

DIGGING

By Tess Haskin
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It was Monday morning, two days after my eleventh birthday. The world was glowing. I had just had the decade's greatest weekend.

Now it was back to school.

I was the kind of girl who never missed a homework assignment, and got A's in all my classes. My teachers loved me. I was also the kind of girl who really cared about doing well. Even the prospect of doing anything wrong scared me silly.

Let the drama begin.

It was 10:00 am, and we had just started science. I pulled out my notebook, glue stick and smiled. I was confident; I was set, until the teacher arrived.

"Good morning everybody," she said as she strode into the room. "Please pull out your homework, I need to come around and check it off." I froze. My blood felt as if it turned to ice. I had forgotten to do my homework. The thought of cheating flashed through my mind. I could say that I forgot.

A psychiatrist named Dr. Stephen Karpman came up with the idea that during stressful times human dynamics involve three roles; the *victim*, *persecutor*, and *rescuer*. Dr. Karpman explains how the roles work off of each other creating a "Drama Triangle" of interactions.

My teacher was getting closer. She checked Sascha's homework, now Brooke, Cassidy, Arthur... Then she was at me. I tried to smile at her, but I am sure that it looked more like one of those scary mechanical smiles that you see on creepy dolls. She reached for my notebook.



THE
POWER
OF TED*

My mind was racing. Stuck in the *victim* role, I was seeing life happening *to me*, totally out of my control. In my mind I saw my teacher as the *persecutor*, the person doing this *to me*. Persecutors can also be an illness that somebody has, or a natural disaster, but this was all her in my mind.

“Um,” she stopped and looked down at me as I spoke. “It is not in there. See, the thing is,” I stopped and looked around the room hopefully.

I was looking for a *rescuer*, somebody to come and save me from my persecutor. Because I felt that the situation was out of my control, I was looking for somebody else to fix it for me.

“I left it on my desk.” I kept my eyes on the table, hoping she would not see the lie in my face. Late work was not accepted... but missing was. She nodded, wrote something down, and moved on.

This felt worse than forgetting. I had lied to my teacher. I had lied, and even worse, she had believed me. I told myself this was just one little slip, just one. So why was I so angry? Was I angry at her? No. I was disappointed in myself; disappointed in myself for forgetting, disappointed because I lied. Well, there was no turning back now. I had just dug myself a hole. It was not one of those wells on TV that little children fall into, when they can just yell for the collie to go and get help. No. Mine was a hole that people will fall into, and in their desperation to get out, dig down instead of making steps up.

That was three years ago.

Recently I read David Emerald’s book *The Power of TED** (**the empowerment dynamic*). Not only did I find the book interesting, but also quite helpful. In Emerald’s book he talks about how you can change your reactions, focusing on intended

outcomes rather than problems. This switches your role. So, what is the opposite of a victim? Emerald says that it is a *creator*. When in a *creator* role, the person owns their responsibility and contribution to their current circumstances. They see the challenge as something that they can learn from. This is someone who creates outcomes and takes control of their life.

This leads us to our next role; a *challenger*. Pretty self-explanatory, the *challenger* is meant to challenge a *creator* into taking a positive step. Our last role of *coach* is somebody who will effectively help the *victim* move toward his or her dreams and desires, without stepping in and taking over.

Do I still dig now? Ever since I learned about these roles, I have been trying to catch myself and shift to the right way of thinking so my actions take steps, rather than stumble through situations. Sure, this transition is not an easy one, and it is not always my first reaction. It's hard, but it's worth it. It's definitely better to dig steps up and out rather than deeper into a bad situation. Besides you get a better view of the world from the outside of the hole.