

## VIOLENCE ANONYMOUS NEWCOMERS' PAMPHLET

### WHAT IS VA? (Preamble for Violence Anonymous)

Violence Anonymous is a program for people who, through shared experience, strength, hope and honesty, are recovering from violent behavior. Whether the violence happened during adulthood or childhood, Violence Anonymous welcomes everyone who wants to stop the emotional, physical or psychological violence in their lives.

Are you ready to stop the cycle of abuse in your relationships?  
So are we.

Violence is any pattern of hurtful thinking, action or behavior that has an adverse or damaging effect on others or ourselves. Some examples are the use of deceit, manipulation, neglect, threat, abuse and misuse of power, position or force. Generally these expressions of violence occur when a person or group is triggered.

A trigger is our internal reaction to a person, place, thing, situation or thought. Some catalysts for triggers are fear, threat, past trauma, limiting beliefs, shame or unmet needs. When triggered the violence addict may, consciously or unconsciously, react with violence to assert power and control over people and circumstance.

Even if these incidents occur only once or occasionally, they instill fear of future violence. Regular use of violent behaviors makes up a larger system of abuse.

These are some of the ways violence is carried out:

Intimidation

Manipulation and Control

Entitlement

Emotional Abuse

Physical Abuse

Psychological Abuse

Isolation

Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming

Gaslighting

Using Children

Economic or Financial Abuse

Shaming

Rescuing

Victim Thinking

Sexism

Racism

Casteism or Classism

Coercion and Threats

Spiritual or Religious Violence

Sexual Violence

We have found that without a spiritual awakening, this condition is progressive, and untreated can result in damaged or destroyed relationships, isolation, deterioration of physical health, financial difficulty, insanity, imprisonment and death. For those of you who are sincerely willing to change, there is hope. May you find it now.

Violence Anonymous is not affiliated with any public, or private organization, political movement, ideology or religion; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to overcome violence and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.

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### IS VIOLENCE ANONYMOUS FOR ME?

We came to VA because we had finally given up trying to control people and situations. We were fed up with the drama, pain and conflict in our lives. We arrived wondering if we belonged in VA, and if we would find the help we needed.

We decided to try to face up to what violence had done to us. Here are some of the questions we tried to answer honestly. Our experience has shown, if we answer YES to six or more, we are in deep trouble with violence. See how you do. There is no shame in facing up to the fact that you have a problem.

1. Do you judge or criticize others frequently?
2. Do you often wish you didn't feel frustrated, angry, numb, sad or lonely?
3. Do you keep score in relationships?
4. Do you frequently experience conflict in personal and/or work relationships?
5. Do you fly into sudden rages?
6. Do you say or do things that you regret or feel shame about later?
7. Does drama or conflict seem to follow you?
8. Do you believe that people in your life need to change for your relationships to improve?
9. Do you have difficulty stopping yourself from helping, even if others don't want your help?
10. Do you isolate yourself or allow others to isolate you?
11. Do you often believe that win-win solutions are impossible?
12. Do you feel like there's no point in doing something because things won't get any better?
13. Do you have difficulty giving or receiving love?
14. Do you feel closer or more attached to someone during or after conflict?
15. Does your need for getting love from someone intensify with conflict?
16. Do you isolate others?
17. Do you think you're better or worse than other people?

18. Are you a people pleaser?
19. Do you often choose being right over being at peace?
20. Setting aside experiences of racism, sexism and casteism, do you often believe life is unfair or blame other people or external circumstances for your unhappiness?
21. Do your relationships lack a satisfying level of connection, intimacy or sensuality?
22. Do you often experience fear or anxiety about security, money or prosperity?
23. Do you often take things personally?
24. Is it normal for you to sacrifice what's important to you to take care of others or avoid rejection?
25. Do you feel resentful when others don't recognize or appreciate your efforts?

Did you answer YES eight or more times? If so, you probably have a problem with violence. How do we know? Since 2005 hundreds of people in VA, from all over the globe, have acknowledged these truths. We found out the hard way. It is up to you to decide if you belong in Violence Anonymous. If the answer is YES, VA can help you untangle yourself from violent thought, action and behavior. Working this program allows you to live a happy, prosperous and peaceful life, one day at a time. We suggest you try six VA meetings before deciding if Violence Anonymous is for you, and that you place principles before personalities. Welcome and good luck!

