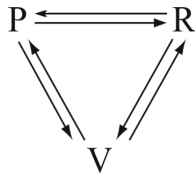


## 1. THE HISTORY OF THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

The Triangle emerged from my doodling 30 pages of basketball and football fakes. There was once a fourth corner, the Trickster, which eventually was incorporated into the switch lines. It began as a script triangle, but soon was used as a game triangle. My 8-year-old script decision was to be an inventor. Many hobbies. Art experimenting. Brainstorming was the rule in the Berne's Tuesday night 202 seminar with weekly credit for new theory. Dr. Eric Berne as editor of his T.A.B. said to me "They will quote you for 150 years so get it right." He suggested alternatives, the name of Aggressor and to put the Victim on top, manipulating the action. To his basic game formula he then later added the switch (S), now it reads  $C+G=R \rightarrow S \rightarrow X \rightarrow P$ . The Drama Triangle won the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award in 1972. The TAJ January 1973 acceptance speech is posted on my website [www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com](http://www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com). 100 hits weekly. Someone earlier had the Drama Triangle and Karpman's Triangle name "parked." I waited for it like the Rhinoceros at the tree.



## 2. EARLY CHANGES

Fig. a. Soon others drew the triangle, as did I, as a simplified equilateral triangle, point down. Eric Berne started referring to it as "Karpman's Triangle" (like the medical Hasselbach's Triangle). This caught on as TA trainers started teaching TA worldwide. Fig. b. Clarifications were up to me, so I then needed to add lines to distinguish between transactions (arrows on the triangle) and switches (curved arrows outside the triangle), as in the game below of "I'm Only Trying to Help You" where the Victim Cons the Rescuer with the "You're The Only One Who Can Help me" (transaction lines on the diagram) and the Rescuer buys in with the Response, "Yes, You Have So Much Potential" Then the switch happens (curved lines outside the triangle.). A common example is in trying to help your partner ("this will help you, me, us") with helpful personal hints or unwanted advice that backfires quickly. Now you, the Rescuer, are the new Victim. Fig. c. From early on I regarded the energy in the corners as usable for their (+) or (-) energies, calling it the OK triangle. Sometimes I write the persons name inside the triangle to tell the players apart.

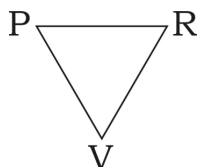


Fig. a.

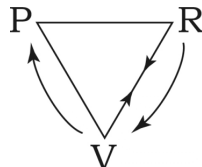


Fig. b.

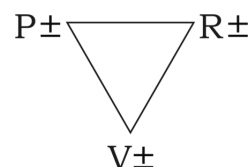


Fig. c.

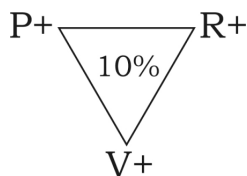
OK TRIANGLES. Many others have written up their OK versions. Among others

1. Acey Choy published an excellent "Winners Triangle" in the January 1990 Transactional Analysis Journal (TAJ) naming the corners Assertive, Caring, and Vulnerable, relating it to the Cathexis Institute problem solving model.
2. Lewis Quinby on his comprehensive TA website TA-tutor.com borrowed the same PRV initials to read Persevere, Reach-out, and Vulnerable in the Quinby Durable Triangle. I use his Reaching-out word and include my own OK Power and OK Vulnerable corners to cover the PRV initials.
3. David Emerald's storied quest in his fascinating book "The Power of T.E.D. (The Empowerment Dynamic) has the corners relabeled P -> Challenger, R -> Coach, and V -> Creator.

OTHERS' CHANGES. Out on the Internet things get changed. Originally I required capital letters to represent game roles so that small letters could represent real roles, i.e. legitimate rescuers, legitimate victims. Didn't happen. Rarely authors don't give credit, some rename the triangle, some draw it "squashed," etc. Many others (www.LynneForrest.com, etc.) and others have written up thoughtful variations on the triangle in home and work applications (nursing, teaching, legal, dysfunctional families, entertainment, etc) that turn up in a search of over 15,000 references on Google. TA writers have shown influences as in the Miniscript Triangle, Redefining Hexagon, and others. Once in TA a fourth role of the "observer" was added, but if the observer feels or gains anything, scorekeepers and reporters included, they are in the triangle. Otherwise they are in their Adult.

