

# Stop the Drama on Your Projects and Get back to Reality!

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Based on material from Reality-Based Leadership  
by Cy Wakeman

# Reflection

**“You can argue with reality and you will lose,  
but only 100% of the time.” Cy Wakeman**

# Drama!!!

Drama is the overreaction to  
circumstances and events.

Emotion

Injury

Blame

Pity

Outrage

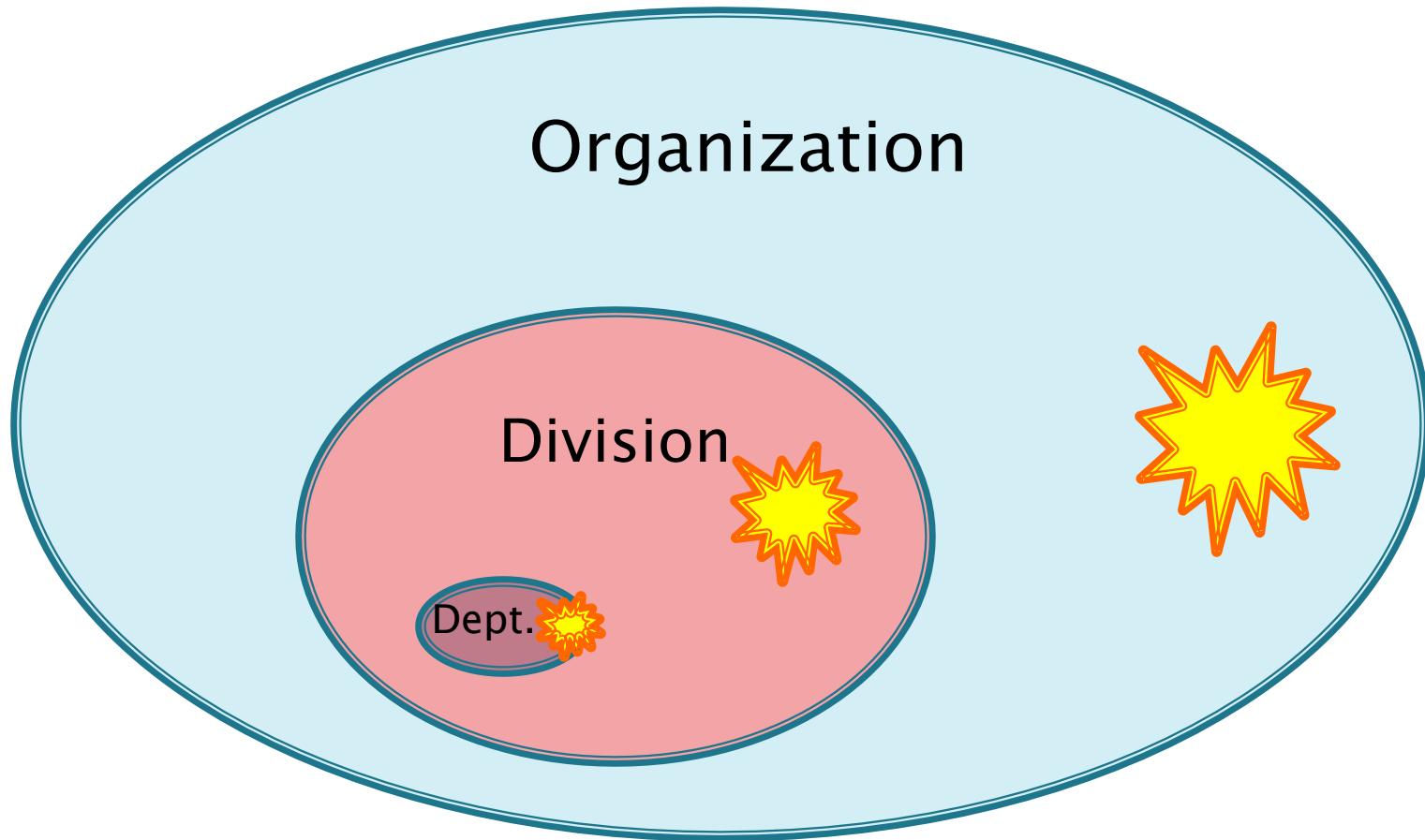
# People Love Drama

- ▶ It makes life more exciting
- ▶ But at work and within teams...
  - It wastes time
  - Creates negative emotions
- ▶ People spend up to 20% of their day dealing with drama

