

## **Too Much Crisis, Chaos & Stress in Your Life? How to Overcome Drama Addiction – Dr. Scott Lyons – #1047**

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to The Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Today, I just want to tell you how big of a problem everything in the world is, and how pretty much it's all someone's fault. It absolutely isn't mine, and I want you to fix it for me so I can feel good about myself. And now that I've got that off my chest, I would like to introduce today's topic, which is about drama. Specifically, Addicted to Drama, which is a new book by Dr. Scott Lyons. And you might say, "Dave, I thought you talked about human performance and you talked about upgrading humanity and biohacking and stuff like that." Yeah, if you want to know one of the things that's getting in the way of you doing what you choose to do, and one of the things that's taxing your energy, it's drama, and some of it's your own drama that's invisible to you, and I've spent huge amounts of time figuring out my own dramas and things. But a lot of times it's other people's drama that they bring into your life and somehow you welcome, for some reason.

The overarching framework for biohacking is, look, maybe you should stop wasting energy, and then you'd be better at making energy. And some of those are cellular processes. Today, in the conversation with Scott, we're going to talk about whether maybe even drama is a cellular process, but regardless why this is so important is that if you can reduce your internal or external drama, that's the definition of biohacking; changing the environment around you or inside of you so you have full control of your own biology. Drama steals your control of your biology, and there's a reason for it. And by studying that, I think you're going to find that, well, you might become a better human being, and that when you're a better human being, the people around you resonate with that, and maybe they become better human beings too. And then we won't need politicians. Oh wait, did I say that out loud? Sorry. Scott, welcome to the show.

Scott Lyons:

Thanks, Dave. I have to say that was the best intro I've ever had.

Dave:

Nice. Mission accomplished.

Scott:

Well done. Yeah, I mean, you're talking about unnecessary turmoil and chaos that is affecting not only our physiology, our psychology, but our culture. And it's a significant problem. And there are pathways to heal this.

Dave:

All right. Drama. I feel like we all know drama, but there's that Supreme Court definition of, well, it rhymes with corn, but starts with a P, and I don't want to get this censored because that's not what this show's about, but when they asked them to define it, they said, I don't know what it is, but I know it when I see it. And I feel like drama's the same way. So is there a clinical definition of drama, or is it just your mother-in-law?

Scott:

My mother-in-law, yes. But-

Dave:

I meant yours, the collective your, but okay. [inaudible 00:03:19] after Scott, no drama there.

Scott:

No, I'm not married anymore. I don't know why. There isn't a universal definition of drama, and that's part of the issue because you're right, we all know it. We've all seen it. We've all probably experienced it on a deep, impactful level, but it's so hard to define. It really is this unnecessary turmoil and chaos in ourself that we're creating, that we're seeking, that we're around, that we're surrounded by, that we see in the world, and it's so much easier to define it by how it looks than an actual description of what it is. Although, I think we'll get into it, we'll later define about what its purpose is, and that really unravels why Addiction to Drama exists.

Dave:

Why?

Scott:

Why? Oh, you want to jump right into the why, all right.

Dave:

I want to jump right into the why.

Scott:

Why? The question is, that I could ask you Dave, or anyone who's listening is what have you done to avoid your pain?

Dave:

Okay, I'm going to be maybe personal on this one.

Scott:

Please, yeah.

Dave:

A lot, maybe the first 30 years of my life, unless it was physical pain, as in, I can't walk because my knee's dislocating all the time. That would be pain, or if there's an injury. Other than that, there isn't a reason for there to be pain. Therefore, there isn't pain. So it's kind of a logical thing in like there's a dull sense of impending doom, but you're just, "Well, there's no reason for this." So you just deny that they exist. And it feels like when anyone is caught in a drama cycle, that they're going to deny that it's a drama cycle, just like you would deny your pain. So I'm not doing anything to deny my pain because I don't have any pain, because there's no reason to have any pain, therefore there's no drama and you're a bad person. That's the cycle.

Scott:

That is the cycle. And the reason why we have an addiction to drama, I mean, is the main question we can ask ourselves is what are we doing to avoid our underlying pain and trauma? What are our

strategies? What are our adaptive survival approaches to ignore it? I mean, this is such a gruff example, but if you have, I have this glass of water here and there's a little crack in the glass, which I like, and it's not enough to make the water leak out, but if I pull a hose out, a fire hose, and just shoot water in there, it distracts me from the fact that there's a crack in there, because there's so much other chaos happening, so many other things, so many unnecessary things that keep me away from the underlying issue that is affecting actually the stability of that glass. And it's the same thing in our human experience, that often we can create more sensation, more intensity, more distractible themes in our life that keep us away from the contact of our own underlying pain and trauma.

Dave:

Okay. So things we do to distract ourselves.

