared in such triangular patterns, the health of that organization and its members is directly jeopardized. The spirit of those who work to fulfill its mission and the collective spirit of the organization itself is put at risk.

The destructive power of triangles is worthy of our attention. Most of us, at one time or another, have been drawn into such triangles. Each of us have propensities to play certain roles in the process of triangulation, and it would behoove us to know what these are so that we do not unwittingly succumb to such roles and advance the development of triangles. Let us begin by clarifying our terms and exploring how and why triangles are formed.

#### WHAT ARE TRIANGLES?

*A triangle is any relationship between two people that is dependent upon a third in order to maintain the status quo.* Triangular relationships are ones that have the proverbial “go-between” who mediates the relationship for the other two people. They may do this consciously and intentionally and in a helpful manner, or they may be unwittingly drawn into the triangle and participate in ways that are destructive of others.

The so-called “matchmaker” is a good example of someone who intentionally forms a triangle. The matchmaker helps bring about a relationship between two people who, if left on their own, might not form a relationship. The couple is established with the help of a third person. Therapists, councilors, mediators, and the like can also form intentional triangles, helping to assist two people who might not otherwise make it as well on their own. Leaders and those in supervisory positions also, by virtue of their role, intentionally help manage the relationships of subordinates.

Some people, regardless of their role, get drawn into triangles unwittingly. I am sure you have had someone make the innocent request, “Would you mind telling so and so, such and such, for me?” Relaying messages between two people is a concrete example of

“When members seek power and safety by joining camps where loyalties are tested along “we-they” lines, both the organization and its members are adversely affected.”

a potentially nascent triangle. This can be normal and innocent, or it can become problematic and manipulative. Passing along messages that are clear and non-conflictual in nature is usually not a problem. We all do this. However, if in a *patterned* way a third party is doing more talking *for* the other two than they are willing or able to do for themselves, then this becomes problematic. When this happens, the dyad has become *overly dependent on the third person* in order to sustain the relationship and a triangle has been formed.

A common example of this can occur when parents stay together “for the sake of the children.” The children, in this instance, are the glue that holds the marriage together. Conversation is passed through the children who act as conduits or go-betweens (e.g., “Tell your mother that I won’t be home for dinner”). Worse yet is when conflicts are worked through the children (e.g., “Tell your father to keep his mouth shut”). Without the kids, the couple would likely not talk, and if they did, they would probably break apart. In effect, the parents are dependent upon the kids who are maintaining the status quo. The children, in this instance, are being “triangulated” by their parents. It is also true that children can triangulate their parents. They can go to mom or dad to help solve conflicts with their siblings. They will tattletale in the hopes that mom or dad will take care of the problem *for* them.

It is important to note that the third leg of a triangle does not have to involve a third person. It might involve a third thing, such as work, a hobby or an addiction. Two people can remain together because this third activity helps create a homeostatic relationship. When this third leg is gone, then the homeostasis breaks down. It is common knowledge among therapists and AA participants that when an alcoholic stops drinking, the marriage often ends. The patterned way of living between the alcoholic, the co-dependent and



the alcohol (i.e., third leg) had maintained a balance that is now lost without the alcohol. When the husband retires, the marriage can fall apart because the patterned way of living around his work (i.e., the third leg) is now gone. When the third leg is gone, a couple will need to find balance in a new way or they go their separate ways.

Those in leadership are especially prone to being “triangulated” and blamed for efforts to assist or intervene on behalf of others. Perhaps this is because they are at the top of the hierarchy, and, like mom and dad, are perceived to have the power to take care of the conflicts that others cannot or will not manage themselves. Too often people do not deal directly with the person with whom they have the conflict, especially if it is with someone who is perceived to have greater power, such as those in leadership. Instead, in order to garner power, they enlist the help of others to fight their battles. Members who are perceived by others as somehow more “fragile” or less powerful are often viewed as “victims” especially at the hands of leaders who have intervened in an unwelcomed manner (e.g., requesting someone to go to treatment or leave a position). “Rescuers,” believing that such a victim cannot possibly speak for themselves, will then come to their aid by taking sides against the perceived “villains.”