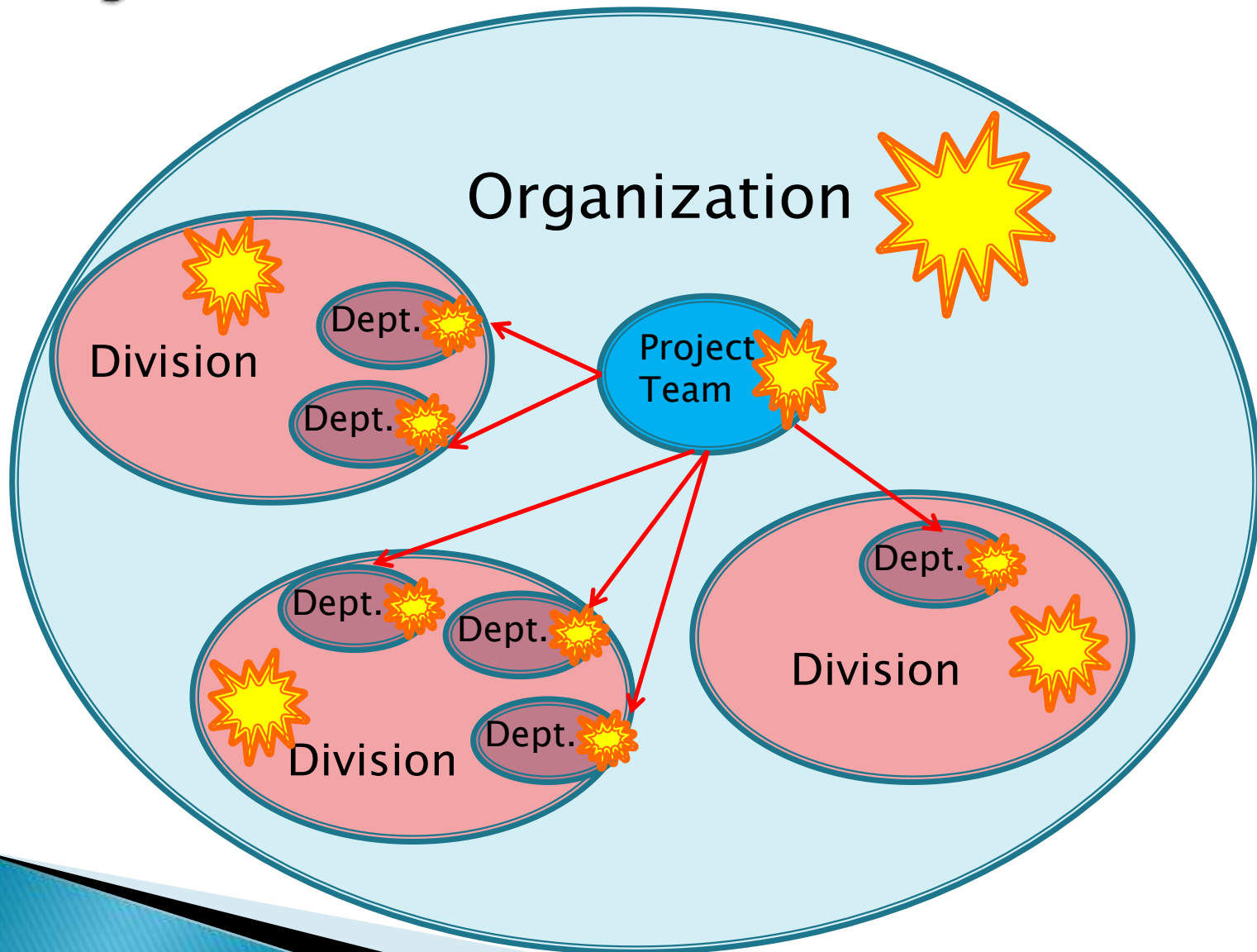
# Let's be Clear

- ▶ There is suffering in this world
- ▶ What happens at work is usually caused by:
  - miscommunication
  - conflicting priorities
  - diverting accountability and laying blame
  - protecting ego
  - exercising power
- ▶ Drama is the overreaction to events or circumstances.

# Impact of Drama



# Project Drama



# Stress at Work

People feel stressed because they spend the majority of their time reacting to circumstances instead of moving forward productively



# Relating to Circumstances

- ▶ Circumstances at work are often beyond our control.
- ▶ Differentiate between those that can be changed and those that can't be changed.
- ▶ Apply energy where it can be most effective.

# Suffering at Work

- ▶ Circumstances may not be negotiable, but your suffering is.
- ▶ Source of your suffering is not what happens to you, but the story you create.
- ▶ We set limitations by believing we can't do our best work in the circumstances.
- ▶ Our reactions set the tone for others.

“The difference between an ordeal and an adventure is attitude.”

# Our Stories

- **Victim stories** – It's not my fault
- **Villain stories** – Its all your fault
- **Helpless stories** – There is nothing else I can do. Denied accountability.
- **Fight Stories** – Feeling that someone needs to fight back

# When something happens:

- ▶ We tend to judge a situation in terms of what is right or wrong instead of what is.
- ▶ Bring back to reality...
  - What do I believe to be true at this point?
  - What do I know for sure?

