

Save Your Drama for Your Mama: Drama or Leadership Is a Choice

Charlie Sheppard

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Charlie Sheppard's *Save Your Drama for Your Mama* is based on a simple premise—that leadership is a choice, and that “the behaviors we learned as children don’t provide us with the best leadership competencies as adults.” As a result, the amusing title of the book refers to the notion that drama is more appropriate in childhood.

In the workplace, and in life for that matter, drama occurs all too often. According to Sheppard, drama creates a cycle of negative behavior that moves one away from being a leader. The core of the author's argument revolves around two triangles; the “Drama Triangle” and the “Leadership Triangle.” In the Drama Triangle, the “Victim”—someone who is angry, confused, and resigned—tends to avoid accountability, be controlled by external forces, and assumes “negative intent.” In the Leadership Triangle, the “Visionary”—a leader who is energetic, focused, and engaged—embraces accountability, is focused on internal control, and assumes “positive intent.”

The book is organized logically into two sections. The first thoroughly explores drama, both from a physiological and behavioral perspective, and demonstrates how it contrasts with leadership. Sheppard then explains the concept of the two opposing triangles, talks about “perceptions and intentions,” includes an intriguing chapter titled, “Who Is Driving the Bus?” that addresses internal versus external control, and concludes with a discussion of ways in which people become trapped in the Drama Triangle.

The second section addresses leadership, but from a novel point of view. Most chapters contrast two roles, one aligned with “drama” and one aligned with “leadership.” For example, in the chapter, “The Adversary and the Catalyst,” the author details an adversary driven by anger and using fear to dominate others, while a catalyst uses positive energy to make things happen or make a difference. Sheppard includes plenty of relevant examples of both adversaries and catalysts to illustrate the point. The author wraps up the book with a final chapter, “Leadership is a Choice,” summarizing and reinforcing key messages of the book.

In closing, the author, who runs a leadership consulting firm, cleverly invites readers to use a special code that provides single-use free access to an online “Drama or Leadership Multi Rater” self-assessment tool. While there is no obligation for readers to use the firm's services, Sheppard does offer a description of his seminars at the end of the book.

Clearly, Sheppard is a master in the art of business book writing. His prose is straightforward, strongly active, highly educational, and engaging. He combines his own insightful observations with numerous stories and vignettes that bring the topic to life. The book is also well-designed, with a pleasing typeface, lots of sub-heads, bulleted items, and numbered lists make it extremely easy to read.

Save Your Drama for Your Mama is an outstanding book that all aspiring leaders would do well to read.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (March 28, 2013)

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