



## *Attachment/Bonding and Detachment*

Attachment with respect to human beings can be best described as affection, fondness, or sympathy for someone or something. Attachment is an attraction or a like which we express in many different ways to people, situations, possessions.

In fact, we do not know how to live without attachment. The emotional bond that typically forms between infant and caregiver is the means by which the helpless infant gets primary needs met. It then becomes the means of subsequent social and emotional development. The early experience of the infant stimulates growth of neural pathways that will decide his patterns of response to many things.

The attachment experience affects personality development, particularly a sense of security. Research shows that it influences the ability to form stable relationships throughout life. Neuroscientists believe that attachment is such a primal need that there are networks of neurons in the brain dedicated to setting it in motion and a hormone to foster the process, oxytocin.

## ROLE OF ATTACHMENT IN LIFE

- Attachment system provides first coping system of infant.
- It sets up in the infant's mind a mental representation of the caregiver.
- It is wholly portable and can be summoned up as a comforting mental presence in difficult moments.
- It allows an infant to separate from the caregiver without distress and begin to explore the world around.
- Attachment contains within it the platform, the child's ability to survive independently.
- Attachment is the source of all our pleasures now. We are attached to our friends, to our relatives; we are attached to our intellectual and spiritual works; we are attached to external objects, so that we get pleasure from them.

However what, brings misery is but this very attachment. Whenever we are forced to be away from any person, place or situation we are attached to, we become miserable. We need some time and effort to come out of such condition and we have to detach ourselves to be normal and joyful.

Attachment becomes unsafe when it entwines our emotional, physical, and mental energy with another person.

We become obsessed with that one relationship. Sometimes we expect another person to meet our every need. Or maybe we expect that of ourselves for others. Trying to meet every need of another person is an impossible superhuman task that sets us up for failure.

When attachment becomes unhealthy, we may feel the need to detach from a relationship.

Detaching can begin with setting a boundary in a relationship. It may mean saying no to someone you have always said yes to in the past. If you feel the need to agree with everything and everyone, it will naturally be uncomfortable when you voice an opinion that differs from your friend/spouse/child/parent.

Healthy attachment is the act of both holding and letting go.

Healthy attachment is holding the bird with cupped hands so it is free to try to fly, but safely being held. The freedom to fly is important, but the safety of being held is a part of the process, too. In detaching from unhealthy relationships, we often go to either extreme of overprotecting or releasing too quickly. We must find the balance.

## ■ DETACHMENT

Detachment also expressed as *non-attachment*, is a state in which a person overcomes his or her attachment to desire for things, people or concepts of the world. Detachment is a very strong word. Our understanding of detachment is to repulse something to which we are attached or attracted.

## ■ IMPORTANCE OF THE TERM

Detachment as release from desire and consequently from suffering is an important principle, or even ideal, in the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Stoicism, and Taoism.

The Bhagavad Gita, the basic text on the practice of detachment, is wonderfully explicit on this point. Krishna tells Arjuna that acting with detachment means doing the right thing for its own sake, because it needs to be done