OK TRIANGLES. THE 10% SOLUTION: Into the OK Triangle I soon included "The 10% solution," a general rule I find very useful in couples' therapy, which offers,

- 1) That in every game there are at least 10% OK reasons in each P, R, V corner.
- 2) That every idea spoken has at least 10% truth in it.
- 3) That 10% of the population would react the same way.
- 4) That 10% of what you are saying is not true anyway.

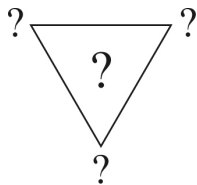


The 10% Solution

### 3. DRAMA TRIANGLE VARIATIONS

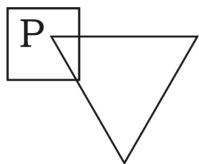
#### THE QUESTIONMARK TRIANGLE

What are the unknown reasons why she dumped him and gave no reasons? Check out some possibilities, that she felt like the Victim as too hurt or disappointed by him; Rescuer as not being what he needs and doing him a favor by quietly disappearing from his life; and Persecutor to get even with him by not giving him a chance to explain himself. The Triangle offers three motives behind any unexplained action.

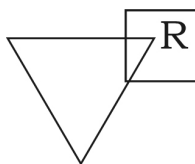


FALSE PERCEPTION TRIANGLES

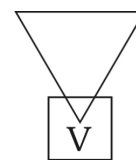
The diagram above also represents the confusions of false perception in the reading of a situation perhaps as one wants it to be, rather than the way it is. Old family transferences (“baggage”) or projections of one’s own mind set can alter one’s P, R, and V perception as well. Illustrated below is how some people can get locked into perceiving things from one corner of the triangle as their only window to the world.



The Persecutor Window



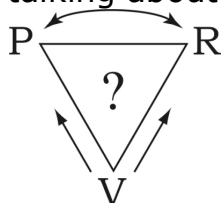
The Rescuer Window



The Victim Window

DOUBLE BIND TRIANGLES

A partner in a custody battle had a periodic substance abuse problem. If he voluntarily (R) admitted he had the problem, it would be used against him in court, and he’d lose. If he lied (P) and denied any problem, they would say he was in denial, and he’d lose. He was in a double bind. Either way, he would lose. The third point (V) of a classic double bind is that there is no way of talking about it.



THE INDECISION TRIANGLES

Fig. a. A man wanted to ask his wife for plastic surgery to help with their sex life, hoping she’d be a Rescuer of the relationship. But he knew if he did ask, she would react as Persecutor and push him further away. So he stayed undecided, “stuffing feelings” as a Victim. In Fig. b., he is harboring grudges as a Victim, but if he speaks out, it will sound too angry (Persecutor), so he stays Victim, undecided. In Fig. c., he feels neglected and wants to Rescue himself by finding an outside girlfriend, but that could backfire and both women would leave him (double Persecutor), and he’d be a Victim again. Double binds are resolved by careful and caring communication over time. If someone is at fault, they should play their ABC cards: Admit It, Believe It, Change It.

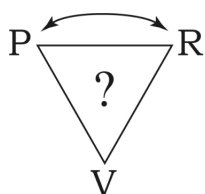


Fig. a

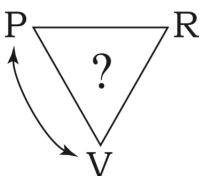


Fig. b

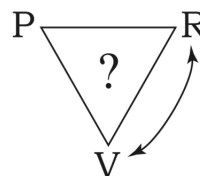


Fig. c

THE VICIOUS CYCLE TRIANGLES

Fig. a. Lonely Victims with an Impulse Control Disorder and unmet needs, Rescue themselves with their food, gambling, sex, power, spending or substance addictions, then suffers repercussions (P) from within or without, returning to Victim again.

