

# Sex Games People Play: Intimacy Blocks, Games, and Scripts

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## **Abstract**

**This paper draws from the presentation “Sex Games People Play” before an audience of 80 at the World TA 2005 Summer Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. Included in this paper are new, unpublished TA theories on sex and intimacy including: the Sexual Winner’s and Loser’s Loops, the new field of Intimacy Analysis, the Intimacy Winner’s and Loser’s Loops, and five new versions of the Drama Triangle at the psychological and script levels.**

## **Sex Games and Intimacy**

This paper introduces the new transactional analysis theory of three basic blocks to sexual intimacy in problem relationships—the Scared, Disgusted, and Deprived blocks. These three blocks operate in varying degrees at both the social and psychological levels in transactional analysis and are not specific to any ego states. As blocks to sexual intimacy, they fit into the transactional analysis time structuring list of the six ways people structure time, with intimacy at the top. Eric Berne refers to the list as how we structure time with people while “Waiting for Santa Claus,” or, “Waiting for Rigor Mortis.” Introduced here is what I call the field of “Intimacy Analysis.”

All theory and therapy fields in transactional analysis deal with social intimacy in their own way. Redecision, for example, would free up many of the 13 underlying script injunctions at their impasses, such as Don’t Be Close, Don’t Feel, and Don’t Want. Relational therapy would explore the inner transferences, suppressions, and resistances. The Process Therapy Model (Kahler, 2008) would treat the six personality types and their underlying phasing issues.

## **Intimate Communication: Winner’s Loops and Loser’s Loops**

Using Berne’s legacy of scientific reductionism and applying Occam’s Razor of Scientific Parsimony, I have reduced all the transactional communication blocks I have seen to the four basics. These four discouraging attitudes function as barriers to problem solving in both verbal and nonverbal communication, intimate or not, at home and at work, and are not linked to any specific ego state, game, crossed transaction, or discount. If used in a game, the sweat shirt might read “Try and Know Me If You Can.” This reductionism theory is similar to reducing the drama in games to the three roles of Persecutor, Rescuer, and Victim and linking them together in a tight triangle (Karpman, 1968, 2007b). In the Winner’s and Loser’s Loops the four blocks are drawn in a tight, impenetrable circle, or loop (see Figures 1a and 1b), which could also be enlarged to encompass the three ego states in a shell.

These four blocks to intimate communication and problem solving are defined as the Condescending, Abrupt, Secretive, and Evasive Blocks—each a completely separate maneuver, but all four happening as a unit with alternating emphasis (Karpman, 1975, 1981, 1997, 2005, 2007a). To teach it, I use a guided imagery exercise with the following suggestions: “Imagine that you want to personally get through to someone who doesn’t want to listen to you or to your ideas. In what way is the person:

- 1) *CONDESCENDING?* You and what you are doing is inferior, annoying, and a waste of his or her time. Soon you believe you are in the wrong and you stop trying.
- 2) *ABRUPT?* With sudden intimidation, the person interrupts you and tells you to stop immediately, or he or she will walk away angrily. The person may repeatedly cut you off by reciting his or her rules and facts over and over. Your subject is now ended.

- 3) *SECRETIVE?* The person withholds the necessary information you need to solve the problem or to think of compromises. He or she may ignore you and not respond at all. The person withholds the positive strokes of liking you and your ideas, which would make problem solving easier. He or she withholds his or her unresolved Scared, Disgusted, and Deprived basic sexual feeling blocks so you cannot know what the suppressed issues are.
- 4) *EVASIVE?* The person quickly changes subjects and leads the conversation far afield, usually to something more interesting at the time. You will never get a straight answer to your question. You get involved in the side issue, and once again nothing gets resolved.”

These four intimacy blocks happen simultaneously and prevent a couple from successfully talking through sexual or relationship issues. This leaves them unable to successfully complete what I call the Three Rules of Openness (Karpman, 1997, 2007a) that I require as part of the contract in couples' work. Needed is the ability to Bring It Up, Talk It Up, and Wrap It Up, all requiring separate skills . . . as opposed to Save It Up, Blow It Up, Mop It Up!

*SELF MONITORING.* Many TA therapy contracts include TA education, Adult control of the Child, and self monitoring. Patients can learn to monitor the four intimacy blocks in themselves and others. Speak to someone, and then watch what happens! In classical transactional analysis, therapists monitor their Parent, Adult, and Child ego states. In miniscript theory (Kahler with Capers, 1974) people monitor their five drivers. In Schiff Passivity theory (Schiff & Schiff, 1971) they monitor the four discounts and passivity around thinking. In Steiner's Radical Psychiatry (Steiner, 1975) they monitor lies and power plays during dominance. Self monitoring is also included in many other transactional analysis therapies that contract for the transactional analysis standard of demonstrable social insight and change.

### **Sexual Winners and Losers**

This paper on “Sex Games People Play”

introduces a new intimacy model called the Sexual Loser's Loop—a unique loop linking together the three fundamental emotional blocks to sexual desire, performance, enjoyment, and intimacy. These are the sexual variants of the larger group of social level Intimacy Loser's Loops and Winner's Loops (Figures 1a and 1b). The names refer to Eric Berne's social definition of Winners—they decide what they want and get it; Non Winners—they decide what they want but work too hard to get it and barely come out even; and Losers—they decide what they want but lose out on getting it. These refer to the attainment of specific goals, not to any personal identity. This work is directed to people who want intimacy but lose out on getting it. The four intimacy blocks mentioned above prevent discussion of the three sexual blocks, which are often hard to admit or talk about.

