



How to deal with a Drama Queen

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Firstly, the title is a bit of a misnomer. I have met many men who would fall into this category. Drama queen is not limited to gender nor gender orientation. Drama queens are found in all walks of life.

So let us start by looking at how to recognise a drama "person".

Drama people thrive on attention. But that is typically because growing up they learned to feel invisible and unimportant. They also typically tend to have poor coping skills so they can't manage themselves and their emotions adequately. They are trying to convince you, and therefore themselves, that they matter. And unfortunately their behaviour sabotages their efforts. They are so caught up with their needs they ignore the needs and feelings of others. And so their behaviour is a turnoff, leaving others to distance themselves from them rather than express compassion. And compassion and understanding, as well as firm boundaries is actually what they need to heal their wounds and move on. Whether it is from believing they were not good enough, not wanted or accepted, or not loved, drama persons have developed an internal and mostly unconscious story that they play out and that exhausts everyone around them.

Some signs to watch out for:

And you don't need to display all of these to be a drama queen. A few can be enough to warn you.

- ✚ The typical relationship balance of give and take doesn't exist. Drama persons crave admiration and attention and can't or won't give it back.
- ✚ Small problems become huge disasters.
- ✚ They will top your stories of good or bad fortune in your life.
- ✚ They take minor comments as personal affronts.
- ✚ When they mess up, they look for a scapegoat.
- ✚ They throw others under the bus, including you, to get what they want.
- ✚ They like the limelight. When the spotlight slips away from them they find ways to steal it back.
- ✚ They display volatile mood shifts.
- ✚ They have monologues, not conversations, but expect you to come in with "oh no", or "then what happened". In other words, support their monologue, but don't talk about yourself.

- ✚ They never remember what is going on with you.
- ✚ They dominate social gatherings with personal stories and demands.
- ✚ They overshare, regardless of what is appropriate.
- ✚ They betray secrets.
- ✚ They make threats - for example, "I will hurt myself", "I will leave you".
- ✚ They worship you one minute and despise you the next.

How do you deal with a drama person?

Ideally, you do nothing. Drama is a symptom. If you participate on any level you feed the symptom and you get sucked into someone else's self-issues that have not been resolved. Unless you are their therapist, it is not your job to try to fix them or change them. So don't. You will just exhaust yourself. The only thing you can do is manage yourself. Know when to draw the line and how to draw the line, and know when to walk away.

1. Remind yourself they are over-exaggerating. Try and understand what they are really saying. Then you are less likely to go over the edge with them.
2. Set clear limits - boundaries. (That was last month's newsletter topic). Don't let them step over your boundaries. If someone wants to continually phone you at all hours set time limits. State your boundaries directly. Be polite but do not invite small talk. You can say "good morning" but don't ask, "how are you?". Do not let the drama person talk too much before you excuse yourself. You can say something like, "I am sorry I cannot talk to you, I am late for a meeting." Or, "I am sorry you are feeling bad, but I have work to do". If you have to communicate with them, for instance you work with them, then ask them just to share facts.
3. Don't reward their behaviour. Which essentially means ignore it. Don't give them attention. If they break something don't replace it. If they shout and insult you ignore them. Stop answering their demands. Lessen social interactions.
4. Look after yourself. If you have lots of encounters with a drama person, then go for a walk or listen to music or get into nature to regroup yourself.
5. If nothing else works, and you have the option, leave the situation and cut ties. This may not be possible if the drama person works in your office but sometimes it is an option and the best option.
6. If multiple people in your life fit the drama person description then consider what it is about you that attracts such people. Does the neediness of such a person make you feel important? Own your part in the situation.