

The Advice Monster & The Drama Triangle

The Advice Monster

According to author Michael Bungay Stanier in his book *The Advice Trap*, advice-giving is a widespread habit that many people find difficult to break - a habit he personifies as your “advice monster.” He claims that subduing the compulsion to give advice (i.e. taming your advice monster) is not an easy change to make.

Stanier defines advice as “*suggestions of what another person should do*”, and he notes that in the workplace, many situations seem like they can be solved with an advice-driven approach. Such an approach may sound like “*You should try -*” or “*Have you thought about doing -*”. It’s in these situations that Stanier says your “advice monster” has taken over and represents the compulsive habit to give advice.

He argues that advice-giving can create several problems, including unproductive work environments, lack of team confidence and overburdened managers.

Giving in to our advice monsters can be problematic for a number of reasons:

- It can lead to inaccurate solutions – this can happen when we give advice too quickly before we fully understand the situation. We offer solutions without fully understanding what lies at the heart of the issue.
- It can generate negative emotions that hinder workplace productivity. Both givers and receivers of the advice can become demoralised. Receivers feel less capable and less motivated because the ideas aren’t their own. They may feel the adviser considers them inferior or doesn’t value their opinions and thoughts. Also the givers can become defensive when they feel their ideas are being disregarded.

You can learn more about your Advice Monster in Michael Bungay Stanier’s Ted Talk https://www.ted.com/talks/michael_bungay_stanier_how_to_tame_your_advice_monster?language=en.

The Drama Triangle

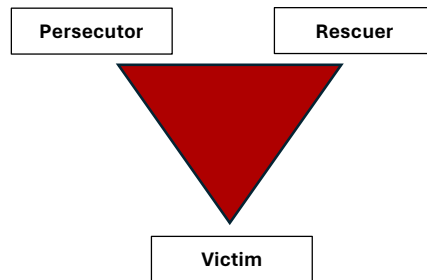
Transactional Analysis identifies a number of games or patterns of communication and behaviour which we find ourselves repeating and which result in lose / lose outcomes. One of these is called the ‘Drama Triangle’. Once we engage in the game and ‘rescue’ someone, we can find ourselves moving towards the other roles of victim and persecutor.

The Drama Triangle is formed when people take up and switch roles in situations of conflict and stress. It is exactly what it sounds like – creating stress, drama and conflict and rescuing people from their responsibility.

Victim – As victims, people feel hopeless, ashamed, powerless, helpless, and unable to make decisions, enjoy work, solve problems or achieve goals. They seem to attract bad people and situations and feel that something always keeps getting in the way.

Rescuer – They are the enablers who always want to rescue others. They find value in being needed, sometimes at the expense of not taking action to solve their own problems. Rescuers feel good about themselves by helping victims.

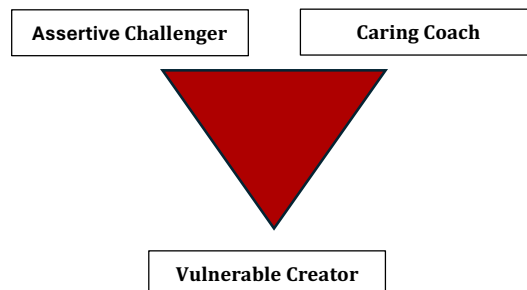
Persecutor – In this role, people feel that the fault is somebody else's and not theirs. They think they know better and have a right to tell other people what they should do. They can be angry, oppressive, rigid, authoritarian, blaming, controlling and critical.



For example, in a conversation scenario:

- Person A asks for a solution to a problem (victim)
- Person B gives the solution (rescuer)
- Person A blames person B for not coming up with the solution they wanted (persecutor)
- Person B feels resentful that Person A didn't act on their advice (victim)
- And so it goes on!

The antidote to the Drama Triangle is the Winner's Triangle.



The Winner's Triangle, on the other hand, has three positive roles where the Victim becomes Vulnerable, the Prosecutor becomes Assertive, and the Rescuer becomes Caring. Here are the three roles:

Vulnerable Creator – These people accept their vulnerability but also understand that they have the abilities to meet their needs and find their way. They ask for help and accept it when offered to empower themselves. The most important skill they possess is problem-solving.

Assertive Challenger – In this role, people use their time and energy in resolving issues rather than blaming others. They are good problem solvers and always find ways to meet their needs without shaming others.

Caring Coach – Rather than imposing the solutions, they show compassion by asking how to help. This empowers the vulnerable to decide what they want and the caring role can learn to listen and allow others to find their way.