### **Intimacy Blocking and Unblocking**

The two groupings of intimacy blocks are, in the first grouping, the *Intimacy Evasive Loser's Loops*, using the four initial letters of C A S E representing the Condescending, Abrupt, Secretive, and Evasive transactional blocks to intimate discussions. These are linked in a loop for connectedness and easy memorizing. They leave these people blocked against varying degrees of intimacy or any open communication that is needed. If one of the four blocks is missing, there may be a way to begin communication. A discount or crossed transaction may or may not have all of them at first.

In the second grouping, there is a complementary provoking loop called the *Intimacy Invasive Loser's Loops*, or E R A (see Figures 2a and 2b) for the three invasive blocks of Eager, Relentless, and Annoying persistence, also linked in a loop, representing people who invade another person's boundaries, forcing the other to put up a protective wall, or a CASE around themselves. The people will demand “Talk to me now!!” or “What are you hiding?” or “Love me more and more,” in relentless pursuit. One needy E R A person may exhibit the S/N/F loser's loop of the three eager dwarfs: Speedy, Needy, and Feedy: Speedy—they go faster than you want to go; Needy—they need

more than you can give; and Feedy they give you more than you want. An overworked sexual partner may see the E R A other as having a sexual addiction. The two basic loops are a novel discovery and cover all transactional intimacy and communication blocks.

*POSITIVE LOOPS.* In line with current transactional analysis theory making, we also need to mention the positive mirror side the release the corresponding OK Winner's Loops. These require for theory simplicity the same initial letters and represent the closest OK opposite choices. Using each of the same letters, the winner's C+A+S+E+ loop represents a Caring, Approachable, Sharing, and Engaged atti

tude, offering a welcoming openness and reward, that is, Caring the opposite of Condescending; Approachable the opposite of Abrupt; Sharing the opposite of Secretive; and Engaged the opposite of Evasive.

The positive alternative to the invasive E R A loop, using each of the same letters, is the winner's E+R+A+ Loop, which represents an Empathic, Relaxed, and Appealing attitude, offering a safe and tempting invitation, that is, Empathic the opposite of Eager; Relaxed the opposite of Relentless; and Appealing the opposite of Annoying. These invite intimacy rather than invading privacy. They are the winner's equivalents to the former E R A (Figures 1c and 1d).

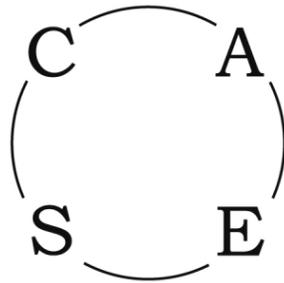


Figure 1a  
Intimacy Evasive Loser's Loop  
(Condescending, Abrupt,  
Secretive, Evasive)

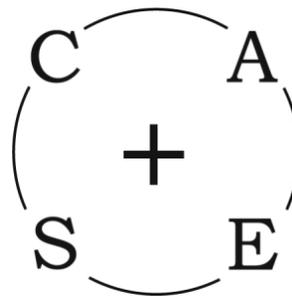


Figure 1b  
Intimacy Sharing Winner's Loop  
(Caring, Approachable,  
Sharing, Engaged)

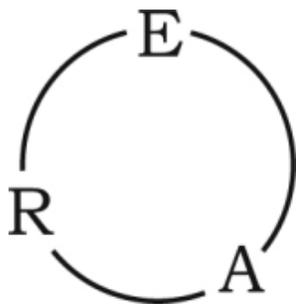


Figure 1c  
Intimacy Invasive Loser's Loop  
(Eager, Relentless, Annoying)

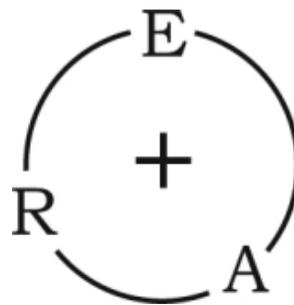


Figure 1d  
Intimacy Inviting Winner's Loop  
(Empathic, Relaxed, Appealing)

### **Intimacy Workshop Exercises**

For the openness training sections of my relationship workshops, people are asked to pair up, pick a relevant topic they have been absolutely unwilling to solve, and then practice using the four blocks in the not OK and then the OK way of talking and listening. Then they discuss with each other the blocks that were the most and least difficult for them. This active practice will improve awareness in talking out future relationship issues. The tape of the workshop (Karpman, 2007a) demonstrates how to set up the exercises. The same exercises can be set up in couples' therapy or play acted in individual or group therapy.

Another popular exercise during relationship workshops is to get participants to create strokes for others by drawing on paper several flattering Personalized Winner's Loops that they can take home with them after the workshop. Examples of winning identities in a loop are "I see you as a T/T/T: "Tall, Tender, and Terrific," or "You're a W/W/W: "Wild, Warm, and Wonderful," or a "S/S/S: Smart, Sincere, and Successful." These are stroke triplets referring to their winners' identity (Karpman, 1979b).

Also as a footnote to this Intimacy Blocking series, there is a series of six Get Fired Loser's Loops (Karpman, 1979a) defining the six fixed social stereotypes to avoid in yourself and to help others learn how to avoid being stereotyped. These represent unwelcome people who actually do good work but habitually get fired or not hired in relationships and employment because they fall into unflattering stereotypes without knowing it (i.e., P.A.Gi: Pushy, Accusatory, and Guilt inducing, or C.U.D.: Cheap, Ungrateful, and Demanding, or F.F.F.: Flighty, Flakey, and Frivolous, etc.). These six stereotypes represent people who do good work but are the first out the door and fired.