This is not to suggest that members cause the triangulation of leadership or are to blame. To the contrary, leadership and membership choreograph this dance together, each contributing their missteps to this deadly dynamic. Just as parents can triangulate children, so too can leadership triangulate members. Every triangle has three participants, and all three are needed to keep the system going. Furthermore, such triangulation is not merely a leadership-membership dynamic, but one that, if left unchallenged, spreads throughout organizations at all levels, member to member and leader to leader. *Triangulation exists at all levels of an organization to the degree to which individuals are unwilling or unable to address conflicts and tensions directly and, instead, rely upon third parties to do their work for them.* Let's take a look at how triangles are formed.

#### BUILDING BLOCKS OF TRIANGULATION

When a third person is drawn into a conflict between two other people, they are said to be “triangulated.” In many organizations and leadership teams conflicts are not well addressed. Despite the fact that

conflicts and tension are a normal part of any relationship, the ability directly and successfully to work through conflicts is a skill often lacking, even among managers and leaders. Conflicts are frequently avoided or erupt without resolution. Often the “superior” is drawn in to mediate the conflict of others. Indeed, he or she might even handle the conflict by telling the two parties *not* to speak directly. When leadership fails, or is the subject of conflict, human resource personnel, grievance boards or lawyers may be called upon to arbitrate and settle the matter. Sadly, many people in such organizations are more familiar with this kind of triangulation of superiors than they are with the encouragement of direct conversations with their coworkers, subordinates or superiors.

Despite the many pitfalls and potential problems that come with talking through conflicts with a third person, sometimes it is helpful to talk with a third person and sometimes it is not. Let's look at when talking with a third person might lead to triangulation, when it might be helpful, and what makes the difference.

#### Blocked Confrontation

Most people, if given half a chance, will have urges to avoid conflict (see Figure 1). We look high and low for reasons to justify our natural fear of conflict (e.g., “It's a bad time;” “It won't do any good;” “It will just make matters worse;” “They're too fragile;” “It's not that bad;” etc.). In this situation, when persons A and B, for whatever reason, begin to avoid addressing conflicts, the effects begin to build. Issues go on unresolved, and feelings fester. Resentments build, guilt and mistrust accumulate and become the building blocks for walls that create distance. People in this situation grow further and further apart. If left uncorrected, over time such a pattern of avoidance will destroy the relationship completely.