Fig. b. in the classic Cycle of Violence, the arrow now swings counterclockwise. The release from the unappreciated Victim role (#1) is through a tension build up (#2) and then to violence as Persecutor (#3), then remorse and regrets in the "Hearts and Flowers" apology and promises stage (#4), to start the cycle all over again (at #1).



Fig. a. The Addiction Triangles

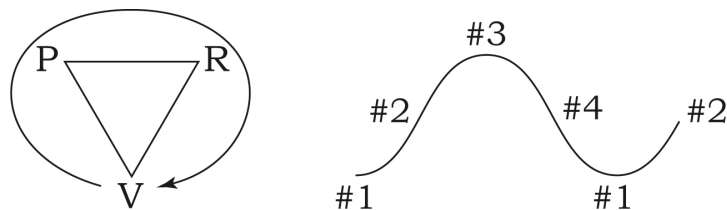
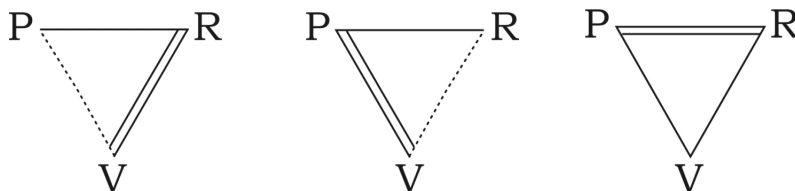


Fig. b. The Cycle of Violence Triangle

TRAPPING TRIANGLES and "Betrayal Bonds"

In the first two diagrams below, one parent locks out the other parent, either by "Our special secret" bonding or by threat bonding. In the third diagram, the top two roles are so thoroughly controlled and well performed, that the Victim cannot compete and stays trapped in a dependent position.



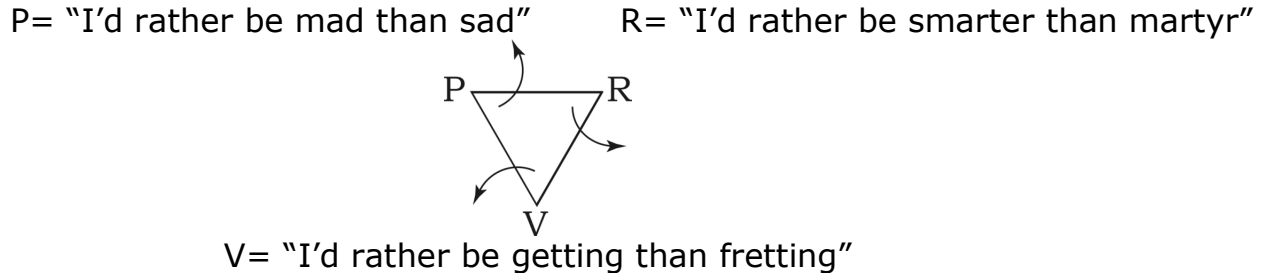
"Don't tell our special secret"    "Don't tell or else!!!"    "You can't get along without me"

ESCAPE TRIANGLES

"How do I get out of the triangle?" One place to start is with knowledge of the roles and switches, knowledge of how and why you got there, and knowledge of the consequences. As games escalate to 1st, 2nd, or 3rd levels, 1) the number of players increase, 2) the geography covered widens, 3) the confusion and complexity increases, and 4) the stakes increase to the level of "dire consequences." Additional reading of books on co-dependency and 12 step meetings are informative and supportive of change. Avoid slippery places, slippery people, and slippery thinking. Change your

friends when you get free. With knowledge, when one then senses an invitation to a new drama beginning, they can say "no" to drama.

If one is inside the triangle and aware of the roles and switches and consequences, an escape is available from any corner, as shown below. An escape from each corner:



### TRIANGLES OF OPPRESSION AND TRIANGLES OF LIBERATION

Fig. a. shows social Victims of scarcity and oppression. Attempts to Rescue and free themselves fail from ineffectiveness, or from putdowns by the usual Persecutors. The return then swings back counterclockwise to Victim again, to start over or to give up. Fig. b. shows OK Rescues by personal determination, or by inspirational heroes, or by social movements. The successful OK Persecutor confrontations by leadership or by personal assertiveness moves them out of the Triangle, now with all 3 corners satisfied.

