

## ***Creator, Challenger, Coach: A Deeper Dive into the TED\* Roles***

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As human beings we are all too familiar with the Dreaded Drama Triangle (DDT)™ roles of Victim, Persecutor and Rescuer. As we grow in our awareness of the TED\* roles, they will become like new friends, inviting us to step into an empowering relationship with ourselves and others.

### **The TED\* Creator Role**

**Description and Qualities:** The Creator role is the positive alternative to the Victim in the DDT. A Creator's response is based on thoughtful evaluation of the situation and then choosing appropriate steps toward an outcome, rather than reacting from a problem-focused orientation. In doing so, a Creator works toward desired outcomes instead of reacting to avoiding/fixing problems. Creators take radical responsibility for their own lives. They surrender to "what is" and drop resistance in the moment. Creators focus on what they want rather than what they don't want. They are open, observant, and mindful of their life story and how they make meaning of life's events. A TED\* Creator is constantly open to unlimited possibilities and may even be seen, as times, as a visionary. They may be eager, ambitious and energized and, at the same time, be calm and introverted, ever aware of their direction and purpose. Creators also understand that everything is constantly changing, therefore they do not attach themselves to a certain or right way. Instead, they focus on outcomes, hold the dynamic tension of not-knowing, and continue to focus on what they want and how they choose to respond to life events.

**Focus and Thoughts:** A Creator's focus could be described as neutral as they observe, without grasping or clinging, and reflect on what their choices are in the moment. They continue to refine their principles and make even more compelling their vision by focusing on "What do I

most care about?” and “What are my values?” For a TED\* Creator, “What is the outcome I want given the current reality?” is the fundamental question they ask themselves.

Inner State and Feelings: One person familiar with TED\* said, “I don’t think I have ever met a pessimistic Creator.” Creators experience the awe of life---the spiritual and sacred state of joy, happiness and wonder. While they are powered by passion, they are centered and calm, since they are not reacting, and trust the mystery of how their life and all of life will unfold. “Equanimity” is another word that aptly describes the inner state of a Creator---neither leaning forward nor withdrawing and fully holding the emotions and tension of the moment. “Wordlessness” (coined by Martha Beck) describes the sacred, even transcendent state of a TED\* Creator at times. Gratitude and love are the innermost feelings that a TED\* Creator embodies.

Behavior and Actions: A TED\* Creator desires to create out of their “being needs” and a feeling of completeness and wholeness. They put things in their place so they can continue to take Baby Steps forward. Thus their actions are effective since they don’t take large, over-reaching steps. They share their vision or the collective vision of the team. When working or living with those who frequently embody the DDT roles, they acknowledge and have compassion for others without reinforcing their victimhood. They see others as a Creator in their own right – whether the other knows it or not and acts like it or not. Others may describe a TED\* Creator’s actions as eloquent, graceful or inspiring, while experimental: “Let’s try this, evaluate, adjust, step back and take another step forward.”

Key Challenge (Unmet Need) for Victims to Make a Sustainable Shift to Creator: Victims must learn to take full responsibility for their response to life’s events. If they do not know their values, or care about or what they really want, they are at risk of slipping back into blame or feelings of powerlessness. Learning to go deeper and discover what is driving their wants and desires is essential to remain strong and true to their values and dreams and avoid slipping into victimhood.

Recommendations to Make the Victim-to-Creator Shift: A victim wants to feel that they matter, thus acknowledging them without reinforcing their victimhood is important. They want to be seen, heard and loved. Taking the time for reflection, values clarification and what they really love will cultivate the Victim’s ability to clarify their desires and feel safe enough to choose what they want. Learn to ask: “And what if it were possible?” Support them in confronting their “whatever” mentality and learning to trust they will find their own answers if they persist. Since life constantly changes, help them to ask: “What do I want in this stage of

my life?” or “How do I feel safe while exploring my dreams?” and “Where must I take responsibility in order to create my dreams?”

