



BEING A DISRUPTOR.  
(A REAL ONE)

*Marcia Martin*

*dis·rupt*

(dīs-rŭpt')

tr.v. dis-rupt-ed, dis-rupt-ing, dis-rupts

1. To throw into confusion or disorder: Protesters disrupted the candidate's speech.
2. To interrupt or impede the progress of: Our efforts in the garden were disrupted by an early frost. The noise disrupted my nap.
3. To break apart or alter so as to prevent normal or expected functioning: radiation that disrupts DNA and kills bacteria.



Marcia (right) and sister Karen

## The term 'disruptor' is pretty trendy these days.

You hear it a lot in business circles, and in the transformation industry too. You see it on Social Media profiles, proudly proclaimed on websites and speaker bios. But just because it's trendy doesn't mean that every Tom, Dick and Harriet IS one or that they really know the implications behind it. I do.

My whole life, it seems that I have been a disrupter.

I'm not sure when it started; maybe when I was 6, I was kidnapped by my father and taken away from my mother along with my 4-year-old sister.

We were in Los Angeles then – my birthplace – having moved there again from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, when my mother left my father and tried to start a new life without him.

My father had told my mother he would help her out with babysitting so she could go interview for a job.

Dad figured out that if he pretended to be helpful, he could sweep us away, which he did. He turned up in Los Angeles, talked my mom into letting him babysit, then took me and my sister in our underwear and bare feet down to the Los Angeles Freeway. There, he hitchhiked with us, returning to Coeur d'Alene, and dropped us off at his brother's house where we lived with Aunt Maxine and Uncle Richard for the next two years. We did not see Mom any of that time and barely saw Dad either.

On that trip, I remember being cold and scared. We seemed to be in a lot of cars with a lot of strangers. Dad would go with each new friend into some tacky tavern at the end of the day's ride and stay for hours getting drunk. Then he would come and get us out of the car, take us into the bar, and show us off. "Look at my beautiful little girls!" he would brag, and a bunch of scary strangers would want to give us a kiss while we stood on the bar in our underwear.

I remember thinking, “You can’t trust anyone, not even Mom and Dad”, and “You have to take care of yourself – no one else will do it. You have to watch out for your sister – she needs you – you are the only one who can help.”

Maybe that was when it started – me disrupting the ways things were and trying to make them better for all.

Or maybe it was in school when I witnessed boys making fun of a girl in 7th grade who apparently just got her period and had blood on the back of her dress. She was humiliated and crying. I tore after those boys and made sure they knew they had to deal with me if they kept the taunting up.

Since I was one of the most popular girls in school, those boys certainly did not want to upset me, so they stopped their abhorrent behavior, and she finally stopped crying too.

And then there was the time when I fell in love with a Navy Seal. We lived together for ten years, with him spearheading all our adventures. They were mostly terrifying – climbing mountains, scuba diving in exotic places, discovering the African Serengeti on our own without a guide. In a jeep, we tore across the plains amidst lions, elephants, and giraffes. We sailed a 50-foot Ketch in 30-foot seas; that was when I learned that nothing could stop me, not even fear.

I’m not sure when it all started, but I was off on a mission, disrupting the status quo, standing up for causes, and creating global movements.

I’m glad it did. My whole life, I’ve been known for taking a ‘stand’, for fighting for a ‘cause’, and for disrupting the ‘normalcy’ of the current circumstances.

In mainland China (before China was open to other countries), I negotiated with the Chinese government – contracts for new business that allowed my company to utilize them for my fashion jewelry designs – something they had never done before. That experience opened prospects for other companies to build new business relationships and products with the emerging titan.

### **Disrupters forge the future.**

They shake things up and create fresh possibilities and new tomorrows.

Many people think that being disruptive is a bad thing. That it causes problems and disturbs the peace.



*"Yes, it does disturb the peace.  
Sometimes we need that. We need to shake things up."*

People get stuck in old ways of being and old ways of acting. Being willing to be a disrupter means you are willing to be a rebel, go out on a limb, be unpopular, and go against the norm. And many times, that is just what is needed to create a new world.

Christopher Columbus was a disrupter, so was J F Kennedy. Princess Diana was a disrupter, even Mother Theresa. They fought for things they believed in against the odds – things that were not popular at the time. Some even sacrificed their lives. But the world changed for the better as a result.

Many times, people have pleaded with me to ‘stop making a scene’. Most people are more comfortable being quiet and serene and getting in a line, following obediently, which leads them to a cliff. People will jump off the cliff just because everyone else is, all of them singing the anthem – ‘we always do it like that’.

I am a champion for disruption. Bring it on. Shake it up. Find your voice and use it.

Never underestimate the power you have and the impact you can make. I can proudly say that:

- I was one of the first Pachamama Alliance Workshop Leaders who helped save parts of the Rain Forest from being drilled for oil by the big Oil Companies.
- I coached and inspired thousands of people to courageously follow their own joy rather than do what was expected of them by their parents.
- I managed the 1980’s Chicago Catch the Spirit campaign that organized successful entrepreneurs to support thousands of Youths at Risk, giving them jobs – and trained them to be self-sufficient, inspiring the city to legislate millions of dollars for new community projects.
- I co-chaired the first Great American Smokeout for the American Cancer Society and took a stand in the ’70s to help millions of people stop smoking.
- I was an original Founding Member of est – Erhard Seminars Training (later known as the Landmark Forum) which started the Human Potential Movement. I enrolled millions of people to participate in paradigm-shifting, life-changing educational and transformational seminars and workshops.



With Lynne Twist , co-founder of the Pachamama Alliance, in the Amazon jungle.



The Chicago 'Catch The Spirit' campaign for youths at risk

The reward for being willing to be a disrupter is that you get to be part of making this a better world. You bring new ideas and new innovations into existence. You transform the way people think and experience so that their lives are profoundly improved.

To be a disrupter, you must be willing to see life as it is, rather than how you think it should be. The only way forward is to start from where you are. You must be willing to tell the truth about where you are and what is so.

First, you see what is so. Then you can ask the question, “Now what?” And when you ask that question, if you have the courage, and if you are willing to step into a new horizon, you will find new ways to be and act.



Sometimes that means giving up old beliefs and automatic assumptions. Rather than looking to see if you are “right” about something, look instead to see if what you are defending is actually working.

If it isn't working – if you aren't getting the results you want – then give it up! Get a new way of thinking. Disrupt your old way of thinking and move on. And in that process, you will disrupt the circumstances and events around you, and you will be part of creating a new world that works better for everyone.

**Disruption is a worthwhile mission with worthwhile results.**

Disruptors are usually entrepreneurs, outsiders, and idealists rather than industry insiders or market specialists.

Idealists are what the world needs right now. Disruptive idealists.

I am proud to say I AM A DISRUPTER!

Won't you join me?

*Marcia Martin*

# Marcia Martin

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