# Limitations

- ▶ Casting yourself as a victim develops learned helplessness.
- ▶ Learned helplessness perpetuates because it is safe and easy to lay blame.
- ▶ If we can lay blame, we don't have to deal with it.
- ▶ Helplessness limits growth and productivity
- ▶ Project teams can develop an environment of helplessness

# Finding Peace at Work

- ▶ Deal in Reality
- ▶ End waste from drama and reclaim energy for productivity
- ▶ Harness negative energy
- ▶ Distinguish drama from fact – call it out
- ▶ Stop believing in your own stressful stories
- ▶ Set new expectations
- ▶ Fight for those things that are important to the business
- ▶ End excuses, editorializing and judgment
- ▶ Focus on adding value

# Drama Story

- ▶ The application was coded wrong and we can't meet the date

*Fight* ◦ **PM:** Business resources or customers weren't available for the requirements. There weren't any documented designs. They need to be done now! *Helpless*

*Victim* ◦ **Dev:** There wasn't good hand off from Architecture. The requirements aren't complete. Don't need a *Fight* design, I know what to do.

*Victim* ◦ **Business:** We didn't sign off on the requirements so the PM didn't do their job. I don't understand the requirements, they are too technical. *Villain*

◦ **Everyone:** Why can't they get it right? No one does their job anymore. *Helpless*

*Victim*

What kind of story is this?

# How to Stop the Drama

- ▶ What are the facts?
  - Some part of the code isn't right.
  - Need to hit or reset the timeframe
  - Need participation from all roles to complete the task.
- ▶ What can each of these roles do differently?



# Sources of Drama

- ▶ Need to be the center of attention.
- ▶ Diverts attention from their own issues or failures and focuses it on others.
- ▶ Need to build themselves up by pointing to others mistakes.
- ▶ Avoid accountability to initiate change.
- ▶ Don't have the skills to communicate effectively to ask for what they need.
- ▶ Protecting ego.

# Think About It...

Identify a Drama Scene you have experienced

- What are the facts?
- Determine if the circumstances can be changed or if they are part of the reality of the situation.

# Rewind

- ▶ Rewrite the scene to change the outcome for yourself or others.
  - How can you reduce the drama impact?
  - How can energy be diverted from drama to productivity?
  - How can you add value?
  - Rewrite the story so that it doesn't promote helplessness and leads to a more productive outcome.

# What would be different?

- ▶ There would be less blame and more accountability.
- ▶ There would be more teamwork.
- ▶ More focus on business outcomes.
- ▶ Less time would be wasted in useless conversation or emails.
- ▶ Less emotional energy and damage to relationships.

# Reality Based Leaders

- ▶ Reality based leaders refuse to argue with reality so they never over react
- ▶ They work toward productive change
- ▶ Don't engage in drama.
- ▶ Bring it back to the facts and concrete actions to promote productivity.
- ▶ Focus on the business, not ego.

**“What can you do to help?”**

# Reality Based Leaders

Reality Leadership means:

- ▶ Less talk and more action
- ▶ Being willing to forgive, but still hold accountable.
- ▶ Being confident in your ability.
- ▶ Refraining from judging others.
- ▶ Serving and promoting growth.

**It is humility in action**

**Give your Ego a Rest.**

# Confidence vs. Ego

- ▶ Ego mediates between your perception and reality.
- ▶ Ego seeks praise and generates pride.
- ▶ Ego loves drama and defeats teamwork.
- ▶ Ego based behavior is operating from personal motives and makes you emotionally expensive as an employee.
- ▶ Confidence comes from knowledge and experience, without need for praise.

# Ego vs. True Self

Ego is thinking:

How do I look?

What are people thinking about me?

Drives behavior that is inward focused

True Self is thinking:

How can I serve?

What do I have to offer?