Scott:

Things we do to distract ourselves. And one of the things that happens with pain, with trauma, and trauma is pretty universal at this point. We've all had some issue, some impact on our lives, or something that was missing deeply from our lives that creates essentially a wound, a held energy in the body. Something that doesn't allow us to flow. It's a stuckness, and that's an energy conservation, that's energy reserves that are not being used for the flourishing of our life. And it's a freeze in the nervous system. It's a freeze in the body. And what the body's natural intelligence does is, around that pain, it creates a layer of protection that we might call numbness. [inaudible 00:07:29].

Dave:

We matches my model entirely, okay. So there's numbness. Is the drama inside the numbness or is the drama what you're using to create it?

Scott:

Not yet. So there's the pain, the numbness, and then what does numbness do? It's a wall, it's a divider. So it creates a separation between me and myself, me and you, me and the rest of the world. And that's a pervasive isolation loneliness, that's also embedded in this cycle. Then when we're numb, when we're disassociated, when we feel disconnected from ourselves, from other people, what do we do to feel some sense of aliveness, to confirm our existence? We seek and create sensation that can rise above the threshold of numbness to say, "Hey, I'm alive." And so the volume and intensity that I have to create or seek to rise above my threshold of pain, numbness and isolation is probably going to be pretty extreme.

Dave:

It is going to be extreme, but no one makes that logical choice. I've never known someone who's dramatic who believes they're being dramatic, at least at the time they're being dramatic. So-

Scott:

Yeah, it's not about making sense. It's about making sensation.

Dave:

Oh, okay. That's interesting. And that's in your book.

Scott:

Yeah.

Dave:

Okay. So we're using drama to make sensation?

Scott:

And it's entertaining. I mean, that's the other thing about drama, is it does create and capture and maintain your attention. So there is a positive effect. And when I get what I am lacking, my whole biochemistry says, "Do more, do more, because this is what you're missing." So there's a reward process of going, I'm getting attention even if I actually can't receive it, because that's a whole other aspect of an addiction to drama, is people often think, oh, they just want attention. Well, they might want attention like we all do because there's that gap between themselves and other people. You call that gap a lack of belonging. But there's a challenge here, is that because of that numbness, that wall that has been erected, they actually can't receive that connection, that attention.

Dave:

So you get dramatic, you don't feel the attention you're receiving, so you turn up the volume even more?

Scott:

Yeah.

Dave:

I've definitely seen that happen.

Scott:

There's a lack of validation capacity because that requires vulnerability, that requires intimacy. And vulnerability and intimacy means that we have to soften enough to be in receiving, which means that we're going to have to soften enough to possibly feel what it is that we've been distracting ourselves from. And that's dangerous. Especially when it's been trauma.

Dave:

All right. So we've done a lot of episodes on trauma, and I've talked about it in several of my books, like the book on fasting, Smarter not Harder, that just came out, the last few couple chapters are around how do you undo this? And we've had experts in EMDR, experts in tapping, at the biohacking conference coming up here. By the way, guys, [biohackingconference.com](http://biohackingconference.com), June 20th or 22nd in Orlando, you should come. We're going to have a whole somatic workshop that even gets into really deep trauma release as well as how that even incorporates bedroom activities. And so I'm into this, but what's different with drama versus trauma?

Scott:

Well, drama is used to avoid the trauma. So it's a mechanism, it's [inaudible 00:11:22] like any addiction to keep us out of contact with what it is that's the underlying void. So it's really a mechanism in that way, a tool, a technique, and it's readily available. Think of all... Drugs are not cheap these days, not that I know. Drama's free. You can create it or seek it at any moment. You can take something like this

conversation that Dave and I are having and make a big deal out of it. You can amp it up, you can rev yourself up, you can get triggered by something and then roll down a hill of triggers until you are totally immersed in the emotional overwhelm, and you don't even remember what the original challenge was in relation to what we were saying.

You can call all your friends and get them involved in it, so you're drama bonding. You're getting them to enable it, throw logs on your fire of drama. And so you are so far away from actually being in contact with anything that actually you were feeling or sensing. And it's free, and it's available at any time.

Dave:

I mean, the title of your book is Addicted to Drama. I mean, I've had guys like Joe Polish from Genius Network and Genius Recovery on who talks about really strong addictions, like dozens of them that he had, that he got over. What's the relationship between substance addiction and drama addiction?

Scott:

So drama addiction falls under the category of behavioral addictions. And in the sort of olden days of addiction theory, it was substance only. And so now we can say, "Okay, well, we know things like gambling, sex addiction, finance addiction, we're overspending, these are all under the category of addiction." They weren't some time ago. So it's been an evolution of understanding of what addiction actually is, and that there are many devices we might use to essentially fill the void of that pain.

Dave:

Okay.

Scott:

It's very similar, there are many different pathways around addiction, neurologically. And so it's not that different in terms of whether it's cocaine or drama or gambling or porn.