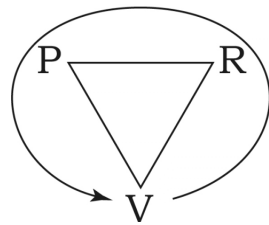


Fig. a. Get Stuck

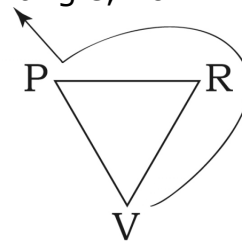


Fig. b. Get Out

### SWITCHING IN THE TRIANGLE

The drama in the Triangle comes from the switching of roles. A game player will be adept at switching roles quickly to avoid any clarity. To defend, deny, and protect their vice, they quickly switch around, using the Three Rules of Chaos:

- 1) Make a game out of everything,
  - 2) Deny everything, and
  - 3) Immediately put you on the defensive. (The family rule was "Talk fast, don't listen").
- An alcoholic may show penitence as a remorseful Victim, then switch to a threatening, embarrassing, or guilt-inducing Persecutor; then switch to the Rescuer role and be "too good to be true" and promise that everything will be better if given a second chance. But soon the sorrowful Victim will return to start the cycle all over again (Fig. a).

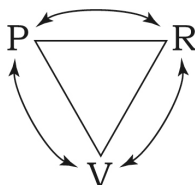
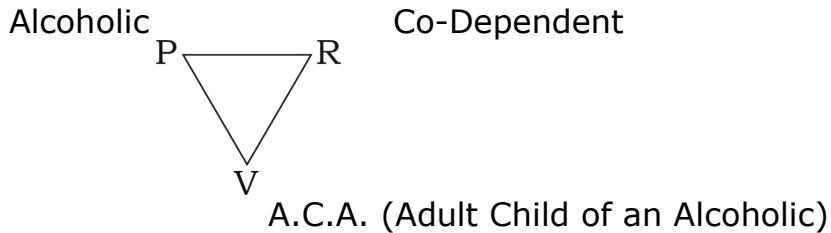


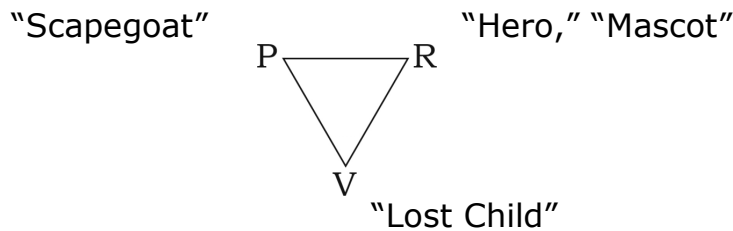
Fig. a. Evasive switching

THE ALCOHOLIC FAMILY ROLES line up as:

Three family roles:



The four classic A.C.A. script choices:



4. THE COMPASSION TRIANGLE

The Compassion Triangle is drawn with a + sign in the center of the triangle. It offers the theory that once someone is in the Drama Triangle they will automatically be in all three roles at once, either in socially identified roles, or as denied roles, overtly and covertly. Hidden motives can be conscious, subconscious, or as "unintended consequences." All three need to be considered to get a three dimensional view of games.

Fig. a. The angry boss, as Identified Persecutor, is scolding and embarrassing the secretary. But secretly the boss is the Victim of the secretary's careless work, and of his/her own job insecurity based on office production; and is also secretly a Rescuer in attempts to train employees to meet high standards and by openly complaining instead of secretly firing the secretary.

Fig. b. The Identified Rescuer can be a co-dependent in a dysfunctional family, but is secretly a Persecutor by enabling the game, and secretly a Victim who won't escape.

