



## **How to Apply Detachment to a Substance Abuser**

**Detachment means you remember that the alcoholic/addict is dealing with an addiction that has been called a disease.**

It is a disease because alcoholics can't drink like other people, and when they do, the alcohol changes them and makes them powerless over the next drink. Drug addiction can be psychological as well as physical, and is difficult to stop. It is a disease that destroys their bodies, souls, spirits, and relationships. This reminds you to be compassionate and grateful that you don't have that disease and understand that the alcoholic/addict is struggling with an obsession and compulsion to drink/use that is more powerful than simple willpower.

**Detachment means you treat the alcoholic/addict with love and dignity.**

You don't have to be driven by your anger, resentment, and hurt. You can choose to treat the alcoholic/addict with courtesy and respect because every human being deserves at least that. You recognize that even though the alcoholic/addict mistreats you and affects your life negatively, the truth is that the alcoholic/addict is struggling with his/her own pain and is not happy. If you respond with anger and revenge, you will add to the hopelessness that the alcoholic/addict is already feeling. You will also make yourself part of the problem and not feel good about your actions.

**Detachment means you let the alcoholic/addict face the consequences of the drinking/using.**

Substance abusers have problems related to the substance abuse. Whether it is missed work, unpaid bills, bad relationships, health problems, legal problems, or anything else, it isn't yours to fix and control. When you intervene with any of these problems, you prevent the alcoholic/addict from facing the consequences that can eventually bring him/her to the place that change is desired because life isn't working. It isn't easy, but you have to get out of the way.

**Detachment means you live your own life and let the alcoholic/addict live his/her own life.**

You recognize that the alcoholic/addict has to make the choice to drink/use or not and to get help or not. It is your choice whether you will get help for yourself. It is up to you to decide what you will and will not do. Your boundaries have to do with yourself and what is okay and not okay for you. You don't have to be obsessed with what the alcoholic/addict is or isn't doing. Turn your

focus onto living your own life and what you want for yourself, and you will naturally be more detached.

**Detachment means you don't take on the blame, anger, threats, manipulation, guilt, and drama that the alcoholic/addict throws at you.**

You don't have to engage in arguments. You can refuse to allow threats and manipulation to change your course. You can refuse to take on blame and guilt that isn't yours to carry. You don't have to be a part of the drama. And you have the power over whether or not you believe what the alcoholic/addict says about you.

Having a relationship with an alcoholic/addict isn't easy; but when you detach with love, your life and relationship will improve, and so will the chances that the alcoholic/addict will get help. When family and friends aren't detaching, they are usually enabling the drinking/using by preventing consequences and acting in ways that allow the alcoholic/addict to blame them for the problems. God detaches from us by allowing us to make our own choices, suffer the consequences, and come to him in repentance when we are ready to change. Give the alcoholic/addict in your life the dignity of the same choices God gives you.