### **The TED\* Challenger Role:**

Description and Qualities: A TED\* Challenger is the positive antidote to the Persecutor in the DDT. It has been said that a TED\* Challenger is a courageous provocateur and disruptor of the status quo. They are deeply rooted in a clear awareness of their values and integrity. Challengers are the truth-tellers, while they “tell it” without blame or judgment. They know what they know. They are in a powerful partnership with a Creator---holding the strength and willingness to stand for the vision, even when others do not. The Challenger may not know exactly how the vision will unfold, yet they are “tuned-in” and know when there’s a gap or lack of alignment with the desired outcome. In a meeting or group setting, an alternative perspective will usually come from the Challenger. TED\* Challengers may range from boisterous, with fiery energy, to deliberate and quiet, while always delivering a bold message.

Focus and Thoughts: Challengers “feel the gap” when something is off the vision path, yet they may not have perfect words to describe their knowing. They focus on: “What are the underlying limiting beliefs that others may be unconscious to?” or “What are the assumptions being held?” Challengers have a knack for letting go of the details and keeping themselves and others on the bigger vision---knowing when to voice their intuition that something isn’t on target. They ask themselves: “Am I using my strength and energy to build up or tear down so we can together achieve our dream?” They may appear ambitious, insisting there is more to create for the good of a Creator or a group rather.

Inner State and Feelings: TED\* Challengers may still feel fear or anxiety, yet they have learned to transcend fearful feelings and cultivate passion for outcomes and possibilities. Similar to a fierce warrior, they can tune into dread or anger, paying attention to the dark side that may be missed by a Creator or Coach. Their energy is more masculine; willing to take a stand for what they believe is the vision and higher good. They inquire into the shadow-side, shedding a light on what others may not be addressing. Challengers have a deep love and compassion for others, knowing that learning and change can be hard and unpleasant, while being willing to stand in feeling states associated with uncertainty and chaos. This “tuning in” may, at times, appear to be a brooding or darker energy, (and maybe not) as they insist that alignment with values and purpose is essential.

Behavior and Actions: TED\* Challengers shake things up. They get past defense mechanisms and go to the heart of the matter. They make declarative statements about “what is,” sometimes with piercing clarity. They notice the gap between current reality and the dream, sharing feedback and observations. Challengers do all this, however, from a “learning intent,” rather a “looking good intent.” They see those they challenge as Creators in their own right. Challengers respect the gap and look for solutions and resolution. They may deliver the brutal facts and, yet, inspire others to reach for the highest good. Challengers don’t just roll with “what is.” They check-in with the Creator and Coach, leaning into the partnership, insisting on mutual learning, accountability and support.

Key Challenge (Unmet Need) for Persecutors to yield a sustainable shift to Challenger: The Persecutor must let go of their ego, need to be right and/or their strong sense of self to shift into the Challenger role. They must also be open to considering other perspectives. Persecutors fear they will be a Victim and have, therefore, adopted various strategies to control, protect and defend themselves in order to avoid their own victimhood. Believing that their way of thinking is best, they often over-estimate their competencies and expertise. Therefore, Persecutors must cultivate an ability to be comfortable with creative chaos, insecurity and feeling the universe is a safe place to step into the TED\* Challenger role over time.

Recommendations to Make the Persecutor-to-Challenger Shift: Cultivating compassion and love for those different from themselves will support a Challenger. Whether they say so or not, every Persecutor wants to be heard, seen and loved. Practicing being comfortable in new situations that call for creative and diverse responses while learning to be calm in the face of uncertainty, will assist the Persecutor to Challenger shift. Supporting the Persecutor to feel and express from different points of view will help them let go of their right or wrong thinking. Finally, self-compassion and love for themselves will allow them to deeply listen to others which, in turn, will support a Persecutor in their journey toward the Challenger role.

## **The TED\* Coach Role**

Description and Qualities: The Coach role is the positive antidote to the Rescuer role in the DDT. Coaches are people of possibility, using inquiry and curiosity to be in full partnership with the other as a Creator, while being keenly aware of their own boundaries and having a strong foundational sense of self. A few of the qualities that describe the Coach role are relaxed, accepting, full of wonder, supportive, often warm and calm, while suspending their beliefs and

assumptions. They are amazed at the human process and development. Paradoxically, a Coach meets the person where they are and, yet, sees their higher potential as a Creator and believe in their higher good. They honor where others are in their process, while knowing continuous growth is possible, using the art of inquiry as their primary tool.