Fig. c. The Identified Victim is the classic "Identified Patient" in the example below, the scapegoat Victim in the dysfunctional family. But as Rescuer, serves as a lightning rod by diverting parental anger and to keep the family together, and as Persecutor, by continually making the game more and more difficult to solve.

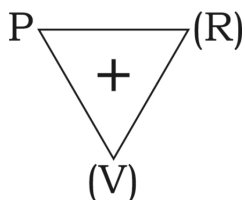


Fig. a. Identified Persecutor

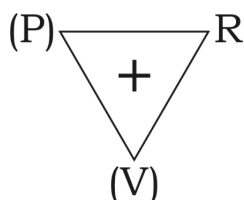


Fig. b. Identified Rescuer

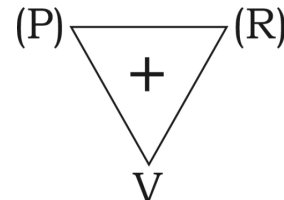


Fig. c. Identified Victim

### THE LIARS TRIANGLE

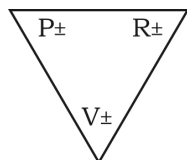
The liar loses respect as identified Persecutor but may be secretly protecting others and self as a Rescuer, and as Victim is afraid of fair or unfair repercussions based on many previous experiences.

### THE P.T.S.D. DEFENSIVENESS TRIANGLE

A sufferer of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome) from an abusive home environment may instinctively react to all criticism as the Persecutor and Victim, and not think to offer appreciation for the Rescuers attempts to open up communication, nor offer sympathy for the Victim they created with their stresses. A first step would be to offer the partner the benefit of the doubt, ask good questions, and use the critique constructively.

## 5. THE INNER DRAMA TRIANGLES

We have an Outer Personality and an Inner Personality during games. We can experience both, one, or none, with or without perceptual distortions. This inner PRV diagram can describe 1) inner feelings, 2) inner self-talk (self-transactions), or 3) inner game roles (with self-switching) during games. The outer personality and the inner personality may be in harmony or disharmony with each other at the same time during a game. Either one may be dominant at any time. With anger, the outer personality is in charge. With depression, the inner personality is in charge.

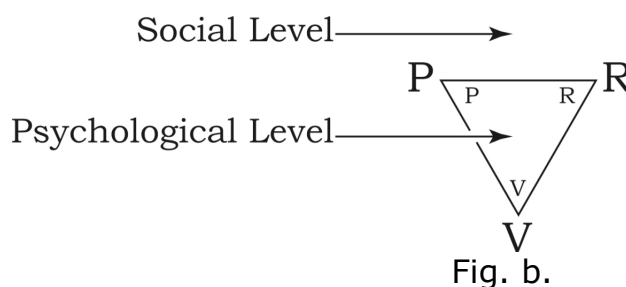
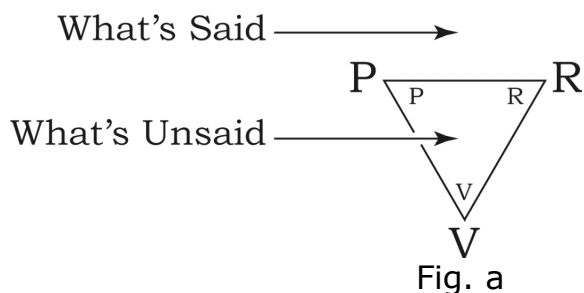


The Miniscript Triangle Drivers begin with the Victim believing in the Rescue, "I'm OK if, I: Be Perfect, Be Strong, Hurry Up, Try Hard, or Please People." These can work inside and outside at the Rescue corner, and when fail, inevitably drive a person into their Stopper or Blamer position (P), inside and outside the triangle and then over to the final Despairer (V) position, and then around again, often within seconds.

### TWO-LEVEL DRAMA TRIANGLES

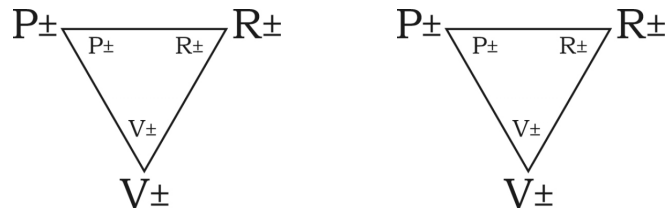
Fig. a. The blank space in the middle of the triangle can visually represent those yet-unspoken words during a game ("What's Unsaid"), words that are ready to make things worse (-) or to make things better (+) when the chance arises.