Dave:

I like where you're going with it. And when I was introducing you, I was having too much fun to talk about what an unusual composition of knowledge you've put together. And this is a really relevant point, to bring it up. A few listeners, if you've been with me for a long time, you've heard me talk about how I reprogrammed my vision. I went from 20/60 with astigmatism to 20/15 in both eyes without astigmatism. And what I did was something you called developmental ophthalmology. And I mean, you don't just talk about drama in your line of work. I mean, you've helped a half million people with their problems and all. But you talk about somatic, the felt sense of things, which I think is very valuable. But you've also done neurodevelopmental therapy.

In my case, my eyes didn't know how to work well with my body, and this has to do with infant movement reflexes. So I reprogrammed all that, and it was very, very difficult. And you do other stuff like infant developmental movement education and something called BMC that no one on earth knows about except for you do. I know one other practitioner, two other practitioners.

Scott:

They do?

Dave:

Yeah. And this is called body, mind centering. Which is another very, I'm just going to call it woo woo way of accessing what, in my books, I call the meat operating system, the parts of the body where all this felt sense and somatic stuff is. In my view of things, and I want you to shoot holes in it or agree with it so we can just share our knowledge with listeners. It feels like stuff happens in invisible parts of the body, and a decision gets made that is before you could think about it and then you get the sensation and then you interpret it a certain way.

And then the pathway that you would go down if you're addicted to drama is instead of going, "Oh, I'm feeling..." Whatever the name of the emotion is, saying, "I don't want to feel whatever that sensation is, therefore I'm going to cause a scene and I'm going to feel like I'm a victim." Is that accurate in terms of timing, in terms of origin of the feelings? Poke holes in that. Is that accurate in terms of timing, in terms of origin of the feelings? Poke calls in that.

Scott:

Yeah. Well, I want to go back for a moment because I had something similar with my vision and-

Dave:

Oh, you did?

Scott:

Yeah. And either I had a major auditory processing disorder when I was a kid.

Dave:

Oh, me too.

Scott:

We're basically twins. And the neural developmental work was a big piece of me also healing and getting what I would call clarity. And I say that because, a rewiring, re-patterning the skewed barometer of my senses. So I'm going to go back for a moment and then I'll touch in on what you were saying is, so one of the things we often think about is, in trauma, it's just like, oh, it's this event and maybe it gets frozen in your body and that's it. But that's actually not the meat of trauma. It's what is adapting? What is shifting? What is morphing in relationship to that event or that experience and the perceived next threat? So what we have learned is that your senses change to be on the lookout for new threats. So that actually will change your visual acuity. That will change how you perceive sound. That will change your sense of timing.

So for those addicted to drama, they're going to taste more bitters. They're going to be more attuned to high pitch sounds, which are more around threat sounds, or decibels. They're going to have a sense of time that feels more like urgency, so they're unable to slow down. So the sense of victimhood that you were referring to that often comes, "I feel like I'm a victim to the world. I feel like the world is coming at me. No matter what I do, no matter what I do, something is always wrong or will be wrong, and it's never my fault. Never my fault." And so that victim mentality is, from the outside, we perceive it as like over-dramatic, oversensitive, and a victim. But from the inside, it's real, because when your senses are locked in to be on the lookout for the next threat, constantly, you will find it. You will always find it.

And if you don't find it, you will seek it, because one of the things that's a challenge is that when your senses are on the lookout and you constantly feel like you are in dis-ease, anxiety on the inside, and the world is calm on the outside, you feel out of sync, you feel totally out of sync with the world. And that

sort of dissonance is awful. I mean, we've all been in that place before. You're in the throes of feeling really angry at something, and someone around you isn't, it feels very threatening. It feels very challenging that they're not with you. It feels very lonely. And so for those who are addicted to drama, to feel a sense of being in sync with the world, they have to shift the environment and those in it to be at the same decibel of chaos and crisis to which their physiology is living in.

Dave:

Wow, that's pretty exciting. So you're not comfortable until everyone around you is uncomfortable like you?

Scott:

Yeah. I talk about that in the book too, as weaponized empathy.

Dave:

Those are powerful words. I think empathy is actually better than not having empathy, but it's pretty toxic because if you feel everyone else's pain, they'll be happy to give it to you, if you don't have control over your empathy, which is more compassion than empathy.

Scott:

Yeah.

Dave:

All right. This is intriguing. It feels like, in your book, you talk about there being a storm chaser and a storm creator. Tell me how drama addiction applies to both of those and what they are?

Scott:

Well, the piece that I was just talking about is that if you feel out of sync with the world or your status quo, your baseline of existence has been chaos, then you're going to go seek it, you're going to go create it. You're going to go manufacture it in the way that you exist. I mean, no one who's addicted to drama, which are many of us on some level, are going to be like, "Oh gosh, that person I'm in a relationship with, I really take responsibility for the toxicity here." We're going to miss how it... And it's easy to be like, "I couldn't have created their toxicity."

Except that we had the trauma tingles, and followed that a beacon to them in a way that we are placing or we're seeking the places where we can reenter back into places of crisis or chaos. And to go back for a moment, I realize I forgot to answer, when I started doing all the somatics and really addressing getting out of the ways my sensory organs were on the lookout for the next threat, that's when truly my vision shifted. My auditory processing issues shifted, and I could hear without feeling like I was on guard. I could see without it feeling like everything was coming at me.