### **The Sexual Loser's Loops and Winner's Loops**

*At the Social Level*, the communication blocking Intimacy Winner's and Loser's loops offer: (1) a way to be open at home and with friends, (2) a way to talk through problems by monitoring the four communication blocks in yourself, or (3) a way to monitor the four blocks in

others and learn how to work around them. In theory, intimacy blocking by the social level intimacy blocks are communicated by barriers. Intimacy blocking by the social level games in the Drama Triangle are communicated by roles.

*At the Psychological Level* there is a core of three feeling blocks—Scared, Disgusted, and Deprived—that prevent sexual intimacy. Some times these show up behaviorally, but usually the blocks lie dormant as unspoken feelings. The net result is less sex without knowing why. Sometimes this results in incorrect and unfair blame.

In therapy, the Sexual Loser's Loop is commonly used as an informal questionnaire or as a therapist's outline to explore the multitude of suppressed feelings that lie below the surface. The simple grouping into three blocks makes it easier to use. Some of these fears, angers, and hurts have been building up over a long period of time as transactional analysis "trading stamps," without a way to resolve them and, ultimately, trading them in for a "guilt free quit." This leaves a couple wondering, "Why aren't we having sex anymore?" and singles wondering, "Why aren't we having any sex at all?"

The three overt and covert blocks to sex are:

- 1) SCARED of hurting the other person mentally or physically or of being hurt by the other person mentally or physically
- 2) DISGUSTED with the other person mentally or physically or disgusted with yourself mentally or physically or seeing the other as disgusted with you mentally or physically or disgusted with sex itself
- 3) DEPRIVED is your final "Quit Decision." After too many hurts and disappointments, one eventually arrives at the fixed position of "I will never again get my needs met by this person." Then the person is unmotivated or unavailable to discuss it further, citing many tangential excuses such as entering a new phase in his or her life or age related physical changes, or a new religious commitment, or needing more time to know someone (and hopefully to turn on again), and so forth. However, if he or she replies honestly to the question "What steps led up to this change sexually?" most of the

three blocks will be revealed as preceding the change, and the real work can begin.

For practice, the reader is now invited to go on a guided exercise to recall a time and place when a turnoff happened with a certain person. Then experience the three sexual blocks in themselves and consider that the three may have been a factor in the other person's turnoff as well. Then consider the result if the three turn ons were present.

The words in Figures 2a and 2b were selected over time and needed to be strong. "Scared" borders on a disabling panic to Get Away From on the OK Corral (Ernst, 1971). "Disgust" implies a distasteful Get Rid Of, a regurgitation, stronger than a temporary word like "mad." "Deprived" is more final than temporary words like "hurt" or "disappointed" and signals a Get Nowhere With on the Ernst OK Corral. Hopefully, partners will be compassionate and flexible and with enough goodwill built up to be able to stop short of making the final Deprived Decision of "I will never again get my needs met by this person."

The Sexual Winner's Loop carefully chooses the equivalent opposite feeling of the turnoffs; the words are not arbitrary. They use the same first letters for easier learning. *Safe* offers the welcome opposite of *Scared* both parties feel *Safe*. The turnoff of *Disgusted* is replaced by the turn on of *Desirable*. The turnoff of *Deprived* is replaced by the turn on of *Depen-*

*dable* ("I'll always be there for you"). All three positive attitudes lead to the desired OK Corral "Get On With." Knowing the three better ways becomes a welcome blueprint for partners who are motivated to learn and change.

#### Examples from Couples and Singles in Therapy

If a sexual problem comes up in therapy, a simple way to get to the core issues is for the therapist to simply say, "Usually there are three blocks behind most sex problems—the feelings of being scared, disgusted, or deprived." Then the therapist explains them. Answers will soon emerge. Presented in the following paragraphs are examples from some actual cases.

1) *SCARED PHYSICALLY*. He was afraid of hurting her or himself physically. He withdrew sexually because he was scared of hurting his beloved partner. She may have complained too often that her body was sick and hurting or that she had frequent headaches. Maybe sex was painful to her because he did not give her enough time to warm up. Perhaps he was too rough, heavy, or uncomfortable on her or he had bad technique. These may be legitimate complaints, but over time he would see her as a complainer who was too fragile for him. Although he loved her, he did not want to hurt her further, so he began withdrawing to protect her from inflicted pain and/or inconvenience. They never talked about it.

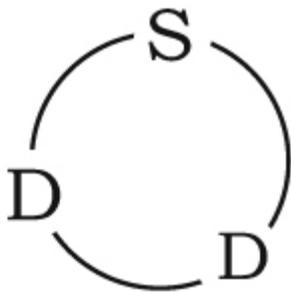


Figure 2a  
Sexual Intimacy Loser's Loop  
(Scared, Disgusted, Deprived)

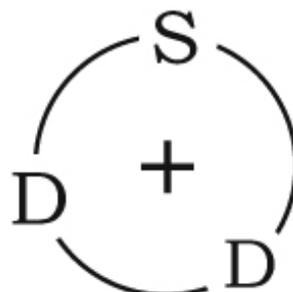


Figure 2b  
Sexual Intimacy Winner's Loop  
(Safe, Desirable, Dependable)

Conversely, she was afraid of the same things physically: that sex would hurt or not be done sensitively or that he would start too soon before she was ready. She might fear she was hurting him by wrong touching or quitting too soon or hurting his bad back. Perhaps he, too, complained too often of discomfort or lack of sleep. She may have old memories of pain and abuse. Each could be afraid of disease. Each person could have his or her own unspoken reasons for being afraid of hurting the other person physically or being hurt by the other physically. Usually these concerns are mentioned a few times but not effectively followed up on. Dropping the subject does not bring relief. Secrets stand in the way of intimacy. An open questioning from this checklist can shed light on hidden concerns and then be followed up with honest discussion, relief, and a surprising renewal of interest.

