

# The drama triangle worksheet

## introduction

In the same way that you can't fight emotions with thinking, you can't fight drama with diagnosis, defence, or distrust - it all starts with stopping the reactivity first and pausing before reacting.

Try doing one (or more) of these things:

- + **Pause** – just count to five before doing anything [NB – NOT out loud!] and use that 5 seconds to reframe
- + **Breathe**: take a breath and connect with your body
- + **Move**: emotions require catharsis - some movement will help express frustration
- + **Ask**: as Stephen Covey describes in his '7 Habits' book: "**seek first to understand then to be understood**"
- + **Listen**: Listening both internally and externally is a powerful tool.

These help shift you away from immediate reaction and provide space to think. The more you practice this the easier it will become and the more 'natural' it will feel.

You can then pause and move towards the roles that will allow you to escape the drama triangle. You may even like to create a new persona, that you can take on. One with super-powers that allow them to rise above human reaction and act with calm, considered, non-emotive presence.

- + **Creator** (from Victim): Here we are empowered by asking for and accepting help - and showing vulnerability.
- + **Coach** (from Rescuer): showing interest/curiosity and asking how they can help the Creator – allow then Creator to decide that they need help and what 'help' might look like.
- + **Challenger** (from Persecutor): This can be a force of nature, a physical constraint or a person challenging someone else.

But all of that will be for nothing if the intention behind it is resentment, trying to change, educate, fix or disprove - then there is no natural compassion and it's easy to slip back into the Drama Triangle roles.

### How to use this worksheet

1. Read the following sections with thoughts about transitioning from Drama Triangle roles, to Winners/Empowerment Triangle roles
2. On Pages 8, 9 and 10, complete the TRIGGERS and RESPONSE columns first. You may not have triggers of each of the roles, but more than likely will have some for 2 of them. Think hard!

Approach your friends, peers, partners, and the team that reports to you. They will all have insights and probably know your triggers better than anyone. This will require of you, a lot of 'active listening' and an complete absence of defence and criticism. This is an excellent test of your motivation and intent.

If you ask for help and then do not want to listen to what you are told, or simply spend the time justifying and defending – put the worksheets back in the drawer and get them out again when you're prepared to do the work.

It is also a great platform to evidence your new super-power... active listening and an intentional mindset.

3. In the TRIGGERS column, write whatever it is that triggers a reaction. It could be anything. A situation, phrase, attitude, person... whatever it is write it down.
4. In the RESPONSES column, write down exactly what your response is. From the first second, how do you respond. If unsure re-read No 2 [above].

Think of a specific example of when this happened that you can recall, put yourself in the moment and recall exactly what happened.

It may be an immediate response, followed by several other things...

*A massive sigh, rolling of the eyes... irritation level increases massively, become tense and red in the face. Speaking becomes difficult and stress level is evident in the intonation, tone and timbre of language.*

*Words that flood in are idiot, lazy, careless, unthinking,...*

Be clear, be expansive, be accurate, be non-emotional. Sense how it feels when you're writing this down.

5. Review and complete as many as you can... keep going – till you've exhausted every possibility.
6. When you have completely exhausted the TRIGGERS and RESPONSES columns, turn your attention to the NEW RESPONSE column, column 3.

Start with just one of your triggers – one that you recognise will have the greatest impact – and develop and new 'reaction'. Only this time it will be well thought through and considered.

Be expansive. Need more space, grab another piece of paper, don't let the size of the available space on the worksheet impede you.

Again, be clear, be accurate, be non-emotional – be very specific and intentional. Sense how it feels when you're writing this down

When you have completed it – engage one of your friends, peers, partners, and potentially the team that reports to you, and have them practice your new response. Be prepared for the fact it may seem clunky and a little contrived – it's brand new for you so will need practice to get better and expert at it.

So do just that, practice it... a lot. Then wait for the opportunity to put your new response into action in a real situation. – it should take long.

7. The key to all learning is reflection. How did it go, what can be improved, etc. So it's important that you reflect on how it went for you. Ideally do it immediately after and think about how effective it was, but as or more importantly how it 'felt'. How did the other person/people react?

From this reflection you may decide to refine you new response for next time. It can be refined as much as is required. Just be authentic in the process.

You can even ask the other person/people how it was for them. In the spirit of development, listen to what they say, avoid justifying and blaming and learn from what they have to say.

8. Congratulations!! You're well on your way. Your commitment and diligence needs to be acknowledged and recognised.

Now that you've nailed one... the rest will be a breeze. Go back to the list and pick the next big ticket item... and refer to No 6 [above].

# from persecutor to challenger

## the 'internal' shift

The shift from **Persecutor** to **Challenger** starts inside oneself, because we humans have a strong tendency to judge and be critical of ourselves.

The "look for what's wrong" trait – which helped our distant ancestors survive by being sensitive to danger – can get turned inward and become your inner-Persecutor if you are not conscious of how this human default system works.

