



## How to Stop Your Drama at Working at Home

Ellen Rohr and [Marlene Chism](#)

**Ellen:** Hey, it's Ellen Rohr, the plumber's wife turned business makeover expert. I'm on the phone with one of my best friends forever, Marlene Chism. Hi, Marlene.

**Marlene:** Hi Ellen.

**Ellen:** It's so fun. We were just figuring out that we met like 12 years ago and have been BFF's since then.

**Marlene:** Yes, it's amazing.

**Ellen:** It's cool because one of the great things about this Business Makeover 2014 event is that selfishly I get to spend time with people I love, trust, seek out as mentors and just am proud to call friends, and you are just such a dear person to me. We always have fun and we always end up on a very authentic, real level of conversation, and I appreciate that so much about you.

**Marlene:** I'm thrilled that you asked me and right back at you.

**Ellen:** Today our topic is How to Stop Your Drama at Working at Home. Marlene is the author of the book *Stop Your Drama*, so she's the expert on drama. Marlene when I see what I perceive to be drama, the first thing I want to do is nip it in the bud. Is that what we want to do? Do we want to just make sure that drama doesn't even happen in the first place, either at work or at home?

**Marlene:** I crack up when I hear nip it in the bud because that is the biggest misconception.

**Ellen:** What?

**Marlene:** That is danger. You do not want to nip drama in the bud.

**Ellen:** I'm already humbled now. Tell me why not.

**Marlene:** Do you want the bloom to come back in due season because all it does is sprout new branches and new blooms in due seasons. So, what I say is get drama at the root and that's what I'm good at is helping people to identify and pull up drama by the roots.

**Ellen:** **Let's talk about what drama is in the first place then. Let's get at least a working definition of drama. I think we all have an idea of what drama is. It involves tears and hurt feelings and all kinds of stuff, but how do you define drama?**

**Marlene:** Let me start by saying that this word was a big trigger word when I first started this work because everybody had their own definition. I'm sure everybody will recognize this statement – oh, well we work with a bunch of women; therefore, there's more drama. I jokingly say my next

book is going to be called Men Have Drama Too because all you have to do is look at men's sports and you'll see chair-throwing, ear-biting, screaming, gnashing of teeth, excuse-making.

All you have to do is look at politics, and you see a guy exposing himself on Twitter. You see the Congress shutting down government and I call that drama, so I jokingly say that men have drama too and so women is not a definition of drama.

**Ellen:** So, it's not just women or teenage girls. Everybody has these tendencies. What is it?

**Marlene:** My definition is any obstacle to your peace or your prosperity.

**Ellen:** Wow, that's deep!

**Marlene:** Yes, because the truth is we all have drama and if you're growing, you're going to step into drama simply by the nature of growing and doing something uncomfortable, so it's not really about saying I don't do drama because that's denial. It's about saying hey we all have it, but in my elevated awareness I can identify it, get to the root of it and then I grow and expand from that knowledge.

**Ellen:** I know that when I work with companies very often they will almost embarrassingly tell me as I'm touring the shop you know we've got a lot of drama in the office.

**Do your clients admit that they have drama, or are they always pointing out drama in someone else?**

**Marlene:** Yes, that's one of the biggest signs of drama is it's everybody else; it's not me. Again, that's the denial piece and they normally don't admit it. They believe that it's happening because of some circumstance or because of some person.

**Ellen:** And they want you to fix it.

**Marlene:** Yes, now there are times when they'll admit it but generally that's because there's been a lot of nipping in the bud and the bloom is just like a dandelion. It has just spread like crazy and that's when they'll call me and admit it.

**Ellen:** When we talk about nipping in the bud, what reactions do you see from people? Oh, I've got this office and there's backstabbing, there's talking about each other, there's all those uncomfortable things that are happening.

**When someone tries to nip it in the bud, what behaviors do they usually try to engage in? Give me an example of the wrong way to deal with it.**

**Marlene:** An example is just you fire someone and they had no clue it was coming on. The fact is you had a leadership problem to begin with and it's rooted in the three elements always present in drama, because there should be no surprises, unless someone's life is threatened or they're stealing, that in itself is an exception but if you keep firing people that's nipping it in the bud. If you tell someone that's just the way it is, I didn't ask you to work here and if you don't like it find another place to work, that's nipping it in the bud but there's a root that's underlying all of that.

**Ellen:** Okay, so you're trying to shut it down without taking responsibility for your role in that happening. I like what you said about people not knowing they're going to get fired. My friend Al Levy, who is a terrific operations man, a great communicator and very good at establishing boundaries and making the game known at companies. He says people fire themselves. They

should know it's coming. They should decide this is not a good fit for me, but it should never be a surprise. When people are shocked that they're getting fired, that's an indicator that you might be trying to nip it in the bud to no good effect.

**Marlene:** That's right, and another thing that I see a lot of is moving people to a different department. She's driving us all crazy, so let's move her to this cubicle full of people, and I nipped that in the bud. Yeah you did because you just planted a dandelion.