2) *SCARED MENTALLY*. In a similar example, he could have been afraid of hurting her mentally. When he got upset he would raise his voice. He finally realized that her tears were his fault, and he felt guilty. He believed her when she said that he deprived her of the things she needed to be happy and he was scared of disappointing her. He was afraid that he did not know how to communicate and talking things over would make everything worse. He said incorrect words in bed that seemed insensitive to women and hurt her feelings soon he was afraid of talking in bed. He had always been afraid of rejection by women or of feminists calling him sexist. He projected old fears of his critical mother onto his partner. He was afraid he was too distant to her and did not kiss her the correct way the way her previous lovers did. However, he loved her and did not want to make things worse with his insensitive words, so he withdrew. Over time, sex in the future took less time, was less frequent, and was not as satisfying. Fear and hesitation replaced desire.

She too could be afraid of the same things from him of her hurting him mentally, aware of his complaints of her turning him down too often, of disappointing him, or her saying hurtful things she did not mean but that he held on to literally and never forgot. She did not mean to demean him to her friends and children, but

she did not think real men should be that sensitive, so she questioned his manhood and regretted it. And she was afraid of her own self control when angry. She could be afraid of other things, that is, of the relationship not working, or worried about finances or the children. These could be on her mind, and it would hurt him if she mentioned that she had stray thoughts during sex. They were both afraid of simply asking, "What would you like me to say or do for you?"

Men and women in relationships say careless things equally, but some people get them cleared and quickly forget them, others sulk and hold on to words as stamps that they trade in for sexual withdrawal, whereas others are compassionate and forgiving. Some are turned on by the challenge to fight back. The S D D checklist flushes out these buried feelings in therapy and can be aired out sensitively so long as both parties are motivated and agree to talk in good faith.

3) *DISGUSTED PHYSICALLY*. Partners can get disgusted with each other when one has physically "let himself or herself go" but somehow does not expect it to be noticed or significant. Refusing to talk about it may make it worse. Accusations can lead to new barriers of shame and disgust. Singles who have a strong physical preference "type" may never connect at all and never say why. Some may have been taught that sex was disgusting. Added or lost weight can become an issue. One husband was mad that his wife wore sloppy clothes and thought that she hid her body from him on purpose. His bad hygiene could get disgusting, as well as smells from smoking, drinking, drugs, garlic, onions, and dirty underwear. Either one could get disgusted with the other or disgusted with himself or herself, hiding his or her body from sight if he or she no longer feels attractive, whether it is from weight gain, wrinkles, big bellies, cold sores, and so on. Additionally, disgust could be a cover up both pick at faults in the other to displace attention away from their own self hate, inadequacies, or unhappiness with their lives.

4) *DISGUSTED MENTALLY*. Disgust with the other's character can surface if the person becomes an embarrassment publicly or in front

of friends and family. Respect can also be lost for the error prone partner who is then labeled a “screw up.” Anger and betrayal can arise if one feels taken for granted by the person who is no longer the “buff” and romantic person he or she married. Unethical sides of the personality that were previously ignored can surface as an issue of disgust of character and unspoken disrespect. Physical abuse and substance abuse can be a lasting turnoff. Unconventional sexual requests and Internet sex addictions can be disgusting to the other. Partners could get disgusted with themselves (guilty) for having said hurtful things or betraying the trust of the other or for concealing bad thoughts or hiding a fantasized or real affair. Discussing these issues can be delicately handled.

5) *DEPRIVED*. This is considered to be the final “Deprived Decision” that after many disappointments and failed attempts one will close the door with the final decision: “I will never again get my needs met with this person.” The person may then never be accessible or motivated to get into a conversation that would open the subject up again. He or she may cover it up and say a sexless relationship is a natural passage of mature relationships and praise his or her new relief at being free of sexual hassles. The person can “lock” in the decision with a new religious commitment and a vow of abstinence that walls off the root causes taking it further away from inspection and discussion. This can be the final area that is not open for further questioning. Or, if a partner insists that the marriage vows of intimacy are broken and it needs to be discussed, the partner may reply, “I’m not motivated, I don’t feel anything anymore.” Then the only possible follow up question becomes, “What are the steps that got you to the point of not being motivated?” This may then open the door to a needed “heart to heart” intimate discussion.

Used as an explorative checklist, the Deprived block can be found to cover other causes. “I’m too tired” can be seen as deprived of rest. “I’m too busy with too much on my mind” can be seen as being deprived of enough alone time, or feeling deprived of a supportive partner who can help him or her think things through. One can feel deprived over time and give up

hope of ever doing fun things again or of ever having meaningful talks again. At times there can be half hearted quit, leaving the door open but only if the other person keeps trying hard enough. One can secretly feel deprived of a favorite turn on, or deprived of the perfect sexual fantasy from his or her past memory, or from a future fantasy that will always be beyond his or her reach. People can feel deprived of perfection by their own overactive “Be Perfect” driver and their game of “Blemish.”

