

# Developing Detachment

## What is detachment?

Detachment is the:

- \* Ability to allow people, places or things the freedom to be themselves.
- \* Holding back from the need to rescue, save or fix another person from being sick, dysfunctional or irrational.
- \* Giving another person "the space" to be herself.
- \* Disengaging from an over-enmeshed or dependent relationship with people.
- \* Willingness to accept that you cannot change or control a person, place or thing.
- \* Developing and maintaining of a safe, emotional distance from someone whom you have previously given a lot of power to affect your emotional outlook on life.
- \* Establishing of emotional boundaries between you and those people you have become overly enmeshed or dependent with in order that all of you might be able to develop your own sense of autonomy and independence.
- \* 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.
- \* Placing of all things in life into a healthy, rational perspective and recognizing that there is a need to back away from the uncontrollable and unchangeable realities of life.
- \* 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 allow people to be who they "really are" rather than who you "want them to be."
- \* Ability to avoid being hurt, abused, taken advantage of by people who in the past have been overly dependent or enmeshed with you.

## What are the negative effects not detaching?

If you are unable to detach from people, places or things, then you:

- \* Will have people, places or things which become over-dependent on you.
- \* Run the risk of being manipulated to do things for people, at places or with things which you do not really want to do.
- \* Can become an obsessive "fix it" who needs to fix everything you perceive to be imperfect.
- \* Run the risk of performing tasks because of the intimidation you experience from people, places or things.
- \* Will most probably become powerless in the face of the demands of the people, places or things whom you have given the power to control you.
- \* Will be blind to the reality that the people, places or things which control you are the uncontrollables and unchangeables you need to let go of if you are to become a fully

healthy, coping individual.

- \* Will be easily influenced by the perception of helplessness which these people, places or things project.
- \* Might become caught up with your idealistic need to make everything perfect for people, places or things important to you even if it means your own life becomes unhealthy.
- \* Run the risk of becoming out of control of yourself and experience greater low self-esteem as a result.
- \* Will most probably put off making a decision and following through on it, if you rationally recognize your relationship with a person, place or thing is unhealthy and the only recourse left is to get out of the relationship.
- \* Will be so driven by guilt and emotional dependence that the sickness in the relationship will worsen.
- \* Run the risk of losing your autonomy and independence and derive your value or worth solely from the unhealthy relationship you continue in with the unhealthy person, place or thing.

### **How is detachment a control issue?**

Detachment is a control issue because:

- \* It is a way of de-powering the external "locus of control" issues in your life and a way to strengthen your internal "locus of control."
- \* If you are not able to detach emotionally or physically from a person, place or thing, then you are either profoundly under its control or it is under your control.
- \* The ability to "keep distance" emotionally or physically requires self-control and the inability to do so is a sign that you are "out of control."
- \* If you are not able to detach from another person, place or thing, you might be powerless over this behavior which is beyond your personal control.
- \* You might be mesmerized, brainwashed or psychically in a trance when you are in the presence of someone from whom you cannot detach.
- \* You might feel intimidated or coerced to stay deeply attached with someone for fear of great harm to yourself or that person if you don't remain so deeply involved.
- \* You might be an addicted caretaker, fixer or rescuer who cannot let go of a person, place or thing you believe cannot care for itself.
- \* You might be so manipulated by another's con, "helplessness," overdependency or "hooks" that you cannot leave them to solve their own problems.
- \* If you do not detach from people, places or things, you could be so busy trying to "control" them that you completely divert your attention from yourself and your own needs.
- \* By being "selfless" and "centered" on other people, you are really a controller trying to fix them to meet the image of your ideal for them.
- \* Although you will still have feelings for those persons, places and things from which you have become detached, you will have given them the freedom to become what they will be on their own merit, power, control and responsibility.
- \* It allows every person, place or thing with which you become involved to feel the sense of personal responsibility to become a unique, independent and autonomous being with no fear of retribution or rebuke if they don't please you by what they become.