**Ellen:** Did you see the movie Office Space, the greatest management tool of all time?

**Marlene:** I did not.

**Ellen:** Would you please. We have to get off this interview right now so that you can go watch Office Space with Jennifer Aniston and Ron Livingston. There's this one character and they just keep moving his desk until he's down in the bowels of the company. It's an excellent movie.

**Is communication the key for getting rid of drama?**

**The word communication gets bandied about a bit, how do you feel about that?**

**Marlene:** It is one of the tools that we use but communication also is an outcome in a way. In fact I'm working on the second book right now. I'm offering a new idea of communication as a strategy because most of the time we want tactics and our communication is very shortsighted, very tactical and very reactive. When you start thinking of communication as a strategy, it goes much deeper than what I said or even how I said it. It comes from a place of intention and that will come from a place of understanding the impact of relationships on drama.

**Ellen:** Let's talk about – you know you've got some uncomfortableness. I like the way you defined drama. Say that again.

**Marlene:** Any obstacle to your peace or your prosperity.

**Ellen:** So, if I'm not as peaceful as I want to be, if I'm not as prosperous as I want to be, what I might take responsibility for is that there is drama and I've got a role in it.

**Marlene:** Yes, and let me give you a quick visual because this really helps people and it helps them to anchor to this methodology, so to speak. When I'm in a workshop, I draw a flipchart or I have a PowerPoint and at the bottom left of the flipchart is a little rowboat with a guy in it. This can represent you, your team, your marriage or whoever.

At the upper right of the flipchart is an island. That represents you getting from point A to point B, which can be as nebulous and as esoteric as your mission statement, your values, all the metaphysics or it can be as simple as what we're going to get done this month. We're always trying to get from point A to point B. We're in the ocean and we're always trying to get through that gap. Then in the middle is a shark. That is the drama. That's drama. The way you know what someone's drama is by what you hear. They'll say my shark, my shark, but you don't understand my shark.

**Ellen:** You don't understand that I can't find good people. You don't understand how hard it is to work with my mother.

**Marlene:** Yes, my health issue – after all I have diabetes, after all if you had had an amputation, after all if you had been disabled, after all if you'd been going through menopause, after all if you

worked with a bunch of women, after all if you'd been divorced three times and it wasn't your fault – my shark, my shark is what keeps me from getting to my island, whatever that outcome is.

**Ellen:** I'm trying to put this in perspective for our listeners today. So, if I start to say oh maybe I'm saying some of those things, what do I do now that I've identified that there's a shark in the water? Is it out of my control?

**Marlene:** First of all, you've identified that there's drama, that there's an obstacle to your peace or there's an obstacle, so it just is what it is. I think the next piece of this is to identify that there are three roots on that bloom of all drama and those three roots are:

1. A lack of clarity
2. Relationship
3. Resistance

**Ellen:** Let's talk about these a little bit. Let's talk about all three of them and dig into them a bit more. Lack of clarity – I love you saying that because so often when I work with my clients, I ask the question what do you want? They're not sure what that island is. They just know that there are shark-infested waters.

**Marlene:** I love what you just said because that is what I call a tool for transformation. It's the question what do you want? We can take it into different levels, so let's talk about it in the workplace first. Let's talk about it from the perspective of you as a leader or a manager and you've got a complaining employee. That's a very simple level of drama. It's an obstacle to your peace. It's keeping you from productivity, so it's an obstacle to your prosperity as well.

**Ellen:** You just want to fire them.

**Marlene:** You do and it's driving you crazy, and your mind energy is taken up with it and you're nipping it in the bud by moving them to different places, by avoiding them or whatever.

**Ellen:** Not talking to them.

**Marlene:** Bud nipping has spread now to a field full of dandelions. Here's the deal. You have to take a breath. You first have to hear people because until people feel heard on the emotional level, they will try to convince you. It's not about not letting people complain. They complain for a reason, and that reason is they have a need that's not met and they don't know how to fix it.

**Ellen:** I just saw that in the airport with a little kid trying to get his mom's attention and she shouldn't pay attention to him, and I thought I bet she hears that mom, mom, mom all day long because she never just addressed him.

**Marlene:** Yes, we all want to be heard and until we're heard we will keep squawking. So, the first thing you want to do is take that breath, that sacred pause and just listen and say it sounds like you're frustrated. If they say no I'm angry, you say oh you're angry. You're hearing the emotional component of what's going on for them.

Then at that point you can move on. The question then is okay I hear that you're angry; I think I understand your story; Sally's not doing her fair share. You hear them and then the next question is what is it that you want? Basically you can say it in different ways – what do you want from me, what is the outcome that you're seeking?

Here's what you're going to hear. This is where we get derailed. You're going to hear I'm going to tell you what's not fair, and you're going to break in and you're not going to take the left-hand turn to the island called that's not fair. You're going to say I understand that you don't perceive that as fair and I understand that you're angry.

The question is what do you want? Well, let me tell you what happened three years ago. No, I don't need any more details. I understand the gist of it. You're unhappy and you're angry. What is it that you want?