Drives behavior that is outward focused



# Think about It...

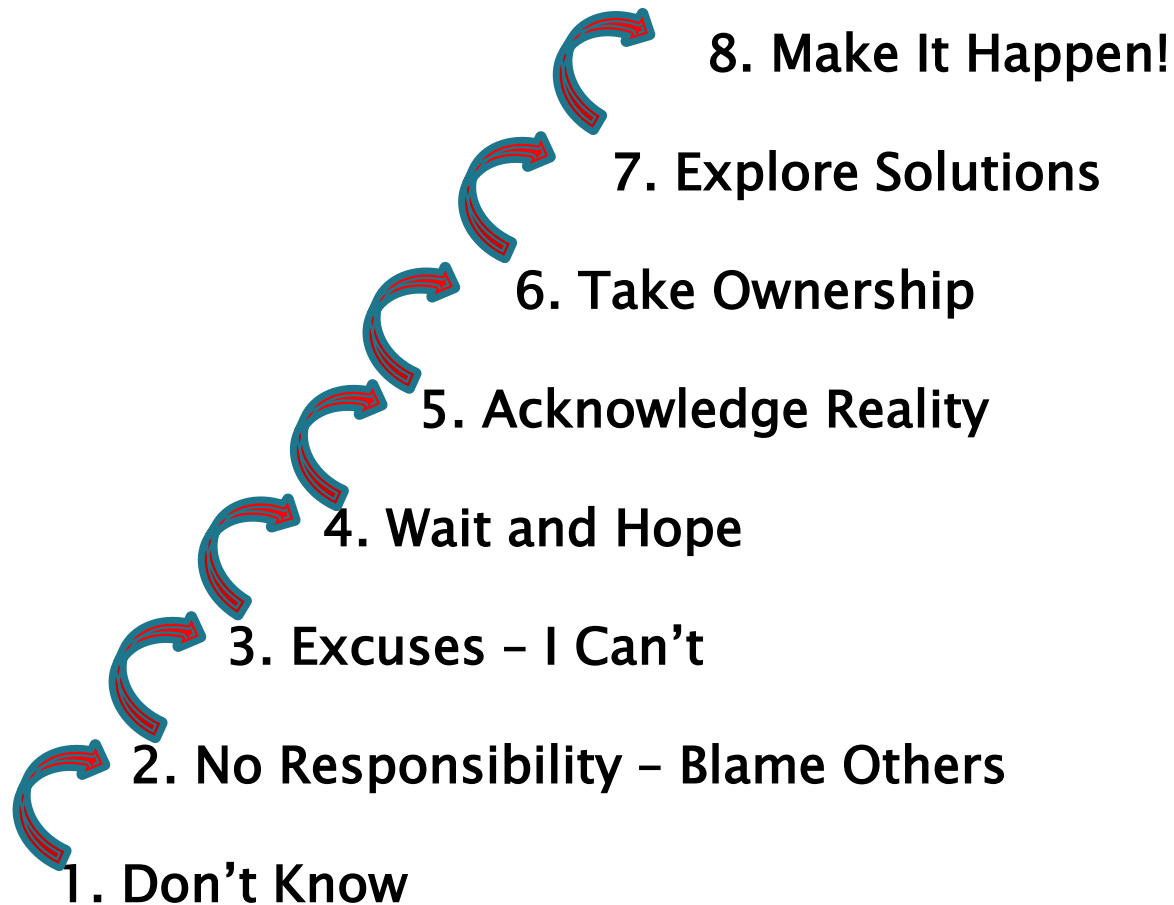
- ▶ Think about a person who engages in drama on a regular basis
- ▶ Why are they behaving that way?
  - miscommunication
  - conflicting priorities
  - diverting accountability and blame
  - protecting ego or power
- ▶ Are they creating positive energy and adding value or are they creating a drain on the team?
- ▶ How can you turn their drama into productive time?

# Value

Value = (performance + zeal to develop new skills) - (emotional expensiveness X 3)

- ▶ Drama leads to emotional expense and reduces productivity.
- ▶ Multiplies because of the effect on others as the drama spreads.
- ▶ Accountability leads to high performance and high value

# Steps to Accountability



# Avoid the Drama

- ▶ Depersonalize your Work Environment
  - Most of the time, stressors are not personally motivated.
- ▶ Q-TIP
- ▶ Forego the need for credit
- ▶ Do what you can to add the most value?
- ▶ Be there to serve and ask others to contribute
- ▶ Avoid the drama

# Confronting Conflict

- ▶ Ensure your ego isn't showing
- ▶ Know when to stand your ground
- ▶ Aim for Common Ground not Knee Jerk Criticism
- ▶ Where can I add value?
- ▶ In the grand scheme, what is the impact?
- ▶ Do you need to be right?
- ▶ Build for the future
- ▶ When things go wrong strive for results and learning not blame

# Lose the Ego

- ▶ Rid yourself of defense – It is the first act of war
- ▶ Provide reasoning instead of defense
- ▶ Responses to attack or drama:
  - Let's look at the facts
  - Good to know
  - I see
  - How can I help? Or What have you done to help?
  - This is a great opportunity, let's get started.

# Are you a reality based leader?

- ▶ Are you 100% involved?
- ▶ Are you willing to venture outside your comfort zone?
- ▶ Are you honest with yourself and others?
- ▶ Do you behave as if the business was yours?

# Are you a reality based leader?

- ▶ Are you working towards the benefit of others?
- ▶ Are you owning your own results?
- ▶ Are you doing whatever it takes to get results?
- ▶ Are you allowing others to see and know you?



# Organizations Need Leaders

Leaders who deal in Reality are more Effective and Add More Value

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No matter what level you are at in an organization, the challenge is in getting people to work together.

Lead People

**Deal in Reality Not Drama!**