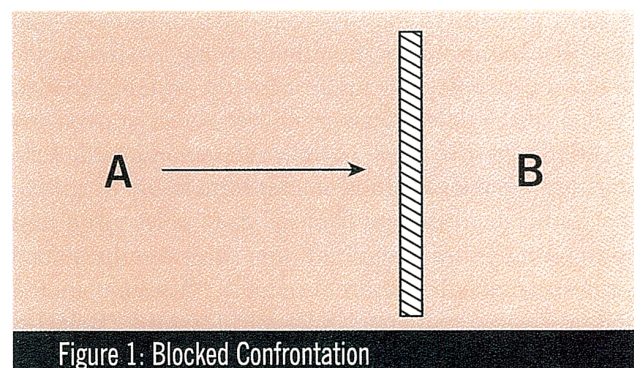


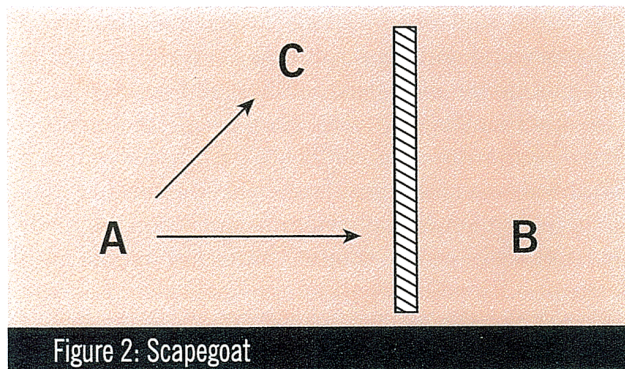
Figure 1: Blocked Confrontation



### Scapegoat

When a conflict between person A and person B is avoided (see Figure 2) and person A goes to person C *instead*, they are on their way toward forming a triangle. Person A is going to C to complain, or vent, but avoids dealing directly with person B. When the problem with B becomes the primary impetus and patterned reason for the connection between A and C, B is what we commonly refer to as a “scapegoat.” In other words, what A and C have in common is their common struggle with, or dislike of, B.

Under these circumstances, if B leaves the situation, what happens? If B leaves, A and C will either end their relationship (having nothing more in common) or

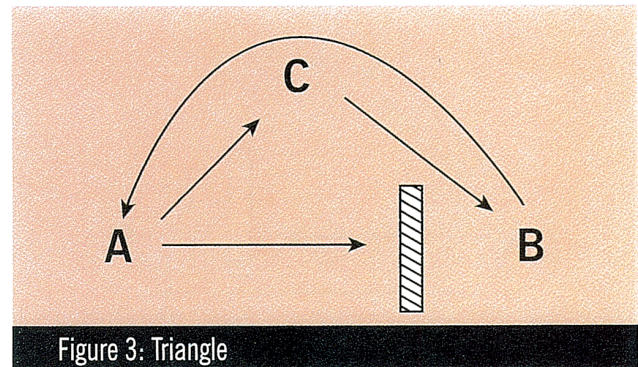


find another scapegoat around which to keep their relationship going. Alternatively, the loss of equilibrium might evoke a transformation of their relationship so that it becomes one based upon more healthy reasons for A and C to stay together other than the common dislike of someone else.

### The Triangle

In Figure 3, person A has a conflict with B, but is avoiding it. Instead, A goes to C (e.g., the superior). Because A refuses to go to B, person C goes to B in order to help resolve the situation for A. However, after talking with B, person B shares a whole other side of the story, but still refuses to talk with A, so person C goes back to A to explain B's position and feelings. Back and forth person C goes, but A and B continue to avoid one another. Under these circumstances, C is working harder than either A or B to hold their relationship together!

If you have trouble following this, then my point is made. This situation is very confusing. The point is that person C has been triangulated and has become *over-*



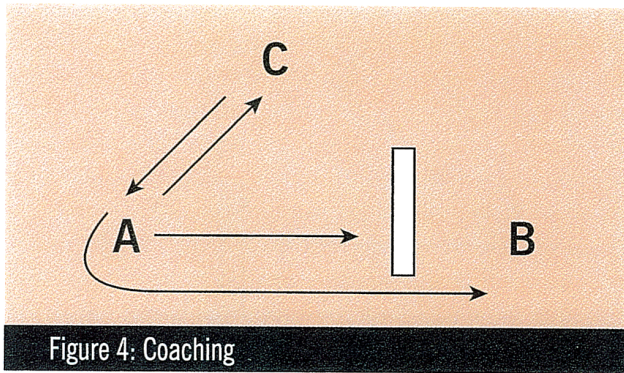
*ly responsible* for maintaining the relationship between persons A and B. Persons A and B are not doing their own work on the relationship, and as soon as C steps out of the picture their relationship will either fail, find another person around which to triangulate or transform and develop on its own merits.

Remember that, although leadership is frequently in the rescuer position, triangles do not have to involve leadership and can exist within and across any level of an organization. Moreover, all who play a part in triangles are responsible for keeping it going, and these roles are interchangeable. A victim, once elevated in power, can easily become the rescuer or the villain (i.e., the oppressed becomes the oppressor). The rescuer, once fallen from power, can easily become a victim or villain. A villain, once vindicated, can become the rescuer or the victim. As such, a triangle is a *system* that has a homeostasis unto itself. Each part is dependent upon the others to exist (i.e., a victim needs a villain to stay a victim) and if one part changes, the others tend to exchange roles in order keep it going (or the system transforms or ends).