People are afraid in leadership positions to ask that question because they're afraid that they won't be able to answer the question of I just want Sally to get fired or I just want a raise. Those are again left-hand turns to the island called let me distract you, and you've got to be conscious and maintain your clarity to get to that question and get it answered.

When they say I want Sally to be fired, this is an invitation to ping-pong or fishing. The ping-pong is that's not going to happen. Well, I knew it so therefore I can't have what I want. Well, listen you've just got a bad attitude. Yeah, but you don't ever listen. Ping-pong, ping-pong. Or it's like I just put some bait on the hook and now I'm fishing and you're getting reeled in, and you don't realize it.

**Ellen:** This is so realistic.

**Marlene:** It is. What do you want? I just want Sally to get fired. You take a breath and you maintain your clarity, and you say okay suppose I could do that what would that give you? Therein lies your answer because we never tell the truth the first time. If you can understand that principle that none of us ever tell the truth the first time because we're not clear...

**Ellen:** Right, it's not even so much a lie. It's buying into your own drama.

**Marlene:** It truly is. We're just not clear is what it is.

**Ellen:** I totally get that.

**Marlene:** That clarity will change any situation, so from that philosophy your job as a leader is to maintain the clarity. Okay, suppose I could fire Sally. What would that give you? Well, I don't know. I just think it's unfair. No, what would that give you? Well, then I could be out of here at 5:00 and I could get my work done and have happy customers. Now we know that what you want is to get out of here at 5:00, have happy customers and to get your work done. Now we've got something to work with.

**Ellen:** That's perhaps in line with you getting to the island. So, there's the clarity as a leader of what I need to have happen. The clearer I am on what I want, the metrics of success for my company, the culture, maybe the soft aspects of my company – the clearer I am on what I want, the easier it's going to be in that conversation then to see if you and I are essentially aligned beyond the drama, beyond the shark-infested waters.

**Marlene:** Yes because if I'm looking at my own communication as a leader strategically versus nipping in the bud – which is tactical and all based on how-to and all based in just reaction and solving an immediate problem – if I am motivated to see communication as a strategy, then I will change my inner world and my inner understanding of it to get to that end result so that I change the culture from that.

**Ellen:** Can we keep on this moment for a bit? I want to hit the other two points of the foundation of creating a drama-free culture. You call it managing drama. Really drama is okay, isn't it?

**Marlene:** My book is called *Stop Workplace Drama* but the reality is it's about identifying it and moving forward and its levels of it. So, we'll always have it but you can own your drama instead of letting your drama own you.

**Ellen:** So, the first piece of this foundation of this work is to gain clarity for yourself as you move in your canoe to your island in the shark-infested waters, maybe this obstacle to your peace or prosperity in the form of this employee who's really having a hard time.

**So, you say if I could fire Sally, what do you really want? Then we start to see some awareness and they gain some clarity and you gain some clarity, but what do we still do with the situation of this employee and Sally?**

**Marlene:** When they say what they want – this is what I want – the second thing that we want to do in this as a coach is to make them see their choices. One of the things that I say is that the very first level of responsibility is the recognition of choice. In other words, if someone comes to me and they want me to fix it, they have not now owned their choices. They do not even see choice and until we see choice we're not empowered.

As the leader, you want to help that person to see their choices. So, the next question would be what are some choices that you have? It could be to talk to Sally. It could be to transfer out. It could be just to go on home when you're done. There are thousands of choices, but because that person is stuck in their drama they are not empowered. They're asking you to fix – which is rescuing – which is what authentic drama-free leaders do not do – which is rescue. We empower. We help people to recognize their own power.

So, the next question is what are some of your choices? What you're normally going to hear – and this will tell you where the employee is, or the complainer or your three-year-old or whoever you're dealing with – is I don't have any choices. That is not true. There are always choices.

**Ellen:** This is really powerful. I know that when I've been in stressed situation, my vision gets narrower and then as I relax and breathe and open up, I can say wait a minute. That's why I try not to think about things in the middle of the night. You start to get scared and you start to see no options. You can't see any options, so as you create this space and ask good questions, then that person can explore some options, one of which could be to not work here.

**Marlene:** That is certainly fine but there doesn't need to be drama about that. If the contrast is such that it is not going to change by nature of politics, Obamacare, the way the world works, who's in power; if that is a reality, which it may or may not be – for example I do a lot of work with public safety and 911, the whole industry there.

When I'm doing workshops, sometimes when we talk about what do you not want, I'll hear I don't want to work weekends. Well, when you work for that kind of an industry, you're going to work weekends because you rotate shifts and so on. So, what are your choices? What we don't want to do as leaders is we don't want to tell them their choices. We want to give them the privilege of discovery.

We want them to be able to say one choice is to take some of my vacation on weekends. Another choice is to see if someone else would trade with me. Another choice is to see if that person could get overtime and I can get off as often as I can. Another choice is this is not a good fit for me because this is the nature of this kind of job and this kind of work.

**Ellen:** I think this might springboard us to the next point about relationships. What this is making me think is with some of my clients, they spend a lot of time and energy and money recruiting and hiring and orienting and training good team members, and then it almost becomes a game to see if we can identify fast that this new person is not going to be a good fit and they leave.

