



Triangulation

Strategies for Reducing Conflict Among Teams



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“I have a problem and I want you to have to have that same problem too!”



Staff and colleagues will often come to us with a situation that occurred with someone else, and before we know it, we can get “pulled in” or “recruited” to help fix the problem.

Being “pulled in” happens when we begin to sympathize with the other person’s plight. We begin to feel bad, sad, angry, etc., on their behalf and lean in to support them by trying to fix the problem on their behalf. I call this the “I have a problem, and I want you to make me feel better about it.”

Being “recruited” happens when the person who is upset says statements such as, “_____ happened to me, can you believe it?” Or “Can you believe what ___ said/did to me?” Or “They can’t do this to us.” All to get you to agree with them. I often call this...” I have a problem, and I want you to join me in being upset about it.

And I get it. We tend to be nurturers by nature in this field. So, we don’t want anyone feeling bad. Yet, let me be very clear... When we jump in on the other person’s behalf, or join them in being upset, it is because we just got emotionally triggered, and now we are the ones who want to feel better. Solving someone else’s problems is one way of going about it.

This situation can cause a lot of damage because it often comes across as taking sides or ganging up on the other party, both scenarios potentially destroying trust.

So, here’s a question for you...Think about the last person who approached you with a problem. What was your response?

The Flip Strategy

As I mentioned above, being “pulled in” can happen easily and so I want to share one of my favorite strategies for supporting others when they come to us called the “Flip” strategy from the book, *Appreciative Leadership*.

What I really love about this strategy is that it doesn’t require a lot of time and money and can be quite effective in helping staff and colleagues move from negative conversations and complaints to affirmative questions and being solution focused.





This four-part strategy consists of first acknowledging the person’s concern. Note, this does not mean we agree with their assessment, especially if we’ve heard it or something similar ten times before, just that we’re acknowledging it was a problem for them. The key is to be very specific by mirroring back what you think they might be feeling or expressing. For example, “Wow, you’re really frustrated aren’t you.” Or “You sound pretty sad, did your feelings get hurt?” This part of the process is powerful because it:

1. Affirms the person is being heard
2. Supports the person’s self-reflection which, helps them move out of their limbic brain (fight, flight or freeze) to their frontal cortex (logical thought)
3. Keeps the focus on them and helps you to not get pulled in or recruited

The second part of the strategy starts by asking the person what outcome or resolution they would like. Now notice the question is in the present tense. This is very important because most of us make the mistake of staying in the problem by asking what they would have liked which typically prompts a response such as, “well, she should have done this, or he didn’t do that”. Notice, this keeps the focus on the past and the problem. By doing a small shift and keeping the statement in the present tense (“so, what outcome would you like or what resolution would you like?”), gets the person to look forward to a solution.

As you think through the first two parts of this four-part process, what comes to mind for you? Or think about the last time you were drawn into triangulation. How might the conversation have shifted if you tried the first or second part of the strategy?



Part three picks up with a reminder and then reaffirmation of their values. For example, when we ask the person what they want, they will usually focus on the other person or the past event. This is where the gentle reminder comes in about not changing other people or the past. What we can change, or control are our thoughts and behavior. Then comes the reaffirmation. You're reaffirming their values, such as stating what you know about their values and asking them how they might apply in this situation. For example, "I know you believe in being kind and generous. What would that person do in this situation?" Or "I know you care about the children and their families. How will this action support that?"



Part three continues to keep the person in the moment and supports their beliefs and values. This will definitely lower the risk of regretful actions later on!! **It also keeps us grounded in our beliefs and values as well. We can ask ourselves a similar question, "Who do I get to be in this moment, and how does this align with my values?"**

The last part of the strategy is to restate the outcome they just shared. Then ask how you can support them in following through? Again, notice the focus is on them doing the follow-through.

Now here's the trick... Make sure to follow up within the next few days (in person, email, etc.) and ask them to share the results. This last step is critical as it lets the person know several things:

1. Their concern was significant enough that you remembered and followed up.
2. You have total faith in them to resolve their own conflicts.
3. You expect that if the concern was significant enough for them to bring to you, then it was important enough for them to follow through.

So that you know, this last part of conversation might need to happen several more times. Especially if you've tended to be the "go-to" person in the past. Remember, you are also changing the way you do business, and sometimes people will test your resolve in this area.

So, stay strong. You got this!!!



Stop the Drama!

We tend to move around the triangle until **ONE** of us changes; until **ONE** of us communicates in a clear and healthy pattern.