*OTHER EXAMPLES*. So far, we have talked of the Sexual Loser’s Loop used in therapy to explore the three feeling categories of why one becomes turned off to sexual intimacy in his or her partner. But the checklist can also offer answers to the questions of why another person turned off to you, either your partner or a singles date. One man in therapy dated a “Too Much, Too Fast” woman who dropped him when their needs became polarized on the second date. She wanted exclusivity and he wanted to keep dating around, so she quit seeing him. In another case, it was he who wanted “Too Much, Too Fast” sexually but she had the slower “getting to know you” style of dating. In both instances, they came on “*Eager, Relentless, and Annoying*” with their wants. Analyzing that, each was *Deprived* of what he or she wanted; he said he was *Scared and Disgusted* with her for coming on too fast. She was *Scared Physically* of being used and *Scared Mentally* of having to deal with her jealousy and *Disgusted* with him for being another man who just wanted sex but would not commit.

The “*Never Again*” decision can be just for that one relationship, but it can also be in the script for “dating never again” or for “sex never again” or for any “commitment never again.” Nevertheless, if the motivation can be renewed, it all can be traced back to the Scared, Disgusted, or Deprived reactions preceding the moment of decision. This would allow a relationship redecision to be made.

### Sex Games and Game Analysis

This paper began by listing the hidden sexual intimacy blocks of Scared, Disgusted, and Deprived feelings that can result from or motivate many games. But any transactional game (Berne,

1964, 1972, p. 23) can stand in the way of intimacy. Sometimes these games are played to set up a payoff of wild make up sex later or of the opposite payoff – an angry righteous rejection that reinforces old racket feelings. There are a variety of negative games of opposition, unpredictability, and anger that can be mentioned, as in the following case example of time structuring by two longtime gamers playing “Uproar.”

AN “UPROAR” GAME EXAMPLE #1: In the following reported drama, a man feels like a lonely Victim (hopeful role), while also being extra sweet to his girlfriend as a Rescuer (helpful role) and covertly as Persecutor (hurtful role) by playing an ulterior “Let’s pretend there’s no unfinished business between us.” Ignoring their issues flushes out her suppressed anger, making her look bad. In the example below, he begins making up to her, hopefully setting up the nest in anticipation of an intimate over nighter. But soon he is collecting mad stamps for the payoff to follow.

HE, SET UP (hopeful): “I like coming over to your house. It is so peaceful here.”

SHE, SWITCH (hurtful): “This is NOT a hotel for you!”

HE, SET UP (hopeful): “I like the way you treat me so nicely here.”

SHE, SWITCH (hurtful): “And what are YOU going to do for ME???”

HE, SET UP (hopeful): “I drive for an hour to get here. That counts. The gas is expensive. I’m tired. Do you think you could cook dinner for me?”

SHE, SWITCH (hurtful): “NO, NO! I am a lady! You have to take me out to dinner! I want to be treated with respect like other women or there is no sex tonight!”

HE, SET UP (helpful): “We’ve argued for an hour. We’re getting tired. Can we stop talking and relax for now? I’m willing to help in any way I can.”

SHE, SWITCH (hurtful): “No you don’t! I haven’t finished with you yet!!”

AND THEN, LATER ON AT TRADING STAMP TIME, COMES THE PAYOFF:

SHE, SET UP (she hopeful): “I’m OK now honey, but I need to cuddle a little before I’m ready for sex? Is that OK with you?”

HE, SWITCH (he hurtful): “No way! If it takes you that long to get warmed up, then you’re with the wrong guy! You only want me for my brains and not my body. I knew it. You never have sex on your mind, so it is always up to me to get you ready. You must be frigid. I’m going home!” (Door slams).

BOTH CAN GET THE SCRIPT PAYOFF: “I never win. People can’t be trusted.”

In all of these, the switches in the drama triangle are sudden and extreme and they all hint of a history of trading stamps between the two.

### **Motivations for Game Playing**

In TA game analysis – such as in the contentious “Uproar” game just described – a half dozen “advantages” to game playing are listed by Berne (1964), including biological stroking, advancing the script, getting the payoff, time structuring, and so on. There are also six hungers (Berne, 1970, pp. 210-211) that can motivate games: Stimulus, Recognition, Contact, Sexual, Structure, and Incident. Games can be played at increasing levels of hardness as first degree (socially acceptable), second degree (socially embarrassing), and third degree games (destructive). These can all be worked on in therapy.

In an important version of the Drama Triangle I call The Compassion Triangle (Karpman 1997, 2007b) (see Figure 5), the approach offered is to realize that each player has a Persecutor, Rescuer, and Victim motivation, overt or covert, simultaneously in action during each game that is played. This expands the range of insight into games. Also, each motivation will be present with at least 10% participation in each role, some hidden, in these following three basic levels. In the “Uproar” game in the earlier example, we can also speculate that there are three levels of motivations:

- 1) Relationship motivations (Social Level) (each person wanted to dump stamps and prove his or her point)
- 2) Personal motivations (Psychological Level) (each person wanted to escape his or

- her guilt for causing a feel bad situation)
- 3) Childhood motivations (Script Level) (each person had early issues with closeness and needed his or her script decision reinforced)

**Social- and Psychological-level Drama Triangles**

The interior space of the drawn triangle can be used as a space for illustrating what is going on inside a person, what his or her “inner personality” is doing during a game (Karpman, 2007b). The outside of the triangle can show what the world sees as his or her “outer personality” while game playing. This can show the overt outer role of the sweet Rescuer, but inside there can be a covert role and a pressure cooker of horrible things waiting for the opportunity to display. If this spills out, it could lessen his or her chance of being seen as a *Safe, Desirable, and Dependable* sex partner.