So, we have this kind of revolving door going where people are coming in but they're not staying, and there's almost a sense of pride in that new person is not going to be good enough here.

**Marlene:** Yes, and really relationships have to do with the way that we see things and the way that we think about things. From all the executives and individuals that I've worked with on understanding this philosophy, once they get all of this – and it does take a while – they start seeing people differently even when they hire and it elevates their level of consciousness. They're able to spot patterns of people that are not going to be responsible types of players in your business.

What you want to do is you want to be able to tell what someone's relationship is with someone or something or some idea by the way they talk about it – for example relationship with time and money. Most of us have a very victim mindset about time and money – well there's not enough time, I'm so busy, if I only had time, oh my husband wouldn't allow it – rather than just saying I've got other priorities, I appreciate what you're doing.

Instead of owning our choices, we make it about why we can't do something else and why we're always the victim of time, but the reality is we're drowning in a sea of choices and we simply haven't caught up to the responsibility of choosing.

**Ellen:** There's relationship in a lot of different avenues. There's relationship with things like money or prosperity or success or time, but there's also this relationship – let's go back to Sally for a minute. Let's say Joe is the one who came to the party with this issue with Sally and you've heard him, you have acknowledged him, you've kind of broken down some of the barriers between you, so communication can flow.

He's shared that he wants you to get rid of Sally and you've helped him see that there are some other choices based on what he really wants, and the two of you are gaining some clarity.

### **What about his relationship with Sally? Is that something you have to fix?**

**Marlene:** I can facilitate that. I can't fix it but it is about the way that he sees Sally, the way Sally sees him and the way that they relate based on the understanding of this business or this company. So, one choice might be what if we got Sally in here and we got some agreement about the boundaries and the way that you two operate? Would you be willing to have that dialog with Sally?

**Ellen:** That came right out of that clarity. That's really cool because that was a choice, one of many choices that you helped him to discover, and then you could at least ask him is that something that we should pursue?

**Marlene:** Yes because if he says no, then what we will find is that many times it's really about tattling and it's about representing everybody else instead of just yourself. One of the challenges I see in communication and relationships and drama is someone becomes the power of attorney for everybody else. Oh, everybody else hates the schedule; now don't tell Rob that I said this but Rob is very disgusted. Well, who made you Rob's power of attorney? Have Rob come to me.

I see this all the time in emerging leaders and private practice types of leaders – dental offices, medical offices, private practice and those kinds of offices where there hasn't really been any leadership experience or training, and the owner is trying to lead and own a business as well. They start believing and talking to people without representing the person who's supposed to be represented. Do you know what I'm saying?

**Ellen:** Totally. My world is plumbing, heating, cooling, electrical, and restoration companies but the same thing kind of happens. A team kind of develops around us and then all of the sudden there's this awareness – wow I should be leading somebody, someone should take charge and it's probably me – but by then there's kind of *de facto* leaders who have already evolved in the group.

**Marlene:** I see this too. Someone's off on disability and there are no boundaries and they keep coming back in and visiting with the crew, and it's disrupting. It's an obstacle of prosperity because they're a disruption now because they're missing people but they're out on disability. The owner's paying this big premium to handle that insurance, and then the owner says to everybody else at a team meeting, hey whenever he comes in he's going to be sent straight to me. The first conversation that should have happened was the person coming in because people are going to gossip.

**Ellen:** Explain more about that. **What do you mean by send them straight to me?**

**Marlene:** I've seen this happen. The owner of the business has an employee and they have a worker's comp because something happened. So, they paid this insurance and this person is out now on worker's comp but they like everybody. Let's call him Bill. Bill keeps coming in to visit with everybody even though he's on worker's comp, so now people are gossiping, visiting and not doing their jobs.

The leader at that point needs to talk to Bill and say here's the thing. You're out on worker's comp and I love it that you like this place but when you come in, it needs to be a meeting with me and not to chit-chat with everybody else.

**Ellen:** I see. So, the owner just added to the drama by making it this big mystery – now I'm going to bring Bill to the woodshed.

**Marlene:** So, instead of addressing it with the person who's causing the problem, the owner gets the team together and says this is really disruptive, so from now on when Bill comes in you are not to speak to him. You're to tell him to come straight back to me and this needs to be kept quiet. Well, the first thing that happens is a text to Bill and then it's like they don't respect me enough.

**Ellen:** I would so do it. I always relate to situations like this. I kind of brag in some ways that I've had 100 jobs. That's because I got fired a few times and I quit a whole bunch, but I was that trouble-making employee. In fact you were to once upon a time, weren't you Marlene?

**Marlene:** Oh yes.

**Ellen:** Is that why you work for yourself now?

**Marlene:** Yes. I didn't get fired but as I look back on it, I would have been a nightmare in some ways. In some ways I was a great worker but looking back on it, I see all these different perspectives.



**Ellen:** See, I think that is a strength now though because when I talk to leaders, I think that's not what they're hearing. I know that that's what you think you're saying but if I were in their shoes – and I've been in their shoes so many times – I'd make mincemeat out of you on that one.