Focus and Thoughts: Attention is on the other person and “what’s up” for them. Focus is on “what could be” as well as “what is,” including the story and meaning-making process that creates the experience of the other. A Coach strives to catch their own judgmental thoughts and to suspend their assessments. They may ask themselves: “Where is there clarity here?” or “Where is clarity lacking?” Aware of timing and allowing, rather than pushing, pulling or grasping, is a key focus. TED\* Coaches have a high level of trust and allow time for each individual’s unique learning process to unfold, while holding them as ultimately whole and complete.

Inner State and Feelings: TED\* Coaches are excited about possibilities. They are full of inspiration, awe, wonder, empathetic love for the other, open and heart-centered, relaxed---no need to work too hard. They are relieved that they don’t have to have all the answers because of the belief that answers and insights exist with a Creator as they coach. They stay attuned to emotions, and celebrate movement and progress. TED\* Coaches uses their intuition to sense obstacles or barriers, as well as ease and flow. Feminine energy of love, appreciation and astonishment for the human experience could also describe their energetic presence.

Behavior and Action: Facilitating movement and forward energy describes the TED\* Coach in action. They patiently support and partner with the other as a Creator (or others, if they are supporting a group). They are available and attentive with deep listening skills. Coaches ask powerful and direct questions to clarify outcomes; discern current reality and assumptions; and partner with others to determine and commit to incremental Baby Step actions.

Key Challenge (Unmet Need) for Rescuers to Create a Sustainable Shift to Coach: For an individual to shift from the Rescuer to Coach role they must face their deep need for external acceptance and love. By fixing and saving others, a Rescuer believes others will appreciate and value them for their good deeds. A person who knows the TED\* work well once stated: “Rescuers really get off on saving the day.” Through rescuing, they hope to receive from others the love and acceptance they crave. When they don’t, they experience a pain of separation both spiritually and psychologically. Even if they become aware of their external need to feel loved, they must also become aware of their internal rescuing behavior (through addictions, distractions or other pain-relieving tendencies). Until they cultivate self-acceptance, Rescuers may have difficulty fully stepping into the TED\* Coach role in a powerful way.

Recommendations for Making the Rescuer-to-Coach Shift: Gentle self-care is essential for Rescuers to step into the Coach role. This is very difficult for a Rescuer because they have dedicated their lives to taking care of others. If you ask a Rescuer what they need, you might get a blank stare. It hasn't occurred to them they need anything because they have dedicated their lives to fixing and pleasing others. For that reason, developing body awareness and somatic practices, self-love, self-compassion and radical forgiveness will assist Rescuers to feel worthy, whole and complete. Finally, a Rescuer must reflect upon the many gifts that others bring to the table so they can empower others to bring their gifts forward. Until they genuinely see others as possessing powerful gifts and answers within themselves, they will tend to interfere rather than empower.

### **Summary Thoughts:**

The graphic of the TED\* triangle faces upward, resting upon a stable base of the Challenger and Coach roles. What's the difference between a Challenger and Coach roles is a question that is often asked. While the central *role* of TED\* is the Creator, its co-creating partners of Challenger and Coach have similarities, as well as important differences.

The Challenger has more masculine energy and is willing to be a strong voice for staying true to desired outcomes and values. By continuously evoking (or provoking) learning, even when the creating process has set-backs and struggles, the Challenger's strength and belief in the desired outcomes keeps things moving forward in the face of uncertainty. In interacting with a Creator, a Challenger tends to make statements, share observations and feedback; offer advice, etc.

The Coach is open and hopeful and imbues more feminine energy into the creating process. Focusing on possibility, the Coach uses the art of inquiry to bring forth clarity and insight into the next Baby Steps that will support a Creator in getting closer to, and clearer about the desired outcome.

All three of the TED\* roles are focused on what they want, as opposed to the DDT roles that focus on what they don't want and don't like. Together the Creator, Challenger and Coach are seamlessly working together in the dynamic process of creating.