1) “WHAT’S SAID” (SOCIAL LEVEL). Using the Drama Triangle game model shown in Figures 3a and 3b, we can use the outside area of the triangle to illustrate objectively what the “Outer Personality” does *What’s Said*. In the earlier example of “Uproar,” What’s Said is what is spoken in the couple’s fight. The transactional reality of a game is defined by Berne by what can be photographed and tape recorded, and that definition fits for their fight and *What’s Said*.

2) “WHAT’S UNSAID” (PSYCHOLOGICAL LEVEL). Then, for the “Inner Personality,” we can use the inside area of the triangle to insert the hidden pressures and motivations of *What’s Unsaid* what is unseen that is held back in

waiting, ready to spring onto the other in an escalation if one chooses. It could also hold the good feelings for timely fence mending if one chooses. It is what is socially unseen, the inner voice in the mind, actions held back waiting to happen. Escalation to the overt Social Level still is a choice to make the game worse, moving it to second or third degree. But a forgiving kindness hidden inside is also a choice to keep the game at a safe first degree level or to even make the game go away. The man earlier in the “Uproar” example kept his stamps inside, unsaid, until payoff time.

What is kept in control inside does not have to be the negative unleashing of trading stamps or one’s personal demons collected from everywhere (although some people do just that). The escalation can either be accidental with apologies later, done on purpose, or done unconsciously for a game and script payoff, as in the earlier example. There is also an OK positive collection inside of *What’s Unsaid*, but these positive feelings were never revealed at payoff time. This could just as well have been the *unspoken strengths* of the inner positive Persecutor energy, that is, using OK Power to take charge to fix things. It could be the *unspoken love* for the other from the inner positive Rescuer corner energy that would bring back good feelings or the *unspoken sensitivity* of the inner positive Victim energy that would create sympathy. When intimate discussions resume between the couple, the positive side of what was withheld could now be shared for mutual understanding and relief. Then they can shift their time structuring upward from games to intimacy.

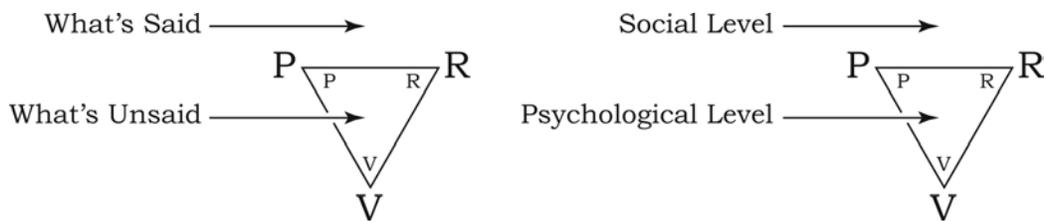


Figure 3a and Figure 3b  
Social- and Psychological-level Drama Triangles

The Drama Triangle (Karpman, 1968, 2007b), as commonly used, only names *Who* the players are and *What* they are doing at the external social level. However, if one wants to dig into the unseen deeper levels to get a helpful and sympathetic look at *Why* the games are played, we need to go inside the triangle to look for the motivations and the “*What’s Unsaid*” drama at the Internal Psychological Level. By regularly looking for what is beneath the surface, we can eventually have an automatic “Why?” inquiry into why the game is played and not just see the *What* and *Who* of naming the players and the game. In a game, the players are on Adrenaline Alert to win and seldom want to listen or understand the other player or themselves.

**The Drama of the Inner Self**

In Figure 4, we name the struggle directly within one’s Inner Self *while* a game is being played, such as the “Uproar” game illustrated earlier. Using a disease model due to the stress inflicted during games, there is *Susceptibility* to the games played balanced against *Immunity* to the games played. This presents the person with a choice between the negative and the positive use of his or her drama energies and a decision to stay out of games.

1) *SUSCEPTIBILITY*. The *Inner Persecutor* is motivated by *Self Sabotage* in his or her relationships with others. The Child is attracted to game players who will give the person negative strokes and payoffs. Over and over he or she provokes unsatisfying relationships.

The *Inner Rescuer* is motivated by the *Self Delusion* as if there was no game played or as if it is unsolvable. It is a self protecting denial of all responsibility and damaging consequences during the games.

The *Inner Victim* is motivated by *Self pity*, with a self sacrificial helplessness to get away from the game.

2) *IMMUNITY*. The OK inner Persecutor using power and aggression energy can switch to *Self Determination* to solve and end the game.

The OK inner Rescuer energy showing *Self Love* can want better for herself or himself and find ways to exit the game.

The OK inner Victim can switch from Passivity to *Self Acceptance* and self definition. During sexual games, all these feelings can exist alongside each other inside and be difficult to sort out.