Dave:

Wow. It's so funny because you never knew that was happening until you-

Scott:

Changed it.

Dave:

Because that's how it always is. I had the same thing, and I tried to explain it to people, I didn't know it, but I was tunnel-visioned, which is what you do when you're stressed. So I was only looking at the middle part of my vision. My whole peripheral vision was turned off, and I had no clue. And it took three months of intense work, every Saturday for an hour, and I would sleep for half the day afterwards. It was so tiring. For my brain to realize that there was information there and could turn it on so my visual system could relax. And if people have listened to the interview with James Nestor about breath work, one of the things that James and I both did is I actually expanded my upper pallet in order to change how my nervous system worked as part of calming it down, and part of retraining my visual system, and then retraining my auditory input.

And when I talk about upgrading yourself, literally, it's like having a camera and changing the lenses on Instagram. You can change your lenses on reality by learning to see differently, learning to hear differently. And in your book, you're making the case that you can learn to see chaos around you differently so that it doesn't make you enter it.

Scott:

Yeah. You can recognize your own positionality in your suffering. You can recognize where you are enabling other people and then being affected by that.

Dave:

Okay. What's the first step to doing that? I mean, you wrote a whole book about it, people are going to need to read *Addicted to Drama*, but kind of walk us through it. Okay, so you've decided, there's a lot of drama in my life. My friends are all full of drama. I create drama. I have drama with my family, drama with my partner, drama with my kids, drama with my boss. Okay, you're one of those people. What do you do? What's step one?

Scott:

Yeah. Well, awareness is step one. Just like in a 12-step program; awareness, acceptance. This is happening. This is not just happening at me. I am part of why it's happening. And that's a big, significant first step. Oh, I'm recognizing all the ways I'm revving myself out of the possibility of rest, of ease, of simplicity. These are the places where I am making life more complicated, unnecessarily more complex. And a good place to go is like take a yoga class, do a meditation class, and notice all the ways, the moment you're settling, so it's called a relaxation reflex that you have something that's called an activation reflex, which brings you up and out of that settling. So I'm thinking about my grocery list. I'm replaying a story of a fight, or something I got into with my mother-in-law, or my sibling or a friend or someone at work. I'm replaying it over and over again. I'm even changing the story. I'm imagining a future where I say something.

All of these ways that are activating your nervous system into more of that fight response, when the intention that you were initially going for was settling. And that's a really good place and practice to start because then you'll start to notice all the other ways in your life that you might be revving yourself up. Like you're talking to a friend and they say something and all of a sudden you start spiraling in your head about what they really meant as opposed to just saying, "Hey, can we pause here? I'm having a response and I'm feeling a little bit of anger, but I really need to check in because I have a story about what I think you meant."

And you can really hear how that discernment happens as we start to gain awareness of what it is that we're doing that prevents us from settling. 80% of anything we're thinking is story. So 20% of what we're



perceiving in any given moment is taken from sensory data in this moment. 80% is filling in from past experiences and future expectations, and that's a conservation of energy. So if I am walking through the woods with you and we hear something rustling in the woods and we see a little bit of hair and some brown, if I wait to gain all the information, oh, it has teeth, it has claws, it's 600 pounds, I'm likely going to be dead by then. It's not intelligent. So, our natural evolution is to fill in the blanks, and there's a lot of blanks, and so we have a natural propensity to create story, which is an integral part of creating drama.

Dave:

When you find someone who's high drama, whether it's someone in your circle of friends, someone in your family, someone you work with, what do you do about high drama people?

Scott:

I mean, if you are not that person and you're on the outside, one of the things to recognize first is that they are going to pull you into their drama. It's a way of relating. So we all know that people all of a sudden we go, "Whoa, what just happened and how did I get involved in that?" And that is a mechanism that they do. It's a tool that they pull you in, extra battery packs to their fuel, extra battery packs to their drama, and that is the only moment that they feel in sync and can feel a sense of belonging safely. It's false belonging, but it's a sense of belonging with another person. So it's important to recognize that they have pulled you off your axis. So you have to come back and ground, anchor yourself back in your feelings, back in your needs, back in who you are and what you want. And that's primary.

Then it's about setting boundaries after that. It's going to go, how much time am I going to allot to this individual knowing that they're going to try to pull me in, or they're going to just keep gossiping or venting around the same story over and over again? They don't want to process their emotions. They can't. They need to feed off their emotions to continue the pattern. Because remember, if they don't continue the pattern, they will enter into the stages of withdrawal, which feels like boredom and an anxiety that you could never imagine. It feels like disease to the max, something to be absolutely avoided.

