



## TRIANGLE OF CONFLICT

(Malan, D 1979)

When people get into conflict (with another person, or inside themselves), they experience a mixture of feelings pulling them in different directions. This can be represented by a Triangle of Conflict. The three points of the triangle are:

*What's expected....* You may be aware of being expected to react in a certain way. What was expected of you from birth onwards? What is expected of you now, and by whom? How do you usually expect yourself to manage life? Who are the key people whose expectations you try to meet? Is this the way you defend yourself from knowing what you truly desire and need?

*What you desire for yourself...* Underneath your everyday actions and preoccupations, there are a set of deeply held needs and goals. These might be to do with psychological, physical, relationship or spiritual needs. Do you know what you are seeking out of your life? What are the patterns that prevent you from being fully who you are? What, in this situation, is most important to you? Who would you really like to be?

*Anxieties & fears....* Your fundamental anxieties are triggered when you move away from what's expected of you towards what you really desire. If you act on your real desires for yourself, will you be abandoned and left alone? Will you lose your mind and go mad in some way? Will you or others be destroyed or die in the process? What are your fears in this situation? What has happened before that makes you fear this happening now? What's stopping you from getting what you need?

What's expected/  
Being defensive

Anxieties/fears  
about the true feeling

What's really desired

Your true feeling