**Escapes from Games in the Compassion Triangle**

The Compassion Triangle (Figure 5) (Karpman, 1997, 2007b) is a major variation that offers one of many escapes from the Drama Triangle. To exit a game, one should take 10% *Responsibility* for oneself as a part Persecutor and instigator of the game instead of exclusively seeing the *other* person as the Persecutor. Next, one needs to verbally acknowledge at least 10% of OK *Sympathy* for the other as your Victim and also 10% OK *Appreciation* for the efforts of the OK Rescuer in the other. All three roles will be there if one looks. Other

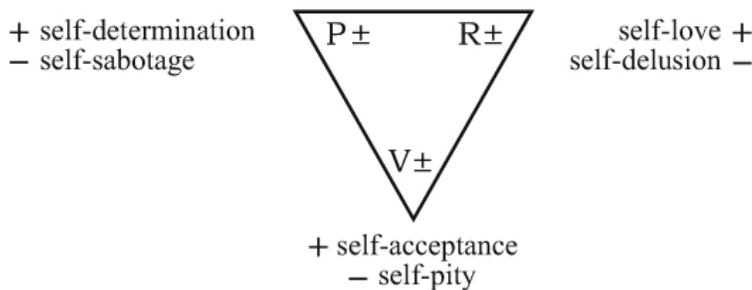


Figure 4  
The Inner Self-Drama Triangle

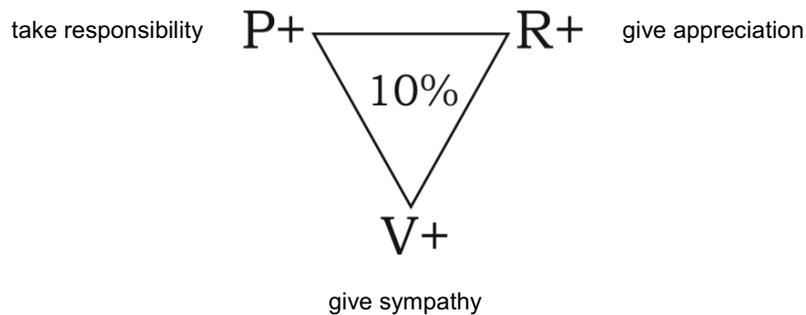


Figure 5  
The Compassion Triangle

escapes from the Drama Triangle can be through the use of Options (Karpman, 1971) and many others. See the worksheet called “The New Drama Triangles” for many other triangles on my Web site at [www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com](http://www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com) (Karpman, 2007b).

### Sex Games and Scripts

For a “Complete Transactional Analysis” (as in a “Complete Psychoanalysis”), one may need to explore the deeper script stages of development, script motivations, decisions, fixations, transactional transferences, impasses, the “Family Coat of Arms,” and the “Favorite Fairy Tale” that underlie the intimacy blocking games. We can name three R’s of transactional analysis *regression* therapy as: (1) Redecision therapy, (2) Reparenting therapy, and (3) Relational therapy and the other neo Freudian approaches. To that list we can add a *social level* TA fourth R called Relationship therapy, Berne’s classic and equally effective approach of script analysis.

### The Drama of the Script Child

Searching deeper when necessary, we find motivations for game playing determined by the early “Family Script Scene” when the “Family Script Game” was played. This can be drawn as either a tiny Redecision Triangle or a Transference Triangle inside the bigger drama triangle (Karpman, 2007b) or use this composite Family

Script Drama Triangle (Figure 6) that covers the approach of several schools of TA.

In summary, on the *outside* level of the triangles in Figures 3a and 3b, one is not in touch with the name of the game and the players; on the *inside* level, one is not in touch with their rackets and feelings; and on the *Script* level (Figure 6), one is not in touch with the family origins of the game.

In the “Uproar” game described earlier in Example 1, under “Sex Games and Game Analysis,” the couple fighting over home and dinner could share a Persecutor *Injunction* (Goulding & Goulding, 1976) of Don’t Be Close and Don’t Make It. The Rescuer *Driver* (Kahler with Capers, 1974) could be “Try hard” with an “Over and Over” script if their game keeps repeating. And the Victim *Racket* (Erskine & Zalcman, 1979) would be old, unresolved Anger and Hurt feelings saved as stamps over and over again. A dozen script injunctions have been described, with a new one added of Don’t Want. Any of them can affect communication blocks to sex and intimacy and can be the focus of Redecision work. The “Over and Over” mentioned is one of the six Time Scripts described by Berne (1970, pp. 166 167; 1972, p. 205). The others are Never, Always, Until, After, and Open ended, all of which can have their own distinct timetable in the intimacy and sex games people play.

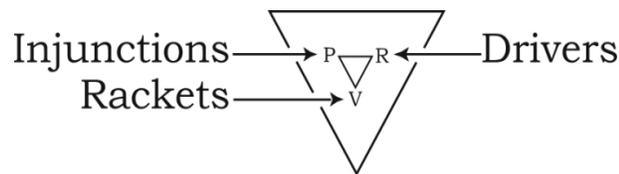


Figure 6  
The Script Drama Triangle

### Sex Games and Therapy

Broad spectrum TA by a licensed TA therapist can treat most of the sexual problems that people have. Focusing on the three sexual blocks mentioned earlier uncovers the core problems in an easily understood way. The three blocks can serve as an outline for a treatment contract. The four intimacy blocks can clear away the barriers to problem solving and intimate communication. Transactional, game, and script analysis, as well as freeing up each of the five ego state energies, can be the focus of TA sex therapy counseling. Referral to a sex therapist or coach may sometimes be preferred.