And so boundaries. I might say, "Hey Dave, I've got 10 minutes for you today." I hear that you have a lot to say. I'm not going to actually give you any follow up questions, aka, enabling you, I'm not going to throw logs into your fire. I'm simply going to go, that sounds like a lot. That's really intense. I'm going to give very short, concise responses. I'm not going to let myself be pulled in. And if I notice it, I'm going to say, "Hey, you're sharing a lot of information here and I really want to be present for you. I need to take a pause so that I can be that much more present." "Hey, why don't we go move and walk through a public space?"

Dave:

A lot of people, and maybe these are the people who are the storm chasers, someone comes in, someone creates a lot of drama, they blame you, first off, you didn't do. And then the normal response for a lot of people is, well, I'm going to fight back and I'll show them, which is itself drama. So how do you navigate that? Let's go to the workplace first. You got someone who's blaming you for stuff they did and stirring up drama and telling different stories to different people. The standard narcissist pattern. What do you do about that?

Scott:

Yeah. Well, one thing about narcissism, let's remember that narcissism is being entrapped or enjailed in one's self. And so this is an aspect of that because as I talked about that numbness wall locks someone

in, seals them into themselves and away from other people. So it does resemble that element of narcissism.

So yeah, they pulled you in. No matter what you say in that moment will be fuel to their fire. There is no wins. So it's important to recognize that, this is not about winning, if you try to win it, you will create more volcanic eruption, essentially.

Dave:

Because they seek drama. It's like, "Oh, there's a cocaine addict. I know how to fix it, let's just give them another vial of coke." And that's what happens if a high drama person comes to you and you respond with defensiveness or drama, right?

Scott:

Yeah. It's going to, like I said, put logs on their fire. It's going to put fuel for them. And so, one of the things is saying, "Wow, I really hear how you're experiencing me as part of some of your hurt. Can we pause here?" Because the pause is really crucial, because they're rolling down the hill of drama. So if you can get them to slow down enough, slow down and go, "Whoa, I hear that whatever's happening right now between us in this room, it doesn't feel safe." I'm acknowledging enough to let out some of the steam so that we can perhaps, and possibly, and it might not happen in this moment, it might need to wait a day until that part of the drama cycle has been completed, that we might be able to come in and see that there might be multiple perspectives here.

Dave:

Okay. When you say that, you talk like this, almost like you've taken a Quaalude, is that because you're a trained therapist?

Scott:

No, I took a bunch of Quaaludes before, I was nervous.

Dave:

But that's a part of actually how you calm [inaudible 00:32:30] drama, right?

Scott:

Yeah, I change my voice. So essentially, I'm changing my rhythm, but I wouldn't do that at first.

Dave:

No, that'll piss them off. They'll think you're talking down to them, right?

Scott:

Yeah, exactly. And you're not meeting them, because remember, meeting them is matching the intensity, but if you give them too much, then that's more fuel for them. It's more data points for them to come back at you with. So I might speed up my voice a little bit. When I have a client come in and they're crisis hopping. So they're going from one thing, "And then my mother-in-law said this, and then my husband's like this. And then I ran into this person," and you can hear my voice now as more intense, more sped up. So I might go, "Yeah, I really hear how all of that's really happening for you, and I'm wondering," and I might just slowly titrate my volume, titrate my speed, so that we might slowly, slowly

decrease from the height of that revving, from the height of that stress response that they are self-inducing.

Dave:

Are senior executives really good at doing this, in your experience?

Scott:

You mean creating the drama? I mean, I've done a lot of consulting work in companies, and I would say it's a mixed bag. Some are perhaps contributing to it or stirring the pot more than most. And yes, others, their job is coming in and being more of a mediator and trying to take the amplified intensity of that moment and just settle it a little bit so that it's possible to basically not have a whole company implode. Which I've seen. It happens.

Dave:

It can happen. It feels like a well composed executive team has one or two people who are good at drama resolution and talking people down. And then you probably need one or two people who are good at creating motivational drama, where sometimes you have to put a little bit of pressure on people. It doesn't have to be negative drama, but sometimes you need drama for leadership, right?

Scott:

Yeah, and entertainment. I mean, if we didn't have drama... We have this post out about my book, and it's so interesting to see the people's responses. They're like, "I hate drama," exclamation mark, exclamation mark, exclamation mark, all caps. And I'm like, "Okay, well first, was it necessary to be that big in your response?" But second of all, the other thing they'll often then follow up by saying is, "I only like it in my movies." Or, "I only like it in certain areas," where they can be a witness to it, but not actually be part of it.

And here's the fun, tricky piece, being a witness to it is being a part of it because stress and drama are contagious. It's called stress contagion. In fact, out of all the emotions that we have that are part of our human box of emotions, stress is the most contagious. It's a survival strategy that we have had for a very long time that you know, you come, you run into this podcast, or let's say we are in the same room, you come running in, you're sweating, your posture's a little slumped, you seem like something pretty scary, your eyes are wide. Before you can even say anything, my whole body's going to mirror your response. Why? Because I need to be ready for the same potential threat that you just encountered. So it's called stress contagion. So just even being witness to it, even like a ballgame, there is no neutral experience here of being a witness, scrolling through social media, not neutral, watching the news, not neutral. All of these things that you are intaking impact your physiology.