The inner-Persecutor views itself as "the problem" and the internal chatter becomes: "What's wrong with me?" Or, "Why aren't I prettier/smarter/more successful than others?"

Here are a few insights to support your inner-shift from Persecutor to Challenger:

**Give yourself a break** - Life is challenging enough without piling on more self-criticism and judgment.

**Cultivate compassion toward yourself** - Growth and change are not easy. As you become more compassionate toward yourself you will naturally become more compassionate toward others.

**Embrace learning as a way of life** - An attitude of continuous learning seeds the **Challenger** in you to take root. Our favourite **Challenger** question is: "What has this experience come into my life to teach me?"

## The 'external' shift

There is also an external shift from **Persecutor** to **Challenger**. This involves learning to challenge others.

When in the **Challenger** role, you become a catalyst for learning and do so from a "learning intent." **Challengers** also are willing to stand for a vision and what they believe in, even in the midst of chaos and change. They are often called the "truth-tellers."

We've all had a **Challenger** in our life at some point; a teacher, boss, or grandparent – someone who delivered the rock-solid truth, whether you wanted to hear it or not. They challenged you because they cared about your learning.

While **Persecutors** want to control uncertainty, the **Challenger** is committed to learning and growth as a continuous process of life, even when the destination is not clear.

Here are a few suggestions to cultivate being a **Challenger** in relationship to others:

**See the other as a Creator** – whether they know it or act like it.

- + **Ask, what is my intention?** – Is your intention to build up and support others... or to put down and blame?
- + **Embrace your values** – **Challengers** are guided by integrity. They know what they value and believe and are unafraid to state it.
- + **Cultivate compassion** – again! Just like with the internal shift, having compassion for others that learning and growth is not always fun and easy, allows the other to feel supported.
- + **Focus on outcomes while being unattached to how you would do “it.”** – Again, as a **Creator**, they are capable to guide their own learning.
- + **Hold them as responsible and accountable for their choices and actions** – including the consequences that result.

A word of caution here – you can never guarantee how others see you. Your intention may be to Challenge without blame or judgement, but you cannot guarantee others will always see you that way. Don't let this possibility deter you from this powerful shift – stick to the suggestions above and remember... leave your ego at the door.

And finally, observing role models that you admire can help support your shift from **Persecutor** to **Challenger**. Who are those people you admire and/or look up to, that are willing to be courageous **Challengers** without blame or judgment?

How might you lean-in to becoming more of what you admire in them?

## from rescuer to coach

To move from rescuer to coach, take these steps:

- + Be helpful and supportive by acting like a teacher or a coach instead of a rescuer or a fixer.
- + Help people learn to solve their own problems instead of solving problems for them.
- + Encourage self-responsibility rather than dependency.
- + Set boundaries on the amount of time you'll listen and provide support.
- + Ask empowering questions like: *“What would you like to see happen in this situation?”* or *“What can you do to change this?”*
- + Trust that the other person can solve their own problems.

People who coach listen deeply and acknowledge the experiences and feelings of others.

- + **Coaches** ask questions with curiosity to help others survive and thrive.
- + **Coaches** believe I can listen with empathy, but I cannot solve your problems.

Ask yourself the six questions below to check how often you use the behaviours of the **Coach**:

- + Do I say no to requests for help when I do not willingly and freely want to help? Or when I don't have the skills to effectively help.
- + Do I listen deeply with empathy?
- + Do I acknowledge what others are experiencing and feeling?
- + Do I ask questions to help others clarify their goals? For example, "What do you want to happen?" or "What is your plan?"
- + Do I ask questions to help others assess their current situation? For example, "What is getting in the way of achieving your goal?"
- + Do I ask questions to elicit healthy actions? For example, "What do you need to do next? What is one step you can take towards your goal?"

## from **victim** to **creator**

Here are a few common **Victim** phrases to listen for:

*"I have to... (fill in the blank)" "I can't do... (fill in the blank)"*

By saying you "have to" or "can't," you are denying that you have a choice in the matter. Your choice may be a narrow one, and yet, you always have a choice.

Instead try this language:

*"I choose to... " OR "I want to... " OR "I will... "*

When you hear yourself say:

*"I should do this or that..."*

Shift to **Creator** language:

*"I could do... " OR "I am going to... " OR "It's an opportunity to... "*

Another way we limit ourselves is when we use the word "but" as a transition.

“But” discounts the first half of the sentence and has the potential to put us into the role of **Persecutor** to another (or ourselves) by using blaming or critical language in the second half of the sentence.

If you say, *“I love you, but I don’t like the way you (fill in the blank)...”* What the other person hears is the complaint in the second half of the sentence and not the positive words in the first half.

Instead, simply make a clear statement, based upon what you want. Drop the buts!

persecutor triggers	persecutor response	new challenger response



rescuer triggers	rescuer response	new coach response

victim triggers	victim response	new creator response