

What is detachment?

- The process of regaining control of one's emotions, thoughts or behaviors.
- Willingness to accept that you cannot change or control another person.
- The freeing of one to act and react with choice and allowing others to accept responsibility for their own actions.
- “Productive caring” that allows others to be themselves, to learn through their mistakes and at the same time, being responsible for their feelings and welfare.
- Ability to allow people the freedom to be themselves.
- Developing and maintaining a safe, emotional distance from someone whom you have
- previously given a lot of power to affect your emotional outlook on life.
- Process by which you are free to feel your own feelings when you see another person falter and fail and not be led by guilt to feel responsible for their failure or faltering.
- Ability to maintain an emotional bond of love, concern and caring without the negative results of rescuing, enabling, fixing or controlling.
- Ability to exercise emotional self-protection and prevention so as not to experience greater emotional devastation from having hung on beyond a reasonable and rational point.

- Ability to let people you love and care for accept personal responsibility for their own actions and to practice tough love and not give in when they come to you to bail them out when their actions lead to failure or trouble for them.
- Ability to avoid being hurt, abused or taken advantage of by people who in the past have been overly dependent or enmeshed with you.

If you are unable to detach from people then you:

- Will have people who will become **overly dependent** on you.
- Run the risk of being **manipulated** to do things for people which you do not really want to do.
- Will most probably become **powerless** in the face of the demands of the people that you have given the power to control you.
- Will be easily influenced by the perception of **helplessness** which these people project.
- Run the risk of becoming out of **control** of you and experience lower self-esteem as a result.

How Can I Detach?

The following will help you in the process of detachment.

- 1. Know your Options** – Remember you have alternatives. Make choices for yourself. Write out your options on a sheet of paper, then cross out those which are unacceptable.
- 2. Set Objectives** - Try to see yourself and hear yourself as others see you. Pretend you are on a TV camera or looking in your window....experience how you look, your facial expressions, body language, etc.
- 3. Be Responsible for Self** – Take responsibility for your behavior and feelings. Allow others to be responsible for themselves. Don't take on blame for the way someone else is feeling or what they have chosen.

You are not that powerful. You don't have to allow someone else to control your feelings.

- 4. Release Yourself from Worry** – Too much time and energy is spent on worry and it doesn't change anything. Letting go of things you cannot change or things that haven't happened can increase your serenity and your energy level.
- 5. Change What You Can** – YOU. Get your focus off of people or things that you want changed and look at yourself. What can you change about yourself....your attitude?
- 6. Maintain a Positive Attitude** – A positive attitude can move mountains. A good attitude can change how you feel physically, mentally and emotionally. Living one day at a time and not projecting about what can happen can improve your attitude. Also not putting unrealistic expectations on yourself and others will avoid disappointment. We can't change the past – the future hasn't happened – and we are not so powerful to control something that hasn't happened.
- 7. Get in Touch with Your Feelings** – Breaking down the roadblocks and getting rid of the defense mechanisms you use to prevent others from knowing how you feel is the first step in understanding yourself.
- 8. Talk About Your Feelings** – Use "I" messages to tell others how you feel. Being honest and open about yourself will help you build stronger relationships.

How Does One Forgive?

There is no magical formula but there is a “to do” list that can help the process.

- As the Big Book of AA suggests, we learned to pray for the one who hurt us.
- Talk out, talk through and talk to death your resentment with a counselor or mentor.
- Write on paper a letter to the one your resent – not to send – but to absorb.
- Re-vision your perceptions as one who has been forgiven.
- Read/listen to the stories of people who have learned to forgive.

Remember

Forgiveness is a process.

Forgiveness is a necessary process for family healing.

Forgiveness is the bridge from the past to the future.



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