

Discovering the Victim Triangle

from *Codependent No More* by Melody Beattie – pg. 83-84

About a year into my recovery from codependency, I realized I was still doing something over and over that caused me pain. I sensed this pattern had something to do with why many of my relationships went sour. But I didn't know what "it" was that I was doing so I couldn't stop doing it.

One sunny day, as I was walking down the sidewalk with my friend Scott, I stopped, turned to him, and asked, "What is the one thing codependents do over and over? What is it that keeps us feeling so bad?"

He thought about my question for a moment before answering. "Codependents are caretakers – rescuers. They rescue, then they persecute, then they end up victimized. Study the Karpman Drama Triangle," he said. The Karpman Drama Triangle and the accompanying roles of rescuer, persecutor, and victim, are the work and observation of Stephen B. Karpman.

What he said didn't make sense, but I went home, dragged out some therapy books that were collecting dust on my shelves, and studied. After a while, a light went on inside my head. I saw. I understood. And I felt like I had discovered fire.

This was it. This was my pattern. This is *our* pattern. This is what we repeatedly do with friends, family, acquaintances, clients, or anybody around us. As codependents, we may do many things, but this pattern is what we do best and most often. This is our favorite reaction.

We are the rescuers, the enablers. We are the great godmothers or godfathers to the entire world, as Earnie Larsen says. We not only meet people's needs, we anticipate them. We fix, nurture, and fuss over others. We make better, solve, and attend to. And we do it all so well. "Your wish is my command," is our theme. "Your problem is my problem," is our motto. We are the caretakers.