

Save Drama for the Big Stuff: Opportunity Cost and Emotional Energy

Opportunity cost.

If you're into economics, you can probably spot it on sight. If you're into economics at all, though, you also know that most people aren't consciously pondering economic insights when they make decisions.

"Drama" – stuff that can suck in our emotional attention, create controversy, and create stress – is a part of life. We will find it. And for all the negative baggage of the term, it is possible for humans to engage in real, meaningful dramas in life. There are stories and plotlines to human lives, and those plotlines have conflict.

But opportunity cost is at work here in drama, as are opportunity tradeoffs. What we choose to engage with as drama (and how we do it) is up to us entirely.

If we choose to act dramatically about small drama – worthless drama – we sacrifice any ability to handle anything bigger. Worrying, doubting, fighting, and losing sleep over little things like your opinions or your comfort or your current social status will cost you. You'll lose limited emotional energy. And you'll lose any opportunity to worry, doubt, fight, and lose sleep over things that actually matter: human life, freedom, justice, peace, integrity – all that.

The significance of the dramas you'll get to play out is totally dependent on your ability to let smaller dramas pass.

Opportunity cost rules everything. Ration your drama wisely so you can live a life with dramas that matter.