Dave:

It's funny, one of the core concepts that I've been talking about actually in the last two or three books is the concept that you can start your path by developing empathy for others. But as we talked about, that can be toxic. I don't want to pick up your drama, but if I have empathy that's not controlled, I will. So then you can move to compassion, which is, automatically before you insert the drama, automatically wishing well for others. So you don't have to think about it. That's your default reaction. And then the highest level of attainment on the path to enlightenment, in Buddhism anyway, is that you want to have resilience or what they would call equanimity. Which means you choose your state and no force on

earth can take you out of it because you're always in charge of your state. And it sounds like you're describing resilience or equanimity when you do that, just by dropping drama.

Scott:

I am, because no one is choosing drama. I just want to be very clear. They might default to it like a reflex, but they're not choosing to be suffering. They're not choosing to live off a stress response. And so there is no control. If you ask someone who's addicted to drama and they're able to attend to some inner experience, they're going to say, "I feel like, life feels like it's out of control. I don't feel like I am sturdy. I feel anchorless." You're right, resilience is when I get to say, "Hey, how much emotion and energy actually is needed to attend to this response or this stressor or this relationship?" Because in my past, I haven't been able to find that regulatory response. I only know one and 10, I only know collapse and catastrophe.

Dave:

It feels like it would be kind of overwhelming. There was certainly a time when I was younger where I would've qualified as being probably addicted to drama. Certainly I was traumatized, and I had PTSD and stuff like that. I know at the time it felt kind of overwhelming because there's all these unknowns all around. In fact, even the notion that I had trauma, I was like, it didn't look like I had any trauma. It's also irrational. How would you go about telling someone, say a friend or a family member, that obviously has a drama or a trauma problem, how would you tell them? What's the first thing you say?

Scott:

So I would leave my book on their doorstep and run away. Look, it's not an easy thing to bridge. I have done it, I've done it a lot as a practitioner, as a therapist, but it takes a lot of time that I built up that they trust me, where I have built up a foundation of safety to be like, "Oh, I noticed you're talking about this again. When we pause, is there actually any emotion that's still connected to this? Or are you revving in the story of it?" And they'll go, if they've worked with me long enough, they'll be able to discern, "Oh, there's nothing here. It's what we call an empty sandwich bag. I'm just in the story of it again." And I'll say, "Is there something you need? Is there something you need to express, to feel, that's under the hood of that story?" And they're like, "Oh, maybe there was this thing I haven't processed yet," or, "nope, I just came back to it like an old reflex. I came back to it as part of my old addiction." Because it takes time.

It's not just like, oh, all of a sudden you have awareness and the addiction just goes away. You have to navigate the behavioral pieces of it, and then you have to address the trauma that's underneath that, and then you're going to have to address the identity formation that's enwrapped all of this. When I talked about how our perceptions change in relation to our trauma and change our sense of reality, we form an identity around that. The world is scary, the world is overwhelming, the world doesn't love me. And so that identity is something that eventually, as we create more safety as we process our trauma, and don't induce more drama, that we can start to say, "Actually, the world might be okay. It might be safe enough. Intimacy, relationships, can be a place of safety. Which means, I can experience belonging. I am not a victim." And some of the hardest work is giving up the identity formation we make in response to our patterns of existence in our traumas.

Dave:

You sound kind of like a dramatic narrator as you say that.

Scott:

I think you mean entertaining.

Dave:

So in your book, you have a dozen archetypes for people who are addicted to drama. And one of them, it just so happens, it's called the dramatic narrator. So I was just trolling you a little bit for drama's sake.

Scott:

Thanks for trolling me.

Dave:

So tell me about what these archetypes are. How do you know they're real and why are there 12?

Scott:

Yeah. 12 is my lucky number. So, no...

Dave:

What an honest answer. "Yeah, I don't know, I made it up."

Scott:

Like all science, it's random and based on your favorite number. I think we started out with, we being me and myself, the proverbial we, started out with about 30 of them. And then really I took that 30, and then as I worked through more and more years of sessions, I was like, "Ooh, I think these can be combined." Or, "I think that this one, it's not clear enough or it's not showing up often enough to be an archetype." And so these were the ones over, I would say, through subjective research that I boiled them down to. And they're just ways of looking at different ways that this addiction to drama might manifest in personality or behavior.

Dave:

If you're really super low energy, like your cells just can't make enough electricity, does that make you more likely to go to drama just to get energy?

Scott:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, that's part of what's happening in our urgency culture is that we're getting a collapse culture. We're never getting to the point in a stress response cycle where we have enough space, time, permission, safety to rebuild our ATP. To rebuild the foundational building blocks to go into a successful adaptation response, also known as a stress response. So we are in existence of collapse. We are in a society of collapse, a culture of collapse. And what is the quickest, best way besides coffee, cocaine and other stimulants? Actually, the quickest, best free way? Drama, stress.