### **What irrational thinking leads to an inability to detach?**

- \* If you should stop being involved, what will they do without you?
- \* They need you and that is enough to justify your continued involvement.
- \* What if they commit suicide because of your detachment? You must stay involved to avoid this.
- \* You would feel so guilty if anything bad should happen to them after you reduced your involvement with them.
- \* They are absolutely dependent on you at this point and to back off now would be a crime.
- \* You need them as much as they need you.
- \* You can't control yourself because everyday you promise yourself "today is the day" you will detach your feelings but you feel driven to them and their needs.
- \* They have so many problems, they need you.
- \* Being detached seems so cold and aloof. You can't be that way when you love and care for a person. It's either 100 percent all the way or no way at all.
- \* If you should let go of this relationship too soon, the other might change to be like the fantasy or dream you want them to be.
- \* How can being detached from them help them? It seems like you should do more to help them.
- \* Detachment sounds so final. It sounds so distant and non-reachable. You could never allow yourself to have a relationship where there is so much emotional distance between you and others. It seems so unnatural.
- \* You never want anybody in a relationship to be emotionally detached from you so why would you think it a good thing to do for others?
- \* The family that plays together stays together. It's all for one and one for all. Never do anything without including the significant others in your life.
- \* If one hurts in the system, we all hurt. You do not have a good relationship with others unless you share in their pain, hurt, suffering, problems and troubles.
- \* When they are in "trouble," how can you ignore their "pleas" for help? It seems cruel and inhuman.
- \* When you see people in trouble, confused and hurting, you must always get involved and try to help them solve the problems.
- \* When you meet people who are "helpless," you must step in to give them assistance, advice, support and direction.
- \* You should never question the costs, be they material, emotional or physical, when another is in dire need of help.
- \* You would rather forgo all the pleasures of this world in order to assist others to be happy and successful.
- \* You can never "give too much" when it comes to providing emotional support, comforting and care of those whom you love and cherish.
- \* No matter how badly your loved ones hurt and abuse you, you must always be forgiving and continue to extend your hand in help and support.
- \* Tough love is a cruel, inhuman and anti-loving philosophy of dealing with the troubled people in our lives and you should instead love them more when they are in trouble since "love" is the answer to all problems.

## **How to Develop Detachment**

In order to become detached from a person, place or thing, you need to:

First: Establish emotional boundaries between you and the person, place or thing with whom you have become overly enmeshed or dependent on.

Second: Take back power over your feelings from persons, places or things which in the past you have given power to affect your emotional well-being.

Third: "Hand over" to your Higher Power the persons, places and things which you would like to see changed but which you cannot change on your own.

Fourth: Make a commitment to your personal recovery and self-health by admitting to yourself and your Higher Power that there is only one person you can change and that is yourself and that for your serenity you need to let go of the "need" to fix, change, rescue or heal other persons, places and things.

Fifth: Recognize that it is "sick" and "unhealthy" to believe that you have the power or control enough to fix, correct, change, heal or rescue another person, place or thing if they do not want to get better nor see a need to change.

Sixth: Recognize that you need to be healthy yourself and be "squeaky clean" and a "role model" of health in order for another to recognize that there is something "wrong" with them that needs changing.

Seventh: Continue to own your feelings as your responsibility and not blame others for the way you feel.

Eighth: Accept personal responsibility for your own unhealthy actions, feelings and thinking and cease looking for the persons, places or things you can blame for your unhealthiness.

Ninth: Accept that addicted fixing, rescuing, enabling are "sick" behaviors and strive to extinguish these behaviors in your relationship to persons, places and things.

Tenth: Accept that many people, places and things in your past and current life are "irrational," "unhealthy" and "toxic" influences in your life, label them honestly for what they truly are, and stop minimizing their negative impact in your life.

Eleventh: Reduce the impact of guilt and other irrational beliefs which impede your ability to develop detachment in your life.

Twelfth: Practice "letting go" of the need to correct, fix or make better the persons, places and things in life over which you have no control or power to change.

