

(The following two lists should in no way be considered absolute, complete, or anything more than a general guideline. Always consult a professional, a security person, and never hesitate to call 911).

Listening For Suicide Risk

- ▶ A direct statement of the intention to commit suicide.
- ▶ A specific plan.
- ▶ History of attempts.
- ▶ Vague statements about suicide or his or her own funeral.
- ▶ History of depression.
- ▶ Hopelessness or recent losses.
- ▶ Alcohol or drug use.
- ▶ Ill health.
- ▶ Impulsivity.
- ▶ Stressful events.
- ▶ Adolescent or elderly.
- ▶ Access to or availability of weapons.

Risk of Homicidal Behavior

- ▶ Direct threats.
- ▶ Access to or availability of weapons.
- ▶ Substance abuse.
- ▶ History of past acts of violence.
- ▶ History of explosive, persecutory, paranoid, suspicious, angry, hostile behaviors.
- ▶ Verbalized a plan to do an action.
- ▶ Verbalized an identified victim.
- ▶ Apparent unwillingness to collaborate during a conflict.

Make an emergency phone list and put it by your phone, not in a notebook: crisis hotline, mental health, EAP, law, and fire... Remember that the number for 911 in most places is "911."

It is easy to remember for a reason.

5.4 Become Fluent In a New Way of Communicating

Communication models are not one-size-fits-all. Finding a style that fits your personality is important to competency and confidence. Whether you study Rosenberg’s model of “non-violent communication” or your grandmother’s “be-nice-to-everyone” model, that is up to you. There are styles that are more functional at the workplace, especially when dealing with difficult people, bullies, jerks, and emotional terrorists.

If everyone on your team is on the same page, the emotional terrorist... [will] eventually lose control, lose interest, and either become compliant or move on to the next target.

5.4.1 Karpman Drama Triangle

The approach developed by Stephen Karpman is a model of communication within a psychological model called *transactional analysis* that efficiently removes the power plays from any interaction (Karpman, 1968). Karpman’s drama triangle is described below. If you see an interaction a bit like a game model, the three roles in the drama triangle would be victim, persecutor, and rescuer – taking on any of these roles is a dangerous position. As the roles shift quickly from one to another, anyone playing this game will be caught in a veritable unending spiral of emotional conflict. Moving away from any of these three roles will lead to neutrality and a position of clarity that will move any discussion away from emotional content to business content.

Managing the creative attributes of emotional terrorists takes calm, quiet, non-emotional persistence. In the face of tornadoes at work, you are the calm place, the shelter, the cellar, or the quiet serenity model for your staff. If you spin, all will be lost. If you get into anger, fear, or blame, all will be lost. If you take on any one of the drama triangle roles – becoming a victim, a rescuer, or a persecutor – all will be lost. If you are tranquil and persistent over time, that will become the tone of your leadership and the higher ground that your team will go to when under duress.

If everyone on your team is on the same page, the emotional terrorist will not have a place to spin or create chaos; so they eventually lose control, lose interest, and either become compliant or move on to the next target. I have found that once managers get the hang of this, they truly enjoy the refined, professional power of being in a neutral position. The pressure is off, and they are able to access their own opinion, ideas, intuitions, and creative ideas. I have seen them sit up a little taller, have softer expressions on their faces, laugh more frequently, and relax in the knowledge that what they have been

doing is actually very, very hard. They give themselves some permission to feel a bit proud of their work. Good managers are a brave lot!

A suggestion I give managers who are trying for the first time to experience neutrality is to think of themselves as Switzerland. I remind them that Switzerland, as a nation, maintains a politic of neutrality. This is not a weak position in the world. In fact, Switzerland is where the Geneva Convention was held, where Swiss bank accounts are considered the safest, where there are Swiss Army Knives and the best chocolate. The Swiss have a very powerful and well-trained army. They know they have the capacity to defend and attack, but choose not to do so. In that choice, they have remained world leaders and safe haven as neutral ground. They do not participate in the drama triangle sorts of politics of the rest of the world. After I explain Swiss neutrality as a model of strength, I remind them of the chocolate part. It is obvious to me that after any enduring challenge of remaining neutral in the midst of conflict, chocolate is indicated. This is not *carte blanche* for a binge feeding frenzy, but rather honoring the tradition of many warriors to finish a battle with a “wee bit of chocolate.”