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### THE 12 STEPS AND 12 TRADITIONS OF VIOLENCE ANONYMOUS

#### 12 Steps of Violence Anonymous:

1. We admitted we were powerless over violence—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

#### 12 Traditions of Violence Anonymous:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon VA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for VA membership is a desire to stop participating in the cycle of violence.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or VA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the person who still suffers from violence.
6. A VA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the VA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every VA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Violence Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. VA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Violence Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the VA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television, films, the internet and all other media.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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## DRAMA TRIANGLE ROLES

(An excerpt from Lynne Forest's Three Faces of Victim)

### Summary of the Drama Triangle Roles

The three roles on the victim triangle are Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim. Karpman placed these three roles on an inverted triangle and described them as being the three aspects, or faces of victim. No matter where we may start out on the triangle, victim is where we end up, therefore no matter what role we're in on the triangle, we're in victimhood. If we're on the triangle we're living as victims, plain and simple!

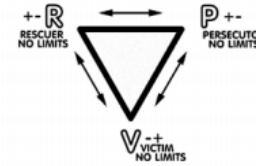
Each person has a primary or most familiar role – what I call their “starting gate” position. This is the place from which we generally enter, or “get hooked” onto, the triangle. We first learn our starting gate position in our family of origin. Although we each have a role with which we most identify, once we're on the triangle, we automatically rotate through all the positions, going completely around the triangle, sometimes in a matter of minutes, or even seconds, many times every day.

**Starting Gate Rescuers (SGR)** see themselves as “helpers” and “caretakers”. They need someone to rescue (victim) in order to feel vital and important. It's difficult for SGR's to recognize themselves as ever being in a victim position – they're the ones with the answers after all.

**Starting Gate Victims (SGV)** believe they cannot take care of themselves. They see themselves as consistently unable to handle life.

**Starting Gate Persecutors (SGP)**, on the other hand, identify themselves primarily as victims. They are usually in complete denial about their blaming tactics. When it is pointed out to them, they argue that attack is warranted and necessary for self protection. These two – the Rescuer and the Persecutor – are the two opposite extremes of Victim. But again, regardless of where we start out on the triangle, all roles eventually end up in victim. It's inevitable.

## THE KARPMAN DRAMA TRIANGLE



You may notice that both the Persecutor and Rescuer are on the upper end of the triangle. These roles assume a “one-up” position over others, meaning they relate as though they are better, stronger, smarter, or more-together than the victim. Sooner or later the victim, who is in the one-down position at the bottom of the triangle, develops a metaphorical “crick in the neck” from always looking up. Feeling “looked-down upon” or “less-than” the others, the Victim builds resentment and sooner or later retaliates. A natural progression from victim to persecutor follows. This generally moves the persecutor or rescuer into victim. Reminiscent of a not-so-musical game of musical chairs, all players sooner or later rotate positions.

### Starting Gate Beliefs

Each starting gate position has a “script” made to order for their particular dance around the triangle. These “scripts” consist of a particular set of beliefs through which the world and ourselves are seen.

### The Rescuer Story

Rescuers believe that their needs are unimportant and irrelevant. This means that the only way they can legitimately connect with others, feel valued and have their needs met is through the back door of care-taking. Rescuers chastise themselves when they aren't care-taking others. Their starting gate story is; “If I take care of others well enough and long enough, then I will be fulfilled. It's the only way to be loved.” Unfortunately, Rescuers are involved with life-time Victims who have no idea of how to be there for them. This reinforces the SG Rescuer's story that says they shouldn't be needy, which then produces more shame and deeper denial surrounding their own needs.

### **The Victim Story**

Guilt and shame are the driving forces for the perpetuation of the Triangle. Guilt is often used by Victims in an effort to manipulate their Rescuers into taking care of them: "If you don't do it, who will?" The Victims' story says they can't make it on their own and they prove it to themselves over and over on the triangle. They believe that they are innately defective and incapable and so spend their lives on the look-out for someone to "save" them. Though this is what they feel they must have, i.e., a savior, they are simultaneously angry at their rescuers because they feel put down by and looked down on by their caretakers.

