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The Paddock Theory – A way of understanding relationship boundaries

- As adults, we all have a metaphorical “paddock” with a fence line around it.
- Inside this paddock are our thoughts, our feelings, our preferences, our personal space etc.
- We choose who to let in and out of our paddock – close friends, lovers, family all get to come in closer than strangers or acquaintances.
- We are responsible for everything inside our own paddock.
- We are not responsible for what is inside anyone else’s paddock.

Examples of “jumping the fence”

- *Whenever George has a hangover his girlfriend rings his boss for him to say he’s sick and can’t come to work.*
- *Her 11 year old son has procrastinated doing his homework project. Rather than cope with the consequences of him getting into trouble, she pretty much does it for him.*
- *She’s really angry that he doesn’t clean up his mess EVER. He has a temper, so she doesn’t say anything and angrily does it herself.*
- *Rather than politely say “Sorry I don’t have time for that” you agree to join another Advisory Group because you know there is no-one else available to do it and you don’t want to disappoint the person who asked you.*

So why would someone “jump the fence” and invade someone else’s paddock?

- To avoid conflict, maybe scared of anger or disapproval.
- To avoid shame – embarrassed by family members behaviour eg alcohol.
- To avoid guilt and/or judgement – “If I don’t help out, they will think I’m selfish/lazy.”
- Taking care of someone else’s problems means I can avoid my own.

What’s my tendency?

Rescuer – feels better when helping others, needs to be needed, “saviour”

Victim – Passive, helpless, complains/blames a lot, “bad things happen to me”

Perpetrator – Insensitive, criticises, uses “power over” strategies, controlling. “I’m right”

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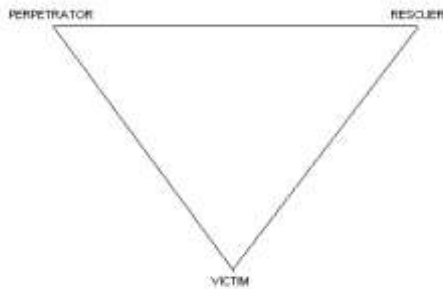
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Karpman Triangle – Rescuer, Victim, Perpetrator



The way out of the triangle = Good boundaries mean taking responsibility for MY PART:

- Whose problem is this?
- What's my part in this?
- What part of this issue am I responsible for ?

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