Master the Drama Triangle: *I would like to thank Stephen Karpman for supporting my use of his wonderful model. Others copy it, or change the words of his original work and call it their own, but the original works well – so why change it.*

Karpman’s drama triangle is a model for communication drawn from the psychological theory of transactional analysis (TA). The model can be used to look at human interaction like a game with three players:

- ▶ The Victim,
- ▶ The Rescuer, and
- ▶ The Persecutor.

As the game is played, no one wins. The roles are exchanged and repeated in a vicious cycle of exchange that moves each player into the other role to maintain the game. As the game continues, the Victim attacks the Persecutor for “crimes” and thus now becomes the Persecutor through the use of blaming. The Persecutor now is the Victim. The Rescuer may step in to offer assistance to the Victim, which threatens the Persecutor, who is now the Victim by way of the Rescuer. The Victim may join the Rescuer and both may now attack the Persecutor, who becomes the Victim by the attack and uses it to justify another attack or to hook another Rescuer *and the game continues until someone steps out of the cycle and becomes a Non-Player.*

The Non-Player, although seen as a player by the others, can remain in the setting but will take on a neutral, nonparticipating role. This may be seen as a rescue, an attack, or a martyr (victim) stance, but if it is maintained over time, players will either end the game or move on to solicit new players.

5.4.2 When is it a Game and When is it for Real?

There are real victims in life. If you are hit by a car, attacked by a terrorist, molested, assaulted, and so forth, you are a victim. (The victim in the Karpman drama triangle, however, puts adhesive on the back of his or her wrist and attaches it to his or her forehead in an ongoing “poor me” position).

There are real persecutors. Terrorists, offenders, and criminals are not playing. They are dead serious.

There are real rescuers. Law enforcement, nurses, fire fighters, EMTs, teachers, counselors, social workers, and other “good guys” are not playing the triangle game, but must watch that they aren’t rescuing people who do not want to be rescued.

Individuals in the drama triangle are playing roles that are not real – they do it for the game itself. If you stop playing, eventually they will move on because you are not playing. They may up the ante, or raise the stakes significantly to entice you to continue being a player, but if you move away from the triangle, you will eventually feel better and be more useful.

An old classic drama triangle is seen in the melodramatic scene of the sweet and innocent heroine tied to the railroad tracks by the evil villain as the handsome hero rides in just in the nick of time. This is endemic to our collective sense of theater. Hollywood knows that the archetypal evil-doer must kidnap the helpless victim so that the hero as Agent 007, Superman, martial arts expert, or even cartoon figure sweeps in to save the weak and to save the known world for the betterment of humanity.

The drama triangle is everywhere, but that does not necessarily mean we have to play it out at the worksite with theatrical dimensions. Even if your company is part of the industry that promotes or supports the drama of victims, rescuers, or persecutors, it doesn’t mean your workplace has to replicate the soap opera within the work environment. Watch a soap opera or CNN to see how the triangle plays out. Now watch your worksite for how you may be unconsciously playing.

I often meet resistance to the topic of managing emotions at work. I am no longer surprised when someone verbally attacks me or my ideas. Some people just do not want to deal with the soft-sided emotional contents of business.

Therefore, I give you unofficial permission to go sit in an Alanon meeting, substituting the word “alcohol” with the word “bully.”

Outside Intervention: Alternative support could be gained from Codependents Anonymous (CODA) or other 12-step programs. However, having seen the long term patient/client results of participation in Alanon and CODA, the clear choice for one practice for me would be Alanon. That is my professional position. Having an emotional terrorist in your midst is quite like having a raging drunk in your living room – you’ll never know when he/she will go “off.” And for that process Alanon is the better choice for acute acting out of anyone or anything in your circle. CODA isn’t immediate enough and provides ample opportunity for extreme levels of denial of your own accountability in the Karpman Triangle set up. It often leads to long-term victimhood behaviors rather than kick-ass accountable recovery when you are in the proximity of crazy people being crazy, drunks being drunk, or terrorists being terrorizing. Someone drunk on power and control still acts like a drunk whether he or she imbibes or not. Thus a “dry drunk” is still a problem for the co-dependent. In my opinion, Alanon is the preferred intervention.