### Coaching

While coaching (see Figure 4) looks similar to the “Scapegoat” situation (see Figure 2), there are some important differences. In Figure 4, A is in conflict with B and initially *chooses* not to deal directly. Instead, he or she goes to C. However, A goes to C not to complain or gain sympathy and leave it at that, but to sort out what to do in order to deal more responsibly and effectively with B. In other words, A goes to C for some coaching, advice and to sort things through. This is a good use of confidants, consultants or other resources. After A talks with C about it, he or she goes and deals directly with B.





Seeking consultation in order to improve your chances of resolving an otherwise irresolvable conflict is a constructive and responsible step to take. Coaching is a helpful way to involve a third person, especially if the third person is a professional helper outside of the relationship (e.g., therapist, coach, spiritual director, etc.), and ought not be something we are made to feel guilty about or prevented from doing. In these circumstances the boundaries are clear, and such “confidential” relationships do not have to be divulged to person B. However, if the third person happens to be a mutual friend or co-worker, there are potential pitfalls. Choosing to consult with a mutual friend or co-worker may be the only or best option. However, in most circumstances it would behoove person A to acknowledge to person B his or her conversation with their mutual friend or co-worker. In this way the boundaries are clean (i.e., no secrets), there is no dishonesty, and the conflict is dealt with in a direct manner after responsible preparation by person A. If such consultation is kept secret, the risk of causing more mistrust becomes greater.

In either case, whether being told of such consultation directly or discovering it indirectly, person B will likely have reactions (though these would be worse if he or she discovered it). Such reactions ought to be seen as normal and are to be expected. When you choose to talk with a mutual friend or co-worker, and this may be the best thing to do at times, be prepared to deal with the consequences of your choice. Even with your best intentions, person B may be more mistrusting, angry or embarrassed, and you will need to work this through. Nonetheless, having your friend or

co-worker upset with you *because you sought help to better the relationship* may be the better consequence to choose, than remaining at an impasse in a relationship without such consultation.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF TRIANGLES AND CAMPS

Undoubtedly, there are a multitude of conditions and factors that lead to the formation of triangles. However, at the risk of oversimplifying, I would like to highlight two broad conditions that I believe are primarily involved.

#### Conflict Avoidance

As a consultant who provides training for leadership teams and organizations to learn skills of confrontation and conflict resolution, I am convinced that triangles are the most destructive of all boundary problems and that these develop when *people choose not to deal directly with their conflicts with others*. Such conflict avoidance occurs for a variety of reasons (e.g., fear of reprisal, mistrust, believing “it won’t do any good,” etc.). Certainly, people choose a variety of ways to avoid dealing with conflict (e.g., suppression, denial, drinking, etc.), but the involvement of other people through triangulation is commonplace. *The root cause of triangulation is conflict avoidance.*

Over the years of providing training in conflict resolution, I would ask groups for their uncensored association to the word “confrontation.” With colorful descriptions and without exception, our collective association to this word *confrontation* is that it is bad, wrong, ugly and sinful. Our parents, teachers, religious educators and, most importantly, our experiences have taught us this. Most of us have been taught what *not* to do with our anger and conflicts, rather than what we can do constructively to resolve them. We have simply not been taught skills of confrontation by our parents or teachers. It should not be surprising, then, that conflict avoidance is, unfortunately, the norm.

Since we are ill-equipped and have been taught to avoid conflict, it is not hard to understand why we deal with our consternation and angst either internally (e.g., brooding, ruminating, eating, exercising, repressing, denying, etc.) or externally through the help of others. When we seek the help of others in the form of sympathy, consolation and support via “agreement” of like-minded friends and associates, then triangles become ripe for formation.