I think that it does give us both some perspective when we go into someone's shop and help hold up a loving mirror. I've heard it said that that's what a consultant can do. So, we've talked about the foundation of the work you do to manage workplace and home drama. It starts with gaining clarity. Now we're delving into relationships, not just between the team members and the leader and the folks who work for him, but also perhaps the leader's relationship with what it is they say they want or the relationship with the sharks in the water.

**Marlene:** It is. It's all relationship and here's a way to think about this that makes an impact – or people tell me that it does. When I'm giving you a new way to think about relationships, I say if an earthquake happened in Japan, you have only a very small relationship with Japan. You know what Japan is.

You've heard of it but if you've never visited, it's like you say a prayer or maybe you send some money to Global Red Cross to make yourself feel better, but if your daughter is over there doing an internship or doing a cultural study, all the sudden it's a huge deal. If you've lived in Japan for a year and you married a person from there, all the sudden this global impact is so personal to you and it's only personal because of the way you think about it.

**Ellen:** The situation isn't any different.

**Marlene:** Right, the situation is there's an earthquake in Japan. It's the same way with any relationship. The only reason that we have a relationship is by nature of the thoughts we have about that person or that issue. We live almost our entire lives through the contents of our head.

**Ellen:** Let's send more for our conversation from like Joe's relationship with Sally to perhaps a leader's relationship with an issue that is getting in the way, an obstacle to peace or prosperity. If he wants to get on the island of I want to grow to \$5 million in sales, I want to have three locations, I want to have a culture where it's fun to go to work and leaders are developing, but I have a relationship with the government or with prosperity in general that seems to be getting in my way.

Let's go a little more esoteric here because to me as a consultant and someone who can help people grow their businesses, business is quite easy – charge more than it costs – but what keeps people from charging what they need to charge? That has everything to do with their relationship with prosperity and not so much to do with the actual accounting or the math.

**Marlene:** It really does.

**Ellen:** Does that make sense?

**Marlene:** Yes.

**Ellen:** Talk about that a little bit.

**If you find yourself with some blocks or some sharks in the waters between you and your canoe and this island of the next level that you are gaining clarity about in your business, how do we deal with that kind of drama?**

**Marlene:** In the end, the end result – which is not going to be glamorous or sexy and we'll explain this – but the end result is about taking full responsibility for every piece of your life, including your finances, the way that you think and the way that you feel. A tool that I use to help people to have the clarity and to hold up that loving mirror is a tool that I write about in the book, and it's called the Karpman Drama Triangle.

**Ellen:** Is that the guy who helped develop it?

**Marlene:** Yes, his name is Dr. Steven Karpman. He's a psychiatrist and he used it in family therapy. I've taken this tool and adapted it to use it in your work life and your personal life so that you can actually take a snapshot of what's going on and you can see the orientation that you're adopting by looking at these different points on the triangle. At the very bottom point is the victim mentality, at the upper left is the persecutor mentality or orientation, and at the upper right is the rescue mentality. Let's talk about finances in relationship and let's add another exciting component, which is a family business.

**Ellen:** If you're listening and you have a pen and paper, let's draw that triangle. It's a triangle with one point at the bottom and two points up in the air.

**Marlene:** Yes, one at the left and one at the right.

**Ellen:** The bottom one is called victim, and the top left is called persecutor and the top right is called rescue.

**Marlene:** And in the middle is a big D and that's denial.

**Ellen:** Oh, the river of denial.

**Marlene:** Now let's take the dynamics. We've got finances as a dynamic, we've got family business and we've got relationships. Now we're talking in that context. Let's say that in your family business you just can't seem to make the money. We might say that's just as simple as charging more than what it costs, but it's not.

Let's say you're charging plenty. You're making a gigantic margin. What's really going on? As we look further, we see that you've got a family member working in the business that really isn't earning their pay. You're rescuing. You're constantly loaning them money and it's draining all of your revenue. Yes but they've had a divorce and they're a single mother. Yes but this. Yes but that. Do you see the rescue that's going on and the victim mentality of the person that's the drain?

**Ellen:** Yes.

**Marlene:** That happens a lot in family businesses. There's someone that's really not at all equipped, able or willing to do the work and the drain comes from this rescuing behavior. Let's say that five people quit because of this person. Do you see what I'm saying?

**Ellen:** Yes, I live this and see this so often.

**Marlene:** Yes, it's systemic. I've seen this too where the owner just cares more about being the best friend than they do about making decisions that are going to hurt people's feelings. We go to the island called making sure you agree.

I find that I am the consultant to consultants because I have other consultants calling me and telling me about situations in their businesses that they're consulting in. For example, one called me and said he doesn't really want to have any organizational structure and there's a guy that maybe has Aspergers, which people have their issues or whatever they've been diagnosed with, and he's on the frontlines in the customer service department.

Well, it's great to give people a choice and a chance, but maybe that's not the best position for that person given the nature of what they have to deal with. This person would rather rescue and say we don't want to hurt his feelings or everybody needs a chance, but if you have something like that that's debilitating that keeps your business from prospering, you have to make a tough decision.