A lot of the CEOs that I've worked with that are really successful, and I mean they have a magnetism, they've channeled that reflexive process of pulling people into their drama, into their passions, because it's not a different mechanism. They're magnetizing. Now, behind closed doors, when I'm with them, it does more resemble an addiction to drama. But in the public, they're using that as, it's like charming. It's alluring, it's entertaining. And people want more of them and what they have to offer. And actors do

that too. They pull you into their world on stage so you feel something. It's just what happens when they get off stage and they're continuing to do it.

Dave:

So I was going to ask you about that, because you actually have a BA in drama. In actual drama, theater, as well as psychology. Which is an unusual combination. So what is the deal with people who do drama for a living because they're actually actors? Are these people who are seeking drama, are they using it as a tool or is it just two different meanings of a word?

Scott:

Yeah, when I did a lot of interviews for Addiction to Drama, the people who are most willing to admit their propensity for drama was those in the arts. And one of the reasons I left the arts, and for those of us who knows someone who's addicted to drama, which is everyone, we know that they tend to relish in the negative, they tend to really focus, because that's where their perceptions are locked into, is to focus on the negative biases to protect them from threat. An author is a great example, they have a hundred great reviews and they get one bad review, and they focus on the bad review. That's kind of the life of those who are addicted to drama. And so there's this unintentional focus on the negative, and it ends up, I mean, I guess my point is that it becomes the dominant experience for those who are addicted to drama.

And when I was an artist, you would hear people after the show always talk about... The dancers would get together, or the actors would get together, and they would say all the things they did wrong. All the places they'd messed up. And then other people would be like, "You did great, you were great, you were wonderful." And I got to a point where I was like, "I don't want this in my life." I don't want to leave an experience, and by the culture of it, focus on the negative, focus on what didn't work, what could go wrong, what did go wrong. I want to go back and just be in the present experience of what was. And that's really hard for those who are addicted to drama.

And so perhaps they find themselves in subsections of our culture or professions to which that's supported. Or they live in cities where, like New York City, where I lived for so long, where your rhythm, as someone who's addicted to drama, is so fast, it's so urgent. And so you find a city that says you can succeed here with this intensity, with this urgency. So recognize what career you're in.

Dave:

I think it makes sense. Should people with drama addictions take an acting class?

Scott:

At Juilliard. I don't know about an acting class. I mean, it may be an improv class so they can start to recognize choice, and play with choice. I always found that really therapeutic in improv classes to go from always being like, ooh, it's a reflexive response. There's no space between stimulus and reaction or stimulus and response. So starting to build space between it by doing improv classes, yeah. Do you want to teach that with me, Dave?

Dave:

An improv class?

Scott:

And improv class for drama addicts?

Dave:

It'd be really fun to do an improv class. I have lots of experience teaching, but I think I would want to become an expert before I would teach. But could I stand there and troll you for people? I'd be happy to do that.

Scott:

I would love that. I'd love nothing more to be trolled. It's my meditation practice every day. I just open up social media and breathe.

Dave:

Yeah.

Scott:

It is actually true lately where I've been opening up social media and people's responses to my book and I just go, "Ah. I am not this and I don't have to enter into this."

Dave:

Oh man, the I am not this, not taking things personal is a big lesson. The other thing, I think it was, it might have even been Tim Ferris, when I interviewed him, who told me this, I'm pretty sure it was. And he said, "Hey Dave, if you look at how much time it takes to just delete a comment and ban someone so they never see your stuff again, it takes you half a second. And they've probably spent five or 10 minutes coming up with some ridiculous commentary about you." And so you always win, right? Even if you just do that.

But if instead you're like, "Oh look, they said this." And my favorite recent comment, I'm like 7.9% body fat, when I measured it two days ago, I'm completely as ripped as I've ever been in my life as a former 300 pound computer hacker. And someone online was like, "Dave, you look like a lesbian." And I'm like, "Actually, I think that might be true. I think they have a point. I think I might be a lesbian. Oh my God."

Scott:

It's a beautiful playful reframe.

Dave:

Okay, sure, whatever you like. But it didn't hurt because it's funny.

Scott:

Look, I remember when I was an artist, and I got my first death threat.

Dave:

Oh, cool, that's a big award.

Scott:

I know. I was 25, I got my first death threat, and my mom was freaked out and I said, "No, mom, it means I've made it as an artist." It's a playful reframe to deactivate some of the response. I mean, they didn't know where I lived. They didn't know anything about me. I didn't have a public profile then. And so I wasn't concerned, but I could have gone down the drama pathway and been like, "Oh my gosh, I need to watch wherever I go, and they're going to follow me, and I need to delete everything on social media." I could roll down the hill. Or you can use a playful reframe to deactivate it, to pause, to make some space before going into the rev.

Dave:

Okay. It makes a lot of sense. So pause before you do it. I also recommend the same for people if you're thinking about going vegan, you should pause before you do it for 75 years. If you guys could just do that, this is what you're learning from Scott here who has come out as profoundly anti-vegan and probably not liking your mother. So that's all true.