## The Power of Camps

When triangulation plays out in organizations, “camps” are formed. “We-they” lines are drawn, and people are placed in certain camps according to perceived loyalties and associations. Triangles are the elemental building blocks, and triangulation is the rudimentary engine for the formation of camps. Groups of victims and rescuers align themselves against perceived villains, creating camps. There is safety in numbers, and these alliances stick together as a way to garner power and exert influence that they cannot otherwise exert. Triangles, and their derivative camps, arise because people do not handle their conflicts directly. Camps exist for one purpose and that is for *people to wield power beyond their ability to claim it through legitimate channels*.

Victims and rescuers resort to such informal structures (camps) because, for whatever reason, the formal structures of an organization have failed to provide them (or they have failed to exert themselves) with the kind of influence they need or think they deserve. The silent majority prefers the comfort of anonymity, hiding behind the voices of “others” (e.g., scapegoats and martyrs). Conflicts go underground and cannot be openly or successfully addressed. The formal structures and channels are no longer used or trusted as venues for the *real* conversations, nor for overt influence. As a result, power is covertly expressed, and the entire organization becomes disempowered because legitimate power cannot be properly channeled, harnessed and used for the sake of the organization’s mission.

Thus, there are two general conditions that give rise to the formation of triangles: 1) conflict avoidance; and, 2) a covert attempt to garner power through others. Let’s take a look at some of the specific motivations behind each of the three roles of the triangle, victims, villains and rescuers, since an understanding of these roles is key to understanding how to prevent or ameliorate triangular relationships.

## THE ROLES WE PLAY

Triangles exist because of how people see themselves (victim, villain, rescuer), how they view power and how they approach conflict. We have all, at one time or another, been in the role of victim, villain and rescuer. It is important to note that only when these perceptions and approaches to life become *repeated patterns* of relating and central to our *identity* do these

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roles become more fixed and do our propensities to be involved in triangles grow stronger.

## Victims

People who believe that life is unfair, that they have no choice in matters and that others control them, tend to see themselves as victims. They see themselves as “stuck” in circumstances rather than seeing the choices before them and owning the choices they make (even if their choice is to stay stuck). They tend to say things like, “I can’t” instead of “I won’t” and refuse to see themselves as free agents. They feel so wronged by the villainous action of another that they need their friends and family to rally around them in sympathy and solidarity against the offender. *Being neutral is not enough and loyalty demands that you take their side.*

If you have ever been “betrayed” in a relationship, “fired,” sexually, physically, verbally or emotionally “abused,” then you know what it feels like to be “victimized.” All of us, at one time or another, have been victimized by some kind of injustice. Understandably, we want our family and friends to support us with sympathy and occasionally to stand up for us. But when such personal injustices seem to occur repeatedly, and we begin to take on the “woe is me” orientation toward life (e.g., *life is unfair, there is nothing I can do about it, etc.*), we begin to see our identity as that of “victim.” This becomes a defining characteristic of who we are. When it keeps us from growing and making responsible choices, or when it is the basis around which we form relationships in our lives, seeking out friends because they will protect us from those who might harm us, then we are on the road toward becoming a “victim.”

Victims avoid conflict like the plague. They do not believe that they have any power to influence others. The primary way they choose to protect themselves and



**“Sometimes, with good intentions, we do for others what they could be doing for themselves; we protect them from the consequences of their actions; we minimize real problems, and, in so doing, we do more harm than good.”**

exert influence is by garnering power through the assistance of others who are more capable. They may seek an attorney, therapist, a group of sympathetic friends, not just once in awhile, but over and over, to help give voice to their cause when they feel injured. They seek the help of others to exert power on their behalf and to take care of matters for them.

### Rescuers

Those of us who are full of compassion and have a propensity to solve problems and fix things for others, to advocate for the underdog, or to fight against injustices are prone to becoming rescuers. The hallmark difference between someone who is constructively helping others and someone who is a rescuer is that rescuers rescue because they need to, not necessarily because it is needed by the one being rescued. Rescuers need constantly to be helpful. It is part of their identity. They move into action repeatedly because of an outpouring of sympathy toward the plight of others or a great need to fight against injustice.

