

Personality Disorders

Communication with Difficult People:
Identifying the Drama Triangle

Definition

- What is a personality?
- Many definitions from many theorists (Adler, Allport, Cattell, Freud, Jung, etc.)
- Common threads: identifiable patterns of behaviors that result from internal processes designed to enable coping with life; unique but categorizable

What is a personality “disorder”?

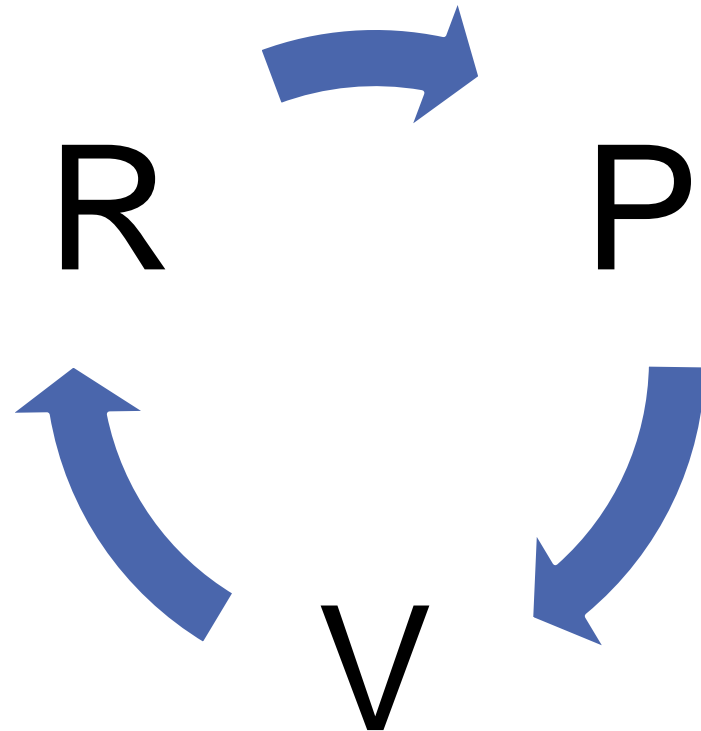
- DSM criteria:
 - Pattern of experience or behavior that deviates from cultural norms manifested in at least 2: cognition, affectivity, interpersonal functioning, impulse control
 - Inflexible, pervasive, broad; causes distress and/or functional limits; longstanding starting in childhood

Communication

- Cooperative: I follow you, you follow me, can agree to disagree, does not intentionally engage in logical fallacy
- Non-cooperative: I follow you, you change the subject (even slightly), I follow you again, repeat until I engage with you in DRAMA

Drama

- Rescuer
 - Persecutor
 - Victim
-
- Adapted from
Greg Lester, PhD
(1999)



Drama Roles



- Rescuer
 - Cognitive: I need to help, save, rescue, not let bad things happen, take care of this person, get them out of this situation, “I can bend the rule this one time,” rationalizing

Rescuer

Emotional: sympathy (not empathy) = feeling “bad” for..., desperation, desire, guilt, shame, embarrassed

Rescuer

- Behavioral: going *above* above and *beyond* beyond, lending, spending, over-advocating, over-focusing on the one person (at the expense of others ***and*** self)

Drama Roles

- Persecutor
 - Cognitive: get them before they get me, he/she deserves this, can't stand that person, f* 'em, let them figure it out, kill 'em all and let God sort it out, "I hate people."

Persecutor

- Emotional: anger, hatred, frustration, fear, dominance, powerful, powerless

Persecutor

- Behavioral: late for appointment, punishing, withholding, intimidating, too loud, too close, specific blaming – “it’s your fault,” externalized – does not account for own role in problems, demanding, doesn’t return phone calls

Drama Roles

- Victim
 - Cognitive: I'm no good, not good enough, a bad person/parent/client/etc., I don't deserve this, they can't do this to me, this "shouldn't" be happening, help me, fix me, leave me alone, personalizing, "waiting for the other shoe to drop."

Victim

- Emotional: angry-scared, sad, powerless, shame, self-loathing, disgust, angst

Victim

- Behavioral: avoidance, complaining, whining, somatization, vague blaming – “it’s not my fault,” too quiet, too far away (entice a “chase”)

Stay out of the Drama

- Just observe
- Breathe
- Balance
- Take time out
- Vent, shake it off
- Respond, don't be reactive
- Take care of self and other therapeutically... this is NOT personal



Drama Switches

- PPD: v-p-v
- SzPD: r-v-p; r-p-v YOU switch because of their detachment
- SztPD: p-v
- AsPD: r-p; v-p
- BPD: v-p-v; r-p-v
- HPD: v-p-v

Switch Patterns

- NPD: r-p
- AvPD: r-p-v
- DPD: v-p
- OCPD: r-p
- Adapted from G. Lester (1999)

Your Goal State

- Scientific Observer
- Just observe and describe
- Assertive approach is kind, not “nice”
 - Kind is active and responsive
 - Nice is passive and avoidant