**Ellen:** I think too that we neglect to recognize that it's no fun to be the guy not winning.

**Marlene:** Right.

**Ellen:** It is enabling this losing situation and aren't you culpable for that as a leader?

**Marlene:** It's just that denial. When we lose our clarity, the focus is on soothing that person's feelings. The focus is on believing a story that they're not capable, or that they're not capable somewhere else or that I can't make a decision. Do you see what I'm saying?

**Ellen:** I do.

**Marlene:** The clarity has been lost and now it's about the shark and it's about I don't make enough money, so let's hire a new sales team. It's not about the sales team. It's about the leak in the boat. You don't need new rowers.

**Ellen:** How does the persecutor fit in here?

There's the victim, the rescuer and the persecutor. We're kind of circling around in this part of the shark-infested waters that is denial. This is how we lie to ourselves. Maybe lie is even a tough word, but this is where we fool ourselves.

**Marlene:** I see this a lot. The persecutor can be the queen bee that's very good at what she does, but there's no grading or there's no performance management on their people skills. Yes they're great at bringing in the sales, or yes they're great at the inventory control, or yes they're great at whatever technical piece they have, or they saved you from a lawsuit or whatever they did. Your business has grown and that person is really navigating the ship instead of you.

I see this in the medical practices. A doctor has his own clinic and he grows it to then finally bring on an administrator. The queen bee who's maybe the head nurse has been with him since day one, saved him from a lawsuit, knows the ins and outs of the business but the administrator comes on and supposedly is going to have the authority to lead and to make policy and to enforce policy.

What happens is that queen bee doesn't like this new power shift, so when there's something that makes her unhappy – the doctor's getting ready to go into surgery or whatever, and she goes in and says the administrator is doing this, it's not fair to me, after all I've been with you and I know this, and he says well then go ahead. He makes an exception that's undermining the leader, so now we have this persecutor showing up as a persecutor because there's a lack of clarity about who's in charge and what the policies are.

**Ellen:** So, a lot of what I'm hearing today Marlene is that being able to see these patterns is the first step, to kind of reduce the emotion and to see things for what they are. This is part of gaining clarity for understanding a little bit about the relationships, your relationships with the island of your dreams as well as the sharks in the water. There are those relationships we have to deal with.

Now let's talk about the point of change. I think we've set the stage for that. The third part of the foundation of this managing drama approach to business and to home is dealing with resistance.

**Marlene:** Yes.

**Ellen:** Let's talk about that.

**Marlene:** When we have drama, we have to learn to see that as a signal for change. When there's drama, that's just an indicator. It's just a sign. What we want to do to relieve that energy is to get back on that triangle and blame somebody. Take a breath and say this. This is one of my sayings that changes lives.

*Knowing your feelings will not change the facts, but knowing the facts can change your feelings. Then when you change your feelings, you change your results.*

**Ellen:** That is really how the nature of reality is. Thought begets reality and so to gain new information, to get the facts, may allow us to think different thoughts and then change our feelings about what's happening, and that can have a transformative effect. Am I capturing this?

**Marlene:** You are, but I think it's simpler than that. The simplicity is that we mistake feeling for fact. Just because you're resentful of Sally doesn't mean Sally did anything wrong. Here's the question. What are they doing that you don't want them to do? What are they not doing that you want them to do? Those are facts.

**Ellen:** And that we could actually deal with. What I find too is that when we start to get to these moments – so we're gaining some clarity, we're asking good questions, we're coming up with some choices – the resistance often persists.

When you say the door is right here and we could walk through the door, we could make this better, the resistance comes so often in this form – you don't know how long this history of me and Sally goes on, or you don't know what I endured as the son of boss for the last 50 years. So much has been invested in the drama.

**Marlene:** We're attached to the shark. We'd rather talk about the shark than about what our choices are, so the resistance is always either a distraction or it's the shark. The resistance is either the left-hand turn called why it's not fair, or it's the shark called why it is and Obamacare. That sounds like a rhyme, doesn't it?

**Ellen:** It sounds so funny the way you say it. It's easy to see it as not as big a rock as we may imagine it to be.

**Marlene:** Let me say this because I know you work with a lot of entrepreneurs and I know you'll get this. We get stuck on the rock called how. We say we want something and instead of really maintaining the clarity of what we want and holding that vision tight and claiming it and speaking it, the drama and the conversation becomes I don't know how, if I only knew how, but I don't know how. The truth of matter is until you say what you want, how doesn't even matter because how is process, and what and why is strategy.

**Ellen:** That's so important. Really when it comes down to the how, if you're clear about what you want – okay this is what we have for our metrics for the business, this is the kind of culture we want to create, this is what it's going to look like and feel like and smell like – the clearer we are on that, the how's could be multiple. There could be a lot of different ways to get there.

**Marlene:** The how will show up, and we get real attached to the idea of a plan that there's no variation from, but we all know that's not the truth. Plans just give you a map and some guidance but it's going to change. The plan will shift, but the what and the why is what you're really going after.

