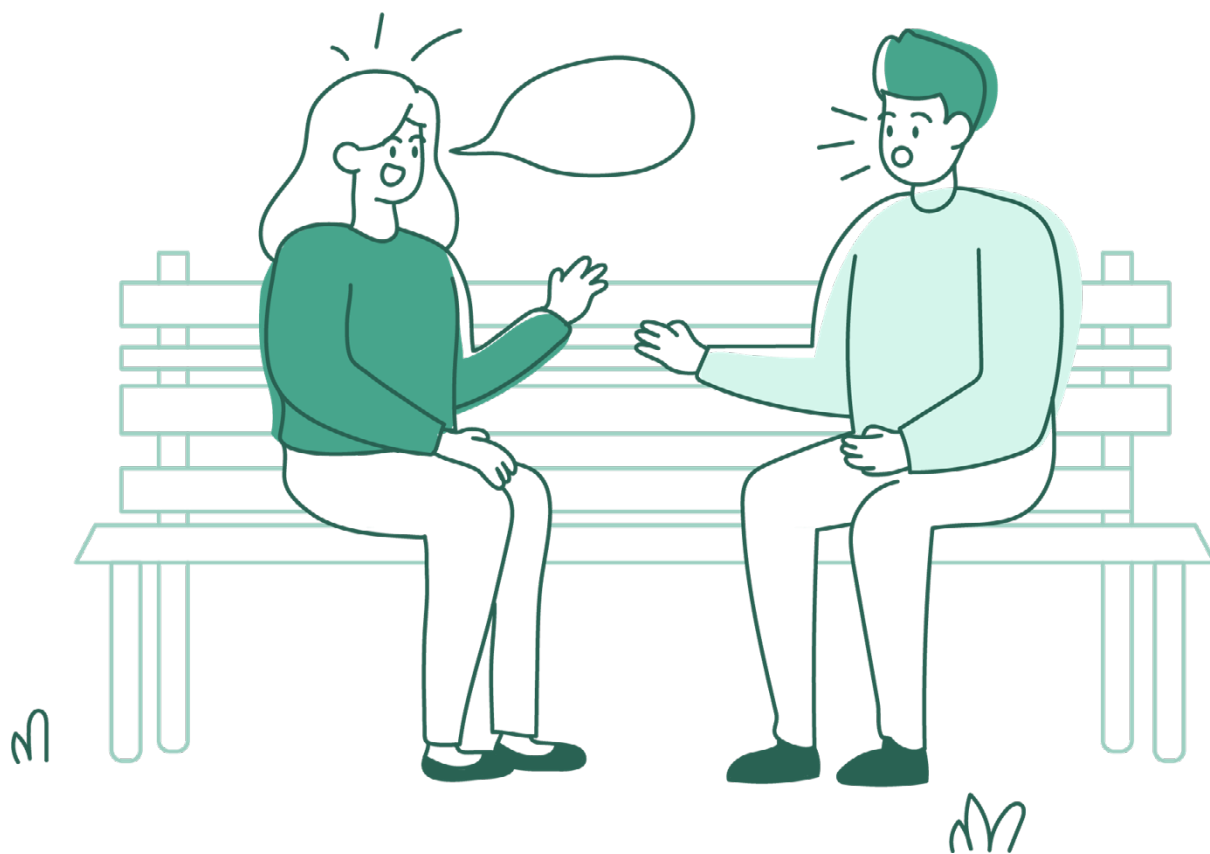


What is...

Detachment





What is Detachment?

Detachment is when you let other people experience their consequences instead of taking responsibility for them.

This is a key component of the recovery process for family and friends of addicts. Redirecting focus away from an addict's negative behaviours can restore the balance of the relationship dynamics, as well as restart self-care. This doesn't mean that you stop caring - the popular phrase is "to detach with love". Detaching means that you **lovingly let go of solving the problems associated with the addiction.**

The central premise of detachment is letting go of trying to fix the addict's life. This becomes especially difficult when the addict chooses to do nothing because that refusal often triggers loved ones to rescue them. By solving problems for the addict, you are preventing him or her from experiencing the pain associated with the addiction. Such pain is necessary for an addict to choose recovery.

Family and friends of addicts often fear that the addict will end up incarcerated or dead. This fear is not unfounded; sadly, many addicts continue using despite the consequences to their health and well-being. Therefore, that fear leads you back to rescuing them. However, rescuing addicts trigger a cycle of control that depletes family and friends to the point of emotional and physical exhaustion.

"You didn't cause it, you can't control it, and you can't cure it."

This phrase is helpful to consider in its parts:

You Didn't Cause It

Regardless of why the addiction started, you are not responsible for the behaviour of a loved one experiencing addiction. You are only responsible for your own behaviours and your own actions.

You Can't Control It

Once a brain becomes dependent on a substance, rational decision-making is significantly impaired. This explains why an addict's behaviour is no longer rational: they cannot see the impact that using has on their own behaviour.

You Can't Cure It

An addict's brain gets hijacked by the dependency, which impacts his or her ability to think and make sound decisions. These physiological changes make it impossible for the addict to see what's happening to them.

To a non-addict, it may look like the addict can stop using. However, those who have never experienced addiction can't understand the physical allergy that creates the addictive response. This lack of control is the hallmark of addiction.

The effects on the family

Over time, living with active addiction creates anxiety, depression, and chronic stress for those closest to an addict. Many family members suffer in silence, while the addict doesn't see a problem. Children in particular act out and may become depressed or anxious.

The shame associated with an addict's behaviour prevents family members and friends from seeking help. As family members of addicts, you may isolate socially because it's embarrassing to witness the outbursts. You may stop talking to family and friends because you fear being judged.



Practicing good self-care becomes essential for restoring emotional and physical health of the entire family. **Dealing with active addiction creates a pattern of self-neglect that needs healing.**

Redirecting the focus back on what you need makes detachment possible because your energy is no longer spent solely on the addict.

How to start practicing Detachment

Detachment works best when you can detach with love. This means letting go of the anger and finding alternative ways to handle the stress of living with an addict.

Here are some beliefs that need to be addressed in order to detach:

- **Avoid making assumptions - if you stop helping, something bad will not necessarily happen.**
- **Challenge the belief that you have all the answers.**
- **You are not responsible for an adult addict's problems.**
- **It's okay for you to get your own support system.**
- **Self-care isn't selfish, regardless of other well-meaning people say.**

Detachment can transform the entire family dynamic. Practicing these behaviours will indirectly benefit the addict because he gets an opportunity to face the truth about his own behaviour. Detaching also restores the family's equilibrium since the attention is no longer focused solely on the addict.

By detaching, you will:

- **Not make excuses for an addict's behaviour**
- **Stop handling an addict's problems**
- **Avoid becoming a passenger while he or she is intoxicated**
- **Leave a situation before an addict becomes abusive**
- **Stop responding to an addict's attempts to blame**
- **Accept that you are powerless over the addict's behaviour**

Simple Detaching behaviours that work

When confronted with verbal attacks, silence works. If you need to, leave the room.

Recognize that rescuing doesn't help the addict long-term.

Take care of YOURSELF instead of trying to fix them.

Refrain from giving advice or preventing their use. Keep children safe by minimizing their exposure.



Founded by individuals who understand the journey firsthand, Rebound is a non-profit support group dedicated to uplifting and guiding the loved ones of those struggling with addiction.

Our service is confidential, non-judgmental, and provided free of charge to carers and family members affected by a loved one's addiction and their associated mental health problems. Please email for a quicker response, otherwise call and leave a voicemail and we will respond within 24 hours.

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