At one level these are admirable traits. Those who fight for social justice, those in the helping professions who have an abundance of compassion, those who show mercy toward another even when they have been injured by that same person, are the very people society holds up as “good.” Justice, compassion, and mercy are virtues. However, these traits become less virtuous, even destructive forces, when we are compelled to *do for others what they can or ought to do for themselves*. These propensities, while well-intentioned, are destructive when we protect others from the consequences of their own actions and consequently prevent them from learning.

Parents who cannot discipline their children because they love them too much to let them incur

appropriate, albeit painful consequences for bad behavior (e.g., being grounded) are not being loving in a mature sense of the word. They are not helping their children to grow, to take responsibility for their actions, to experience the very pain that might cause one to change one’s behavior. They are enabling irresponsible behavior. The boss who protects subordinates from the consequences of their actions is making the same error.

Co-workers may show mercy to “friends” who repeatedly get into trouble for irresponsible drinking (or gambling) by fixing the damage done, consoling them or minimizing the problem. In the name of mercy, compassion or friendship they would rather ease their friend’s pain than confront them with the real life-damaging effects of their destructive behavior and challenge them to seek treatment. When such behavior is repeated over time, it makes a mockery of mercy and enables another’s disease or problems to continue unchecked.

*When we treat others as if they were cripples, we cripple them.* Sometimes, with good intentions, we do for others what they could be doing for themselves; we protect them from the consequences of their actions; we minimize real problems, and, in so doing, we do more harm than good. Sometimes, out of *our need* to help, we disempower others rather than empower them. We prevent them from taking personal responsibility rather than enable them to do so.

### Villains

Those of us who are seen by others as “intimidating,” who are presumed to take power and voice away from others, are often labeled villains. We are not given this exact label, of course; rather we are called “domineering,” “controlling,” “crazy,” a “bitch,” “hierarchical,” “exclusive” and other pejorative labels of our day. We, who are seen by others as having injured them “unjustly” or “abused” them wrongly, are seen as villains, as “evil-doers.” Victims need sympathy, and rescuers need to justify their actions; so we demonize others who have harmed us. The more we can dehumanize them, the easier it becomes to vilify and act against them in ways that exempt us from any possible reproach.

Most of us do not want to play the part of villain. We are given these attributes by others who need to be excused for their actions and find someone else to blame (e.g., “Your demanding boss is the problem not you.” “Your obnoxious co-worker is the problem, not you”). Rescuers and victims need a villain, or they

could not carry out their role.

This is not to say that villains are completely innocent or do not participate in some way in earning the label. Some people are domineering and controlling and will be judged accordingly. Some people are abusive in their use of power, and villains get something out of being a villain, no matter how ruinous to their reputation. Whether the term is earned in some small way and exaggerated by others, or whether there has been obvious abuse of others, the key to becoming a villain is that acting abusively becomes a patterned way of interacting over time, perceived to be part of one's identity. A "reputation" is born, and this person becomes ripe for involvement in triangular dynamics.

#### SUGGESTIONS TO DEAL WITH TRIANGULATION

In order to minimize your risk of participating in triangles, or to help your organization or leadership team reduce such risk, there are a number of constructive efforts you might want to consider.

##### **Recognize the role you and others tend to play**

What part of the triangle are you most prone to playing, rescuer, victim, or villain? If you know your propensity and the potential pitfalls, you can be more vigilant and make better choices. Do you have, or know anyone in your organization, with such reputations? If you can recognize the role that you or others are playing, then you will be better able to challenge and change the dynamics at play.

**Rescuer:** What's the difference between someone who helps and someone who rescues? Many like to root for the underdog, but if you are someone who, in a *patterned* way, finds yourself rescuing others, being a voice for the voiceless, championing the causes of others, then you might wish to reflect upon whether you are enabling or preventing growth on their part. Are you protecting them from responsibilities they ought to take, or are you helping them grow stronger in their efforts? Are you rushing in to help because you cannot stand the thought of not helping (i.e., it is meeting *your* need) or are you asking them if they want help in the first place and, if so, what kind (i.e., meeting *their* needs)? Do you know others who have this tendency?