Scott:

I can't wait to get canceled because of you. Thank you for next week's entertainment. I was just going to read another book, but now I get to [inaudible 00:53:08].

Dave:

See, it was a gift. A gift that keeps on giving.

Scott:

Your drama is a gift that keeps on giving, that's for sure.

Dave:

I also troll keto people. I was a leader in cyclical keto.

Scott:

I remember.

Dave:

I troll all those stuff I believe in too, because I think it's a form of humor and art when it's not done with meanness and when it creates a sensation in people, and an awareness, but not pain. And that's the line to skirt. And I'm hoping that that's not an addiction to drama, where it's like it's careful and intentional use of attention.

Scott:

Careful and intentional. Well, I love that you're an equal opportunity trolling troller. That's something I will walk away with from this podcast about you, is that you really troll everyone. No one is safe.

Dave:

Yeah, in fact, that's why my coffee's called Danger Coffee because no one is safe. No, it's because who knows what you might do? You might do something like, I don't know, troll a vegan. That's very dangerous. I mean, they could complain a lot.



Scott:

I have nothing to say, but I-

Dave:

Oh my gosh, I just got to say, I am trolling you hard on this one. I know you're listening. We actually have the same values. I eat vegetables. It's all good.

Scott:

And I will say I was vegan for 25 years until my-

Dave:

I was a raw vegan for a couple years, but wow.

Scott:

I was not raw. At four years old, sorry, 22 years. At four, I had a dream that I killed an ant and its mom came back and killed me. So the next day, in my own dramatic way, my mom was serving me a hotdog, and I paired the same idea together that if I eat this hotdog, its mom will come and kill me. And didn't meet until my late twenties when I started losing my eyesight.

Dave:

Dude, a hotdog's mother? I am traumatized.

Scott:

I was four. A hotdog's mother, what would that be?

Dave:

How does a hotdog give birth? I'm going to have nightmares. This is-

Scott:

Have you ever been to New York City and seen the Nathan's Hotdog?

Dave:

Yeah.

Scott:

The giant, mother of all hotdogs.

Dave:

They have a little cloaca in the back, like a chicken?

Scott:

It's not a little cloaca, a big one.

Dave:

Good God, I had no idea we were going to go there. It's funny because I would actually say that was a trauma, you created a story and then it created a feeling and that continued. A lot of eating disorders are trauma. In fact, maybe all of them are trauma oriented, including Orthorexia. And including the ones that are well known, like anorexia and bulimia. And then there's other ones like, "If I eat a carb again, I'll die." And, "If I eat an animal again, I'll die." None of those is actually true. I choose not to do any of those. That's making a choice. Believing you're going to die if you do it, that's the trauma. And so you'll find trauma eaters in all health communities, and you'll find people who are working to improve themselves. And you got to sort out the drama from the improvement peeps and see how you can help people.

Scott:

It's the lack of choice, that lets us know.

Dave:

Yeah. Well, this has been amazingly fun. I've never had a guest before come after Joe Rogan, hotdogs and vegans. So Scott, you've set a new record in terms of offending large segments of the population. My hat's off to you. I could never troll someone as strongly as you have on this episode. So thank you for your drama and thank you for showing us how effective it is to be addicted to drama, which is the title of your new book.

Scott:

You are very welcome, Dave.

Dave:

Look at that, no reactivity. Dammit, I can't get anything from this guy.

Scott:

You will never win with me, my friend. I'll never give you the satisfaction. That's the way I win.

Dave:

Oh man, that's a masterclass right there. That is the way you win when you're dealing with the people who are trying to get it. Guys, you know what to do. Go to Dr. Scott Lyons, D-R-S-C-O-T-T, Lyons, L-Y-O-N-S.com. And just, if you can't remember it, he's the guy who spells his name wrong all the time. So there's two Ts in Scott and Lyon has a Y. I don't know why people do this, but he did it. So it's D-R-S-C-O-T-T-L-Y-O-N-S. Okay. So there you go.

Scott:

I blamed my family for so many things, I forgot to blame them for this. So thank you for adding a log to my drama fire with my family.

Dave:

By the way, that was a use of drama where now everyone will remember your URL, and if I hadn't have put the drama in there, no one would've remembered it. So you're welcome.

Scott:

It's true. It's drama tools, that is why the news and everything else captures our attention so well. Drama tools.

Dave:

Indeed.

Scott:

Which is your next class after the improv class we teach.

Dave:

Is drama tools?

Scott:

Drama tools. Drama Tools 101, Drama Tools for Dummies, Drama Tools 101. We'll workshop the name.

Dave:

We'll workshop it, all right. Guys, thanks for tuning in to the Human Upgrade. And if you like the show, support it, maybe try some Danger Coffee and definitely always leave a review for any author, including Dr. Scott Lyons. If you don't leave a review, it's because you're a bad person.

Scott:

Oh wow, that's true.

Dave:

More trolling.