What I've learned through this process of using it in my own business and in helping other people is that the reason we get stuck in that rock called how or the reason we take a left-hand turn to a distraction is because once we have two points of reference established, it creates a gap and that gap creates a feeling called aversion.

Our brain is meant more to solve cognitive dissonance than it is to actually get to the goal. We want the release of tension. When I say I want something and there's a part of me that doesn't know how or I don't believe it's possible, the feeling of aversion and panic is so adverse to some people that they would rather say I don't really want that, or I don't know how, or Sally won't let me or my wife wouldn't understand. We'd rather do that because it feels too bad to take ownership that we don't know how and we don't know if it's possible.

**Ellen:** In that gap of not knowing how but being clear, if we were just willing to ride it through a little bit...

**Marlene:** Part of the willingness that hasn't happened – I call it living in paradox. Here is the paradox. The paradox is that I'm whole and complete, lacking nothing – and you can change I to my business, my family or whatever – whole and complete lacking nothing right here, and there's more to see, do, be, experience, enjoy, prosper. So, if I can hold both and I can get there and I can alleviate some of that aversion, it's about trust. That's what that's about.

**Ellen:** I like what you say about breathing. Just chill for a moment. It doesn't have to be for a year. It doesn't have to be for a day but let's just embrace that what we want is gaining clarity. We're gaining clarity on what we want and the how's will be revealed, and trust long enough to take a breath or two because something always pops up.

**Marlene:** This is a fun exercise for anybody that's listening to this. Start asking people – and I mean powerful entrepreneurs – when they have a little complaint, say it's curious, it sounds like you're frustrated. Do the listening and then say what is it that you really want? If we were having this conversation six months from now, what would the dialog be like? Here's what you're going to hear. Well, let me just tell you about this industry, I mean you just have no idea, and because of the housing industry and because of Obamacare.

**Ellen:** Right and that really inspired me to put this Business Makeover 2014 event together. Marlene, I was just dazzled yet again at how fast a year goes by. We wrapped up 2013 and now 2014 is in front of us, and it's going to be a snap of the fingers before it's October, November, December and you think where did the year go? I want so much these conversations, for these interviews to be an opportunity for us to stop and pause and consider what is it that we really want and what are we committed to?

This is one of your favorite questions, I know. You and I have talked to each other before and I've wanted to get wound up in my drama. You'll say how committed to that are you? Is that what you're committed to or what are you committed to, because our commitments reveal...?

**Marlene:** Yes, by your choices you reveal your commitments.

**Ellen:** By your choices you reveal your commitments, so what I'm committed to is I'm committed to perhaps not getting to the island by continuing to paddle the boat with every distraction.

**Is some of the resistance going to start dissolving?**

**Marlene:** Lack of willingness is what I find, and this is like a big statement and then we can break it down.

**Ellen:** I'm loving our conversation, loving it.

**Marlene:** Thank you. The need to be right soothes the ego but the willingness to be wrong changes the culture.

**Ellen:** When I talk about that baggage – is it so hard to be wrong?

**Marlene:** The desire to be right all the time is what keeps us on the triangle, and that's why leaders have a difficult time sometimes making a decision because it might be wrong. To be willing to be wrong is the ability to even say to the employee that's been causing you the drama, hey would you come into my office, I've got something that's been weighing on me.

Let me just own something that I've done. I've allowed you to come in here and to visit and shoot the breeze with the coworkers when you're on this disability, when you're on worker's comp, and that's not fair to them, to me or to you. So, what I have to do is a little minor course correction and I'm sure you'll understand that this is what the new rule is going to be, and it wouldn't have been fair for me to just hold the resentment and not tell you how it has to be.

It's about owning the part that you played, and the willingness to be wrong will transform any culture because if you'll see the part you played, that's the only part you really have to clean up.

**Ellen:** I talk about this with my clients. You can fall on your sword but you don't have to wear the hair shirt forever, you can just fall on your sword and get back off of it.

**Marlene:** And move on, because people won't think about it. You'll be the only one dramatizing over it but they'll admire you for just being authentic.

**Ellen:** Be authentic and then move on. You're not supposed to be perfect and it's okay. That's another way that we can get through this resistance that's going to keep us stuck, to put the baggage down. I'm going to see how many metaphors I can throw in here, Marlene.

**Marlene:** Here's something else too that I think you'll find interesting. You'll hear this a lot. I bet you've heard this a ton. Well, I tried to set a boundary but it didn't work.

**Ellen:** I'm glad you brought that up because I was thinking about moving forward as we work through these steps – gaining clarity, reviewing and analyzing our relationships, questioning them, clarifying them and then moving through resistance.

Let's go back to Sally and Joe. Let's say that with Sally and Joe we've had some good breakthroughs in terms of clarity and what could happen. As far as the relationship between Sally and Joe, maybe some boundaries were established and the air was cleared a little bit.