## **Steps in Developing Detachment**

Step 1: It is important to first identify those people, places and things in your life from which you would be best to develop emotional detachment in order to retain your personal, physical, emotional and spiritual health. To do this you need to review the following types of toxic relationships and identify in your journal if any of the people, places or things in your life fit any of the following 20 categories.

### Types of Toxic Relationships

- \* You find it hard to let go of because it is addictive.
- \* The other is emotionally unavailable to you.
- \* Coercive, threatening, intimidating to you.
- \* Punitive or abusive to you.
- \* Non-productive and non-reinforcing for you.
- \* Smothering you.
- \* Other is overly dependent on you.
- \* You are overly dependent on the other.
- \* Other has the power to impact your feelings about yourself.
- \* Relationship in which you are a chronic fixer, rescuer or enabler.
- \* Relationship in which your obligation and loyalty won't allow you to let go.
- \* Other appears helpless, lost and out of control.
- \* Other is self-destructive or suicidal.
- \* Other has an addictive disease.
- \* Relationship in which you are being manipulated and conned.
- \* When guilt is a major motivating factor preventing your letting go and detaching.
- \* Relationship in which you have a fantasy or dream that the other will come around and change to be what you want.
- \* Relationship in which you and the other are competitive for control.
- \* Relationship in which there is no forgiveness or forgetting and all past hurts are still brought up to hurt one another.
- \* Relationship in which your needs and wants are ignored.

Step 2: Once you have identified the persons, places and things you have a toxic relationship with, then you need to take each one individually and work through the following steps.

Step 3: Identify the irrational beliefs in the toxic relationship which prevent you from becoming detached. Address these beliefs and replace them with healthy, more rational ones.

Step 4: Identify all of the reasons why you are being hurt and your physical, emotional and spiritual health is being threatened by the relationship.

Step 5: Accept and admit to yourself that the other person, place or thing is "sick," dysfunctional or irrational, and that no matter what you say, do or demand you will not be able to control or change this reality. Accept that there is only one thing you can change in life and that is you. All others are the unchangeables in your life. Change your

expectations that things will be better than what they really are. Hand these people, places or things over to your Higher Power and let go of the need to change them.

Step 6: Work out reasons why there is no need to feel guilt over letting go and being emotionally detached from this relationship and free yourself from guilt as you let go of the emotional "hooks" in the relationship.

Step 7: Affirm yourself as being a person who "deserves" healthy, wholesome, health-engendering relationships in your life. You are a good person and deserve healthy relationships, at home, work and in the community.

Step 8: Gain support for yourself as you begin to let go of your emotional enmeshment with these relationships.

Step 9: Continue to call upon your Higher Power for the strength to continue to let go and detach.

Step 10: Continue to give no person, place or thing the power to affect or impact your feelings about yourself.

Step 11: Continue to detach and let go and work at self-recovery and self-healing as this poem implies.

#### "Letting Go"

- \* To "let go" does not mean to stop caring; it means I can't do it for someone else.
- \* To "let go" is not to cut myself off; it's the realization I can't control another.
- \* To "let go" is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.
- \* To "let go" is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.
- \* To "let go" is not to try to change or blame another; it's to make the most of myself.
- \* To "let go" is not to care for, but to care about.
- \* To "let go" is not to fix, but to be supportive.
- \* To "let go" is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.
- \* To "let go" is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to affect their own destinies.
- \* To "let go" is not to be protective; it's to permit another to face reality.
- \* To "let go" is not to deny, but to accept.
- \* To "let go" is not to nag, scold or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.
- \* To "let go" is not to criticize and regulate anybody, but to try to become what I dream I can be.
- \* To "let go" is not to adjust everything to my desires, but to take each day as it comes and cherish myself in it.
- \* To "let go" is to not regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.
- \* To "let go" is to fear less and love myself more.

Step 12: If you still have problems detaching, then return to Step 1 and begin all over again

Read more: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/14712-developing-detachment/#ixzz14QFK8MZ0>