**Victim:** Do you tend to see yourself as a victim when you are in conflict or have been injured? Do you

*"Are you rushing in to help because you cannot stand the thought of not helping (i.e., it is meeting your need) or are you asking them if they want help in the first place?"*

often say or think to yourself things that suggest you have no choice or power (e.g., *"I have no choice."* *"Whatever they want to do is fine with me."* *"It doesn't matter what I say, they're going to do whatever they're going to do."* etc.). Do you choose your friends because they will side with you, take care of you or avoid confronting you? Do you know others who exhibit this pattern of relating?

**Villain:** Even when you play the unwanted role of villain, perhaps there is something you are doing that spurs this on. Perhaps you begin as a rescuer, but go overboard and insist upon helping. This can create "hostile dependency" (i.e., a build-up of resentment by those who feel trapped in a dependency relationship). Once idealized and needed, you now fall from the pedestal and are seen as the villain. You can be seen as too controlling or domineering.

Consider how well you share power with others. Perhaps when you are upset and in conflict, you tend to "blame" others and have difficulty acknowledging your contribution to the problems. These edges in your personality can make you prone to being targets of others. Do you see this in yourself or in others?

##### **Redirect conversations**

If you can recognize how you might be triangulated and how others participate, you can begin to redirect conversations that are triangular in nature. Challenge would-be victims who seek your support and who insist that you agree with them. Rather than enable helplessness, offer to coach them or to refer them to someone who can. Help them find constructive and personally responsible ways to address whatever conflicts they are encountering. Offer empathy rather than outright agreement (if you don't agree). Rather than take their side against another, side with their healthy efforts to take personal responsibility.



With would-be rescuers, challenge them to examine whose need is really being met. Encourage them to ask the other if they even want help and, if they do, what kind of assistance they need. Encourage them to refrain from doing more for others than they can do for themselves, and help them recognize how disempowering this might be. Encourage them not to take sides as a show of support, but to help by allowing the other to grow stronger.

Challenge villains to look at the grain of truth that might be found in the accusations that are exaggerated. Support them by helping them see how they might unwittingly be playing into the hands of potential rescuers and victims. Help them find a way out of the role that perpetuates their being charged as a villain. Help all persons involved in ways that foster direct, honest and open conversation in an effort to resolve their differences.

### **Learn skills of confrontation and educate your organization or community**

What do you do when you are hurt by or angry with someone with whom you live or work? Do you address it directly or find other ways to manage the pain? Triangles are a way to deal with conflict indirectly and to exert power covertly. The primary antidote to the proliferation of triangles is to learn ways to use power and handle conflicts directly and constructively.

From years of training people in these skills I will tell you that the hardest part of gaining these skills is the unlearning of old habits. The skills of confrontation and conflict resolution are not terribly difficult to learn, but one-time workshops or reading a book will not create the kind of change that is substantive or lasting. Training with the help of a coach, therapist or a program *over time* is essential because years of forming unhelpful habits and attitudinal barriers get in our way and need to be challenged not just once, but repeatedly in order to change.

Ideally, the best way for an organization to extricate itself successfully from perpetual problems with triangulation is for each and every member *to find their voice so that they do not have to rely on someone else to speak for them; to learn skills for handling conflicts directly; and to clear up boundaries that are confusing, dysfunctional or encouraging of triangulation.* This is a costly

and time-consuming endeavor, but considering the time and costs of the alternative, it may be a critical move to make for the long term health of an organization.

### **Consultation and Intervention**

If you are currently caught in a triangular relationship and cannot free yourself from this dynamic despite your best efforts, then seek consultation. If others are caught and have come to you for help, but you have not found answers that have alleviated the situation, then seek help. Seek the help of a consultant, facilitator, or therapist who has the qualifications and resources to assist you with such matters. Choosing a consultant who is outside the organization or has no conflict of interest may be an important consideration (see *Coaching* article on page 27).

### **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

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