### **The Persecutor Story**

Persecutors who believe the world is dangerous, use fear and intimidation as tools for keeping others in their place. What they don't see is how their methods for providing "safety" end up proving to them that life is indeed as dangerous as they believe it to be. Their story says that they are innocent bystanders in a dangerous world where others are always out to hurt them. It's survival of the fittest and their only chance is to strike first. This story keeps them in perpetual defense/offense modus operandi.

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## TOOLS OF VA

1. **Sponsorship** – Our experience shows that working the 12 Steps of Violence Anonymous is crucial to our recovery and working with a sponsor keeps us focused and grounded in that process. We seek a sponsor who has worked the 12 Steps of VA and who has experience processing triggers. By being willing to sponsor and be sponsored we ensure our personal recovery and the strength of VA as a whole.
2. **Meetings** – We attend VA meetings to share our experience, strength, hope and honesty with one another and to learn about the many faces of violence in our lives. At meetings we are reminded that there is a solution. By attending meetings, we deepen our recovery and carry the message of VA to those who still suffer.
3. **Literature/Readings** – We use literature to improve our understanding of our relationship to violence. By reading literature we remind ourselves of the solution to violent behavior and increase our awareness of our thoughts about people, places and things that sometimes trigger us into thinking that playing the rescuer, persecutor or victim will help us meet our needs. Many VAs utilize this tool between meetings as a reminder that we can live off the drama triangle.
4. **Service** – Service strengthens our recovery and helps ensure our growth in overcoming violence. Service can include attending meetings, chairing a meeting, reading literature in a meeting, time keeping, sharing, sponsoring, participating in business meetings, and speaking on the phone with other VAs.
5. **Prayer/Meditation** – When we pick up this tool we acknowledge the limits of our own power and perspective, and seek reliance on a spiritual source of strength. To pray and meditate, it is not necessary that we name or define that spiritual source. There are many ways to use this tool. Here are some possibilities: contemplating a starry sky; participating in ceremonies with a religious community; communicating aloud to a benevolent power, in solitude; attuning to our feelings and needs; reading prayers or

inspirational words; focusing on the movement of our breath. In prayer and meditation we open ourselves to a state of being where we can transcend our dependence on violence and experience the true power of being connected to source.

6. **Nonviolent Communication** – We use Nonviolent Communication when listening and speaking. This form of communication allows us to identify and express our feelings and needs, and request help in meeting those needs. Using NVC liberates us, as we discover a way to relate to others while remaining free of the drama triangle. Practicing NVC creates the possibility of cooperative solutions that meet our needs and the needs of others. Nonviolent Communication deepens connections and cultivates authenticity and well-being in our lives.
7. **Phone Calls** – We call other VAs as a means of giving and receiving support in abstaining from violent behavior. A consistent daily practice of phone calls makes it easier to reach out for support with challenges and in crisis moments. Isolation and the belief that we can recover alone are symptoms of an addiction to violence. Using the phone is a way to strengthen our recovery by building a strong network of support with other VAs. We are especially careful to respect anonymity when leaving messages.
8. **Awareness** – In VA we see awareness as an intimate understanding of violence in ourselves, others and society. We use this understanding to choose recovery by responding consciously, rather than reacting unconsciously to life situations with helplessness, attack or control. We develop the capacity to discern when others are engaging in violence, allowing us to maintain a state of neutrality. We have found that our awareness grows by attending meetings, reading literature, utilizing VA's tools and working the 12 Steps of VA. With awareness we notice our progress and our experiences of increasing serenity, effectiveness and happiness.
9. **Processing Triggers** – A trigger is our internal reaction to a person, place, thing, situation or thought. Triggers can range from mild to severe. Some triggers are positive, and some are negative. When we are negatively triggered we are casting ourselves as victims. This puts us on the drama triangle,

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making it difficult to think, speak or act without causing harm. In recovery we recognize each trigger as a warning that we are at risk of behaving violently. We heed this warning, halt, and process the trigger before moving on. Processing a trigger is investigating the trauma that lies beneath the trigger and neutralizing our reaction to it. Our experience shows that processing triggers with support is essential. We don't have to do it alone. Neutralizing traumas with the guidance of a trusted therapist, peer or sponsor helps us become adept at processing triggers ourselves. By processing triggers as they come up, we gradually clear our inner landscape of the traumas that set off our violent behavior.