Fig. b. The Social Level and the Psychological Level of games can be pictured by Fig. b.



## THE WISDOM TRIANGLES

The wise person can know of the 24 outer and inner triangles (+/-) in others and in themselves and find them when necessary to improve compassion and understanding.

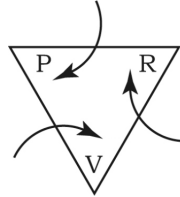


## GOING INSIDE ONESELF TO DEFEAT REASON. THE MANIPULATORS TRIANGLE

A person with a "Don't Think" injunction when confronted or unwilling to listen, can turn against him or herself and create a "feelings only" environment where only they can win.

R= "Now I'll beat myself over this"  
(PUNISHING)

R= "It's everyone else's fault"  
(PROTECTING)



(PITYING)

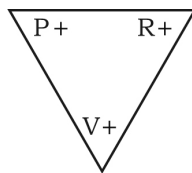
V= "I can never do things right"

## POSITIVE SELF-TALK INSIDE

P+ = self determination, direction, discipline, goals, and strength of character

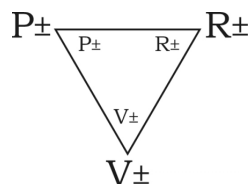
R+ = self stroking, protective, belief in health and self, gathering OK permissions

V+ = self accepting, open, humble, flexible, receptive



## DRAMA OPTIONS

One has the option of selectively stroking the OK inner and outer corners of the triangle to improve relationships and easier communication. One can anticipate the negative corners in advance to prepare for a discussion, also explaining oneself in the process, "I know this may not be the right time for this (to avoid P) but I need to know if..."(my V).





## 6. THE SCRIPT TRIANGLES

The two tiny inner triangles in Fig. a. below illustrate the games occurring in the "Script Scene." There is an outer and inner drama happening during childhood scripting.

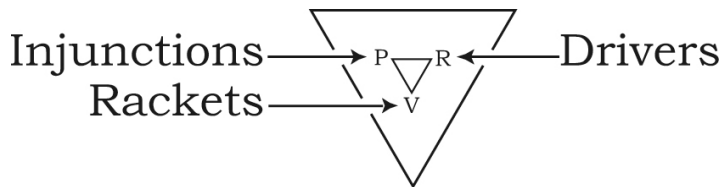
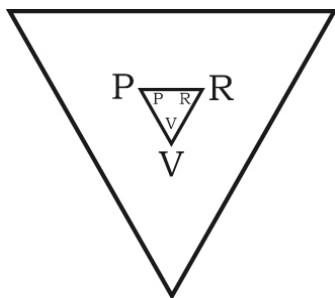
### THE INNER REDECISION TRIANGLE

1. V="How did you feel at the time?" (FEEL),
2. R="What did you believe about the world?" (THINK),
3. P= "What did you decide?" (ACTION) – 13 "Don't" injunctions or 5 "Do" Drivers)

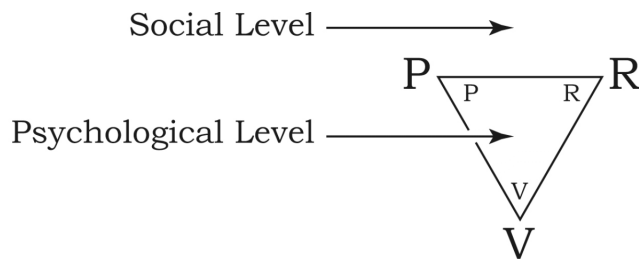
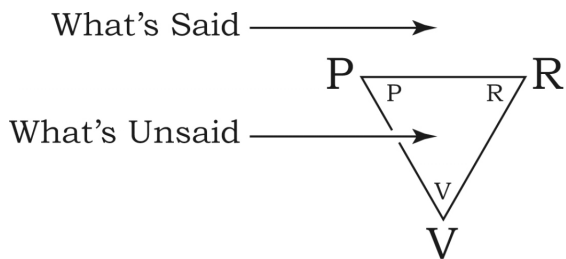
### THE OUTER TRANSFERENCE TRIANGLE. Why does the child accept the scripting?