A therapist can have his or her own treatment specialties. In a brief outline (for space considerations) here are some therapist/coach Personalized Winner's Loops, a wish list for couples to choose from. For instance, a hypothetical S.S.S. specialist maybe able to open up for the hopeful couple the talents of Sensitivity (NP), Submission (AC), and Skill (A). The L.L.L. therapist or surrogate may be better suited to give permission for Free Child Love, Lust, and getting Lucky. A K.K.K. counselor may be best at coaching on Kindness, Kissing, and Know How. An F.F.F. sex therapist can encourage Fantasy, Feeling, and F???. A T.T.T. therapist may be better at opening up a couple to the joys of Touch, Tenderness, and Talking. The right therapist can do all or some of the ones listed. A motivated couple (or therapist) can use the just mentioned 15 skills as a blueprint to work from. Each skill is important and can open up a couple to more sexuality. The couple can look for a therapist who is available and will coach as many of those sensitivities as possible.

### Sex Games and Theory Discussions

*SOCIAL LEVEL TA.* This paper covers a wide range of both new and basic transactional analysis theory and practice as it applies to the popular topic of sexuality and intimacy in singles and couples. This paper has two purposes: one is to make available in a professional publication some 30 years of my original TA theory and practice, and another is to offer this material as a therapeutic handout to be made available in the office, in workshops, and for free Internet downloading. A Social level TA paper should bring new relationship ideas that are: (1) Unique, (2) Teachable, and (3) Usable while following Eric Berne's standard of socially vivid writing (Karpman, 1972) that would be understandable on three levels: to (1) an 8 year old child, (2) a midwest farmer, and (3) an MIT professor. To that discipline I add that the articles written in the *Transactional Analysis Journal* need to be understandable and useful for both the therapist and the patient.

*NEW THEORY.* This paper includes original TA theories that have not appeared together in a major professional publication. These include The Four Intimacy Blocks that are arranged for teachability and connectedness into four "Intimacy Winner's Loops and Loser's Loops" and the "Sexual Loser's Loop and Winner's Loops" outlining the three dormant sexual blocks that are the common denominator behind sexual dysfunction and disinterest. Additionally, on a deeper level, I have included several new, unpublished Drama Triangles: (a) the Social level and the Psychological level Drama Triangles in the games that prevent sexuality and intimacy; (b) the Compassion Triangle for insightful

accountability by forgiving the three motivations in a game; and (c) the deeper childhood interior Script Drama Triangle, which has a format for a Redecision Triangle and a Transference Triangle and can also be a comprehensive teaching Script Triangle diagram that incorporates the TA rackets, drivers, and injunctions that interfere with intimate relationships.

*OCCAM'S RAZOR OF SCIENTIFIC PARSIMONY.* Berne stressed simplicity in TA theory. A psychoanalyst friend of Eric Berne once dismissed TA by saying, "Yours is oversimplified," to which Berne answered back, "Yours is overcomplicated." It is best to see transactional analysis scientific concepts reduced to their basic diagrams, lists, or formulas and reduced to 3 to 5 items; more than that are difficult for the Child to remember, or want to remember. It may take years of applying an idea before the transactional analysis scientist can reduce it to its core minimum; it took many years for me to come up with the matching opposite of E R A (E+R+A+), requiring the same letters for simplicity but with inviting energy instead of invasive energy. The other intimacy and sexual blocks went through many revisions. Initially, "Secretive" was "Surrendering" (surrender the hidden dossier you have been collecting on the other person), and "Caring" was "Cherishing" (honoring and treasuring the other person and his or her words). Although these words were accurate, they were not commonplace words. Sometimes well meaning authors with a "Be perfect" try to find a sixth driver, or a fourth point on the drama triangle, or a fifth discount, but this would undo Occam's Razor and confuse basic TA as it has been taught for years and not add much. An exception is recently when Mary Goulding added a thirteenth injunction to the original twelve, the Don't Want injunction, which is an excellent addition. However, that being said, with apologies to Berne and Occam, I go to the next paragraph.

*TIME STRUCTURING.* I was asked where intimacy blocking fits in the TA Time Structuring list, because The Four Intimacy Blocks are neither Games nor Intimacy, but somewhere in between. They are blocking attitudes, not transactions, just as the Drama Triangle has gaming roles, not transactions. I title my

openness workshops "Game Free Communication For Couples" and my field "Intimacy Analysis," which could have subheadings into Open or Closed (or Intimacy Inviting and Intimacy Avoiding, or Intimacy Rewarding and Intimacy Rejecting, or Intimacy Welcoming and Intimacy Blocking, etc.). But if I had to add it to the Time Structuring List, communication and problem solving are very intense and seem to deserve a high place of their own. Real communication is too personal to be a Pastime or an Activity. So, temporarily, I will posit this list for now. "Communication is a way people spend their time together while problem solving to improve the relationship and to move it from games to intimacy." A new time structuring list could be:

INTIMACY  
COMMUNICATION  
GAMES  
PASTIMES  
ACTIVITIES  
RITUALS  
WITHDRAWAL

In this paper I draw from all sources of experience with the hope that it will be useful in cutting through the games and the mysteries of blocked communication and blocked relationships. Many references are to earlier TA publications that are out of print, but they are available for free downloading from my website ([www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com](http://www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com)) as articles and on DVDs. The 1997 first DVD, "Game Free Relationships For Couples," is available through the ITAA.

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widely across the United States and in a dozen countries. Academically, he is an Assistant Clinical Professor at UCSF, which is in San Francisco, where he also has his private practice. His articles, many out of print, are available on the free Web site at [www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com](http://www.KarpmanDramaTriangle.com). All comments to this article are invited by e mail at [egostates@aol.com](mailto:egostates@aol.com) or on the Web site.

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