

## **Danger Will Robinson!**

By Karel Murray

The look of impatience and frustration directed at me is delivered with such hostility that I'm a bit flustered. Her large white tag announces that her name is Linda. Fading blond hair covers one eye and the florescent light drains the color from Linda's skin making it appear ghastly pasty white. Hunched shoulders, imprisoned in the store uniform, twitch upward with each pounding strike of the cash register keys. She's obviously having an equipment problem.

And it's all my fault. I bought some coffee. Who knew?

Glancing nervously at me, her co-worker, Ellen, tries to intercede. Big mistake. I look on with dismay as the now livid Linda whirls around, ready to attack like a viper. Quickly, I stutter "Isn't it always the case that when you most need something to work...it doesn't? I mean, think of a stapler... why does it always run out of staples just when you need to staple something together?" I smile with what I think is a disarming grin.

Uh oh. I think if she had a stapler, she would have imbedded one in my forehead. I carefully back up, clutching my cooling cup of coffee tightly to my chest.

In a brilliant move of distraction, Ellen triumphantly hits the right button on the register and it springs open. Relief is palpable in the air and everyone takes a deep breath. Linda, glancing sharply towards her co-worker, shrugs casually, counts out my thirty-two cents worth of change, and quietly shuts the drawer. Mission accomplished, crisis is over.

I know that blame and the possibility of danger comes in many forms and today it has taken over the ready, willing, and able body of an innocent clerk named Linda. And she didn't even know it.

You never know what will be the catalyst for a "situation" to erupt. It could be sneezing quietly into your hand and your seat neighbor acts like you just spread the dreaded bird flu. Or you ask someone if they are okay when they have slipped on the ice and they glare at you with a look that shouts "Too little too late! Where were you when I needed you?" You inadvertently knock over a person's beverage that is placed on the floor and they react like the world is coming to an end.

You see, I believe that every bad thing that happens to people has to be someone else's fault.

Every family should have its sacrificial scapegoat. My husband, Rick, volunteered for the position when we first married 30 years ago. It has proven to be very convenient! He knows he has broad shoulders and it's how he "shares the love" in our family. Let me give you some examples:

I place food in the microwave and set the timer for one hour instead of one minute. Sidetracked by a phone call, I don't notice that the dinger hasn't gone off and the food is literally as hard as a rock after five minutes. It's Rick's fault.

I turn a corner too sharply and knock my glasses off my nose. Falling to the floor, they are bent beyond repair. Rick's fault for not warning me to slow down and be careful of how close I turn a corner.

Gain five pounds. Rick's fault.

Sub zero weather. Rick's fault.

See how simple it is? One person who understands that this world will run more smoothly if they shoulder all of the blame. That's Rick's job. Got to love that man. However, he is only responsible for my family, so you can't use him. Find your own scapegoat!

So, what am I responsible for? Let's see...

Someone compliments how handsome my son, Ben is. My fault.

Weather is a perfect 68 degrees, crystal clear and smells of magnolias.  
My fault

Rick handed me this role and I've gladly borne the heavy burden ever since. When either of us got tired of our responsibilities, we used our option of re-assigning scapegoat status to either our son, Ben or the dogs. Is prior notice required? No, not if you lay the ground rules out early. We patiently explained our family guidelines to our son when he was 10 years old and mature enough to handle the responsibility.

You have to be careful of too quickly shifting the blame, because the new recipient might fumble the transfer. Most of us understand our "breaking point" and the signs that lead to it. Ever on alert, we need to be ready to take on the load for a short period of time until the primary scapegoat is better able to cope.

Actually we intervene like the mechanical robot in the television series "Lost In Space". This guardian metal friend rolled around wildly waving its arms and broadcasting "Danger, Will Robinson! Danger, Will Robinson!" Staying true to

our commitment to take care of each other, Rick and I just give each other sly looks with a crooked grin and gladly assume the scapegoat role. If a pretend robot can save someone from harm, we can certainly do it for each other, even if it is only done in jest and with good natured kidding.

Being a willing scapegoat is a great way to build character and a sense of accountability.

That is why I believe the best statement created by our younger generation reflects our philosophy beautifully...

“Whatever”.

Just make sure you get the head shaking part down right. And don't forget the grin.

*Karel Murray, a national motivational humorist and business trainer is the author of Straight Talk: Getting Off the Curb (a book co-authored with KC Lundberg), Think Forward!® (a monthly e-newsletter with over 4,200+ subscribers), The Profitability Blueprint Series: Career Building Concepts for the Real Estate Licensee and numerous articles in local, regional, and national publications. You can contact her at [karel@karel.com](mailto:karel@karel.com) or call 866-817-2986 or access her web site at <http://www.karel.com>.*