1. Stop!
2. Notice what role you are in.
3. Move out of the triangle to a clear and healthy role.

ATTACKER (Bully/Blamer)

Beliefs

*This is your fault.
You're not OK but I am.
You'll be OK if you do
what I tell you.*

Behaviours/Feelings

- Critical, domineering and bossy
- Puts other person down
- Blames and finger points
- Feels anger or resentment
- Fears being out of control
- Rigid in thinking

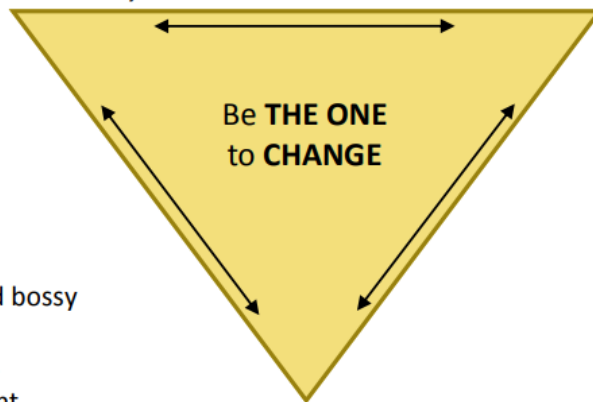
RESCUER (Enabler)

Beliefs

*You need my help.
You're not OK but I am.*

Behaviours/Feelings

- Supports other at expense of self
- Feels guilty and anxious if doesn't rescue
- Feels connected and capable when *victim* is dependent



VICTIM (Underdog)

Beliefs:

*I'm helpless and powerless.
I'm not OK and everybody else is.*

Behaviours/Feelings

- Feels oppressed, hopeless, incapable and misunderstood
- Seeks a rescuer to validate feelings
- Does not stand up to attacker
- Refuses to make decisions, solve problems, get professional help, do self-care or change behaviour



Flip the Page and Flip the Roles

From **VICTIM**
(Underdog)
to **Survivor/Thrivers**
with **Resilience**

Example:

1. State What You Want:
I want more time to finish the task.

2. Keep Agreements: If someone helps you, do your part by following through.

3. Ask Yourself: *How can I get what I really want in a healthy way?*

4. Count Your Blessings: Acknowledge your strengths, what you have and what is going well.

REMEMBER: You make you! You are lovable, capable, and resilient.

From **ATTACKER**
(Bully/Blamer)
to **Challenger**
with **Assertiveness**

Example:

1. State Your Boundaries:
I have 10 minutes to talk and listen.

2. Active Listen: *I hear a problem delayed you.*

3. Make Expectations Clear: *I want you to keep your agreement. Please have it done by Tuesday.*

4. Provide Choices: *You will keep your agreement or I will arrange for someone else to do the task. You choose.*

REMEMBER: You make you! The only person you can change is yourself.

From **RESCUER**
(Enabler)
to **Coach**
with **Empathy**

Example:

1. State Your Boundaries:
I have 20 minutes to talk and listen.

2. Ask What Support Is Wanted: *How do you imagine I can help?*

3. Active Listen: *I hear a problem delayed you.*

4. Affirm Resilience: *I have seen you succeed.*

5. Provide Choices: *You will keep your agreement or I will arrange for someone else to do the task. You choose.*

REMEMBER: You make you! The only person you can change (fix) is yourself.

If you are stuck and cannot move out of a victim, attacker or rescuer role attend a personal development event or arrange for professional help!



Adapted from *The Drama Triangle* by Stephen Karpman
Read more details in **Relationship Drama Part 1** and **Relationship Drama Part 2**
at <http://SolutionsForResilience.com/blog>

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Need Support with Building Your Teams?

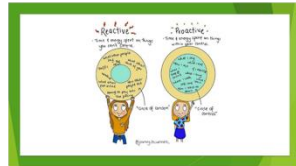


Options for virtual training:

- 90-minute overview of the **8 characteristics of Effective Teams**
- 90-minute overview of **8 Mindsets of Leadership**
- 90-minute overview of the **Team Agreement Process**
- 90-minute overview for **Managing Mindsets**
- 3-hour training on having influence and the **Circle of Control**



Highly Effective Teams



Circle of Control

Options for on-site training:

- 1-day deep dive of the 8 characteristics of effective teams with reflective exercises
- 2-day deep dive of the 8 mindsets of leadership with reflective exercises
- 3-day deep dive of the 8 mindsets of leadership, plus challenges and strategies for “living into your leadership” daily, followed by a full day of effective teaming training.
- 8-month Leadership Academy which includes:
 - 3-day on-site deep dive of the 8 mindsets of leadership, plus challenges and strategies for “living into your leadership” daily, followed by a full day of effective teaming training.
 - Monthly 1-hour group coaching to reinforce training concepts while giving opportunities for practice with feedback
 - 1-day on-site “showcase” where participants can reflect on and share their outcomes from the past year



What is the cost? Reach out to me at deidre.harris@teamagreements.com and we can discuss the training that would best suit the outcomes you're looking for.