10. **Fun, Humor and Laughter** – By choosing to value the lighter side of human experience we learn to let go and to enjoy our lives more. We use humor in a way that inspires a feeling of safety and belonging among those involved.
11. **Deep Breathing** – We have found that deep breathing helps us de-escalate from a trigger or a potential trigger. Taking 10-20 deep breaths can settle our minds and allow our bodies to relax. This practice brings us out of the thoughts that keep us on the drama triangle and into the present moment.
12. **Choice** – The habit of acknowledging responsibility for how we chose to spend our time and energy becomes insurance against the temptation to see ourselves as victims of circumstance. We maintain a level of participation in activities and commitments that is balanced and sustainable over time, knowing that we also have the choice to adjust our participation level in response to inspiration or special circumstances. As our recovery deepens through working the 12 Steps of VA, we become able to listen to the intuitive feedback our body gives us about our true needs, and discover a world of choice we never knew existed.
13. **Self-Care** – Our biochemistry affects our judgment and our ability to respond to situations in a neutral way. The list below raises our awareness of ways we can care for our essential physical needs and avoid playing one of the roles on the drama triangle. Each individual may have additional

ways that they practice self-care.  
Balanced rest.  
Balanced nutrition.  
Balanced exercise.

14. **Experience the feeling (sit with the feeling rather than act on it)** – In VA, as we learn to experience our feelings we discover that they hold the keys to understanding what our true needs really are. Sitting with a feeling means giving ourselves time to connect to the need that's behind it. Then, instead of acting on the feeling, we can take action on meeting the *need* – peacefully. By using this tool we become able to make choices that are truly in alignment with our heart's desire.
15. **Change Attention** – Many of us suffer from chronic “victim thinking”. With this tool we change the habitual thinking patterns that have repeatedly led us onto the Drama Triangle. We also use this tool to neutralize a mild trigger or minimize the impact of a more intense trigger. If we can recognize an impending trigger, we can use this tool to avoid triggering at all. Changing attention to a more positive state may include redirecting our thoughts; changing the subject of a conversation to a more positive one; focusing on something of beauty; using affirmations; becoming aware of our body and surroundings; focusing on something inspiring rather than upsetting. By cultivating the habit of changing our attention to a more positive state we increase the amount of time we spend in gratitude, joy and peace.
16. **Change Location** – Changing location is a safety mechanism to avoid triggering and/or reduce the intensity of a trigger. Whether we are triggered or dealing with someone else who is triggered, moving to a safe location can reduce the effects of the situation and give us crucial time and space to allow our thinking to return to a neutral state. By changing our location we can put ourselves in a position to pause and work toward a cooperative solution, at a later time, when we can meet our need for connection in a peaceful way.
17. **Safety Plan** – The safety plan tool helps us prepare for the

moment-by-moment challenge of remaining free from the drama triangle and abstaining from violent thought and behavior. When we create a safety plan we identify *ahead of time* what VA tools we can use in a potentially triggering situation and what steps we will take, should a trigger (our own or another's) catch us by surprise. A plan for physical safety may include a clear intention and willingness to change location if a situation threatens to escalate, keeping spare keys, clothing and money where we can access them quickly if needed. With a safety plan in place, in the heat of the moment we can grab hold of the VA program...and each time we do, we feel our feet more solidly on the ground of our new life.

18. **Creativity** - For simplicity, we define creativity as making, doing, thinking or experiencing in an imaginative way. Many consider creativity to be an act of meditation, devotion or practice. Others find solace in the technical aspects of an activity. Regardless of how one might define it, we find creativity to be helpful in connecting with something deeper or bigger than our current state of mind. Being creative can be a way of processing conscious and unconscious beliefs, patterns and triggers and can also help us achieve a blissful and fulfilling state of mind. It enhances our connection to ourselves and the outside world while giving us a potential vehicle to meet our needs for Certainty, Variety, Significance, Connection, Growth and Contribution. Some examples of creative activities are sports, visual arts, cooking, gardening, work, crafts, music, performance, writing, dance and other fine arts. Making time for creativity can enhance our ability to use other tools of VA, and be a healthy addition to our recovery.