1. V= Passivity. Mirroring, imprinting, and attribution; mystified, outnumbered.
2. R= Support. To be the champions of the parent's beliefs system.
3. P= Revenge. For revenge to defeat the parent's hopes and dreams.

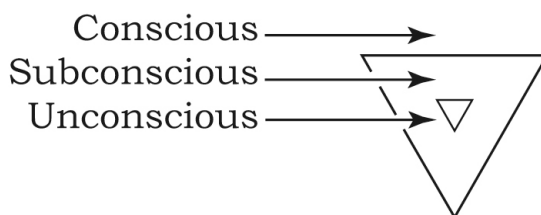
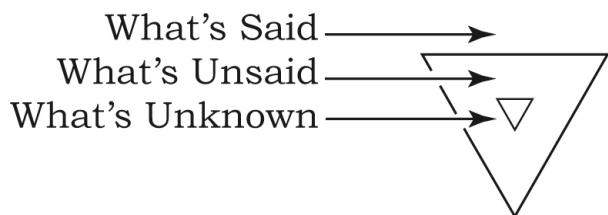
On the inside space one can insert the non-verbal memories. Injunctions (P), Drivers (R) and Rackets (V) can fit on the corners. The triangles can be called The Redecision Triangle, The Transference Triangle, or The Scripting Triangle, depending on the usage.



### TWO-LEVEL DRAMA TRIANGLES



### THREE-LEVEL DRAMA TRIANGLES



## SCRIPT THERAPY

Fig. a. Illustrates the therapists Reparenting (P+) messages being incorporated

Fig. b. Illustrates the therapists Permission (R+) messages being incorporated

Fig. c. Illustrates the therapists Relational (V+) messages being incorporated

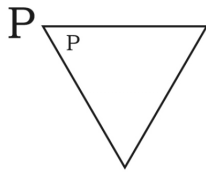


Fig. a.

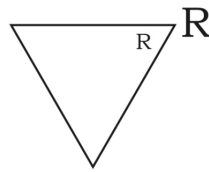


Fig. b.

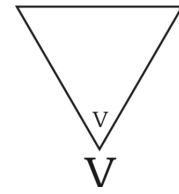
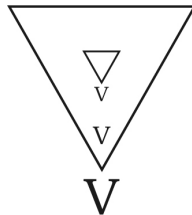


Fig. c.

## PROGRESSION OF UNMET NEEDS

Needs can be Freudian, Ericksonian, Maslow, Schiff and Levin listed needs. Berne's 6 hungers (Recognition, Contact, Stimulus, Sex, Incidence, and Structure), or it could be the unmet needs in the Goulding's 13 Don't injunctions (including Don't Want). These all can be unmet needs continuing forward through one's lifetime, as illustrated below.



## 7. BIOCHEMICAL TRIANGLES

Place a smaller triangle inside the Script Triangle for the transactions at the cellular level, which would include the animal, racial, and family genetics; and organic and biochemical transactions with the script decisions. A five level TA "Unified Field Theory" diagram: an outer and inner social level, inner and outer script level, and cellular level. GENETIC DYNAMICS. There can be dominating genes (P), future evolution genes (R) and unsuccessful genes (V).

CELL TRANSACTIONS. One set of cells (R) transact to provide the chemicals, hormones, etc. (RESUPPLY) to the awaiting (V) receiving cells (RECEPTION), while the (P) cells (RESTRICTION) inhibit over-production and over-absorption. For example, serotonin is produced, received, and the excess is cleared. The SSRI antidepressants inhibit the serotonin absorption by receptor cells, thus allowing the serotonin levels to remain high.