5.7 Emotional Continuity for Employees Transitioning from Armed Services

5.7.1 Transition to Civilian Life – A Career Change, Not a Crisis

Transition from military to civilian life is not a crisis. It is a process, similar to other major changes in career or lifestyle. Again, a healthy person can get through a process, where a dysfunctional one may struggle a bit, and a pathological one will have more of a challenge. The stages of grief apply to transition. Don’t assume someone who is recently discharged from active duty is suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other service-related disability just because he or she is having a bad day or week. Maybe the dog died. Maybe the person has a cold. Maybe the person just moved back home after being far away for a long long time and is adjusting to being near the family for the first time in years. On the other hand, maybe the person is away from home for the first time. Lots of emotions have absolutely nothing to do with being active or retired military personnel.

On the other hand, don’t assume the opposite. PTSD is a real thing, and so are suicide and homicide and divorce and other rotten things that happen to military personnel after they have served their country. There are excellent support services for military personnel who are in the process or recently separated from the service. There are amazing support systems for veterans. Of course the system has weak spots, but there are also countless people doing hard work to serve those who serve. Encourage your military veterans to

reach out to their specific branch and find out what is available. Or have that available for them. Go to www.militaryonesource.com and find out what is available. Each branch of the military has specialists ready to help smooth the transition from military to civilian.

Transition includes three phases: The Beginning of a Change, the Middle of the Change, and the End of the Change. Emotions for each phase will include each one of the grief stages.

Leaving the military may mean significant financial challenges, and the job these personnel have now may be critical to their survival and self-esteem. As they learn the new language, culture, and lifestyle changes of returning to civilian life, they may feel more unstable than they were previously. This does not necessarily mean they are “unstable.” It just may mean they are in transition. Transition includes three phases: The Beginning of a Change, the Middle of the Change, and the End of the Change. Emotions for each phase will include each one of the grief stages: denial, bargaining, anger, depression, and acceptance. A healthy person will go through these stages in good order and not get stuck in any stage. A dysfunctional person may take longer and be a bit more uncertain. Someone with severe issues may end up getting stuck in a transition stage. This latter is something to be aware of so that you can offer help from EAP or other services in your company, or direct such people to their post-military resources. It makes good sense to have partnerships with local military providers or those familiar with the special and regular needs of transitioning military personnel.

5.7.2 Understanding the Background of Military Personnel

Just like all human beings, military personnel come in all shapes, sizes, genders, cultures, perceptions, choices, religions, sexual preferences, boot sizes, and preferences over Coca Cola or Pepsi. The number one rule for those who have reason to consider the emotional continuity for military, whether active or retired, is do not make any assumptions!

- Not all military personnel have had combat duty.
- Some military personnel are typists, engineers, nurses, supply chain workers, and truck drivers – and more!
- Not all military personnel have PTSD. Some do. Many do not.
- Military personnel may have worked all over the world, or in just one location.

Tools for Emotions:

Chapter 5 Managing Your Feelings & Dealing with Bullies & Emotional Terrorists 161

- ▶ Military personnel have the same life issues as everyone else.
- ▶ Military personnel can fit into each category 1) healthy, 2) dysfunctional, 3) pathological, or 4) emotional terrorist.
- ▶ Military personnel have had different duties and levels of accountability, depending on the branch in which they served, their rank, their duties, and their experiences.
- ▶ Military personnel do not speak a different language than civilians any more than a musician who can read music speaks a different language. They have had opportunity and experience to focus their language on one topic, the military life, and most are more than capable of learning something new. Many are already bilingual or multilingual.
- ▶ Military personnel often have to cross-train, so they are used to learning new things.
- ▶ Military personnel might call you “sir” or “ma’am” for a while, which does not mean they are from the South – it means they have learned to respect others in their space.
- ▶ Veterans and recently exited military personnel may have different needs, just like any other person on your team.
- ▶ Some military personnel have had heinous experiences, but will recover quickly when they get on with their civilian lives. Some will not recover quickly but will do so. Some will take a long, long, long time – and a few won’t ever recover. It is a continuum. Be aware of what that looks like in your work environment, and don’t assume someone taking a while to recover is a “lost cause.”
- ▶ When military personnel are transitioning into civilian life, they go through the normal stages of transition that anyone else would. Do not assume it is harder or easier for them simply because they have been military personnel.