**How do we keep from sliding back into drama? If Joe has said I'm willing to make this work, I like my job, I like what it takes, I don't want to blame Sally for everything that's not happening here, I want to move forward – what is some counsel that you could give us to move forward from that point?**

**Marlene:** The main piece is once again the clarity, and the clarity on this level has to do with a deeper kind of clarity about how you want to show up in the world. If you can impart that to your people – I know it sounds deep and it sounds woo-woo, but it really does change things.

I was a factory worker for 21 years and whenever I got a real clarity about how I wanted to show up in the world, it changed the structural dynamics of my relationship to my communication. When I said okay the way I want to show up is as a person who always seeks to improve communication and relationships.

What that meant for me was that I had to remove some of the barriers that kept me from that. One of those barriers was my eye-rolling, my sarcastic wit, my ability to put someone down when I didn't like what they were saying. I used that as a weapon, and where that might seem like power, real power is the ability to shift who you are by holding back when you could use that to take someone down.

**Ellen:** That brings us full circle. As a leader, it is so important for it to start with me.

**Marlene:** Exactly.

**Ellen:** So, I am perpetuating this drama every time I roll my eyes, or say you know that's how Sally is, or we've been here before and all of those little things. You said sarcasm. For me, some of that I'm disguising as being funny.

**Marlene:** That's what happens. We justify it and the reality is we have to be the living example, and when we're not we have to course correct. We have to show people that we are human and that as we grow we have drama, and I shouldn't have said that, that was just me feeling a bit stressed and my mind and course correction is I'm no longer going to say that.

I do that with even the contractors that I work with. If I find myself getting out of alignment with who I say I am and who I want to be seen as in the world, I don't try to justify it. I was on a forum the other day reading high-level consultants talking about and agree with – oh I'm so intolerant of incompetence.

Are you finding that the more you understand life and that the quicker witted you become, you're more intolerant. They're all agreeing yes I get that way too, people are so stupid. I thought truly? Is that how you want to show up in the world? You're proud of that? If that's the way you are, the real question is, is that who you want to be? Is that working for you? Because if it is, good for you but if it's not working for you – which it won't eventually – you'll learn your lesson the hard way.

**Ellen:** I think that my big takeaway from our conversation today Marlene is this event, this Business Makeover 2014, and business is a personal transformation tool.

**Marlene:** Yes, it is.

**Ellen:** Thank you so much for sharing your insights today and you've got a lot more. I want to talk about what you have to offer. You made an exclusive package available for us. On the website, on the speakers' page where the offers are available, you're going to find Marlene's. The

link is [BusinessMakeover2014.com/Chism](http://BusinessMakeover2014.com/Chism). Marlene's last name is Chism and you'll find her on our speakers' page.

Let's talk a little bit about what you're making available. I love the way you break things down and make these strategies and tactics so workable and so kind and so loving and so personally transformative. I'm excited to share what you've got today. You're making Five Traits of Authentic Drama-Free Leaders package available, and this includes an audio download and learning guide.

### **Can you tell us a little about it?**

**Marlene:** Absolutely. You can even use this to share with all the leaders in your workplace. You can download it of course and just listen to it while you're on the treadmill.

**Ellen:** Because once you change, everything changes. As a leader, as you start to transform your approach to drama and to what it is that you want and your relationships and your willingness to correct course and overcome resistance, everything will change in your organization. Isn't that the truth?

**Marlene:** Absolutely, and in this I give you Five Traits of Authentic Drama-Free Leaders. Within that, you're going to learn the three main character qualities of an authentic leader. We talk about authenticity. I'm going to give you snapshot of what drama in the workplace looks like, and then within each one of these checklists, I'm going to give you tools for transformation.

Just to give you a little bit of bait to chew on, one of the traits is they exhibit emotional mastery, so as we talk about an authentic drama-free leader, what that looks like to exhibit emotional mastery. It gives you what I call tools for transformation so that you can start practicing that. It gives you practical tools, so it's not just you listen to this and it's blah, blah, blah. You could actually use this for a training program in your workplace.

**Ellen:** I love that because there's that contrast. I'm getting a handle on what drama is. It's these obstacles to my peace and prosperity. What would drama-free look like is what we're offering in this package.

**Marlene:** Yes, and we talk about in this the four ways that a drama leader impacts the workplace, and I've done tons of research. In fact when I was getting my Master's in HR Development, my capstone was entitled Drama in the Workplace Hampers Productivity: The effect of relationships on the bottom line. Since then I've done a ton of studies on how rude bosses are stressful to employees and how it impacts productivity and even your health. So, you're going to get all that research in there as well.

**Ellen:** This is exciting. We asked that you put together a special package for us, so thank you so much. The value is \$249 and the price is \$97 for a whole lot of wonderful coaching, counseling, love and support from you, Marlene. Thank you so much.

**Marlene:** Well, I'm glad I could do it.

**Ellen:** It's been fun, hasn't it? The hour flew by. It's time for us to say goodbye. It's time for me to play my groovy outro music.

**Marlene:** Thank you so much for having me.

**Ellen:** Love, love, love to you and thank you for helping us expand Business Makeover 2014. Love to you, Marlene.



**Marlene:** Thank you.