



Detaching: Freedom for You and Your Child!

Learning to Detach

Detaching begins with the tough job of disengaging, using several tools to help develop that skill.

Accepting help from supportive others to identify problems with our child or children, then building a plan for change provides the basis from which to work. Tools such as one-liners, withdrawing from fruitless confrontation, becoming an observer, and journaling assist us in our efforts to stop inappropriate or unproductive behaviors. As we become more skilled at disengaging, we develop a greater sense of personal power, and are better prepared to begin the process of detaching.

Detaching can be defined as unfastening or disconnecting from something or someone. In this instance, it is a process of disentangling ourselves from the inappropriate ways in which we have become involved in the lives of our children – their choices, their consequences, and their responsibilities. Detaching entails letting go of expectations for how our children should live their lives, regardless of how appropriate or noble those expectations may be. It does not mean that we no longer have an emotional bond with our children, or that we don't have hopes and dreams for them. It does mean, however, a need to acknowledge the reality of their separateness, and our own inability to control another person's life and destiny.

Detaching: Steps Toward Freedom

1. Spend time considering the observations made about your interactions with your child. Make a commitment to search for truth, and to be brutally honest in asking questions about the methods and motives I've used. These are just a few examples:

? Have I tried to control my child's life with threats, punishment, manipulation, and other emotional blackmail?

? Have I respected my child's need and right to make choices and experience the subsequent consequences, good or bad?

? Have I tried to do my child's thinking for him/her?

? Have I attempted to live my child's life for him/her?

? Am I so involved in my child's life that I don't have time for or attend to my own?

? Do I respect my child as a separate, unique individual with a personality and destiny that belongs completely to him/her?

2. Seek honest input from supportive others regarding your conclusions. Spend some time considering what that input has been. Identify specific areas of problematic behavior.
3. Work with supportive others to develop a plan for change. Make a commitment to small steps in moving forward towards freedom for you and your child.
4. A plan for change may include any of these: Accessing appropriate material that will help in the process of letting go; talking with others in your support group; putting up reminder signs in your home for things to do or not do
5. Grieve – allow yourself to feel the loss of your hopes and dreams for your child, and/or the temporary loss of relationship with him/her.
6. Learn to accept reality- stop the mental conversations that begin "I wish", "if only" and start new ones that begin "I will" and "I'd like to".
7. Be a good example to your children by taking responsibility for your own life and take good care of yourself. Establish new boundaries that are respectful of self and others and get involved in things you like with people who have a positive attitude.

Give yourself time. Changing your life will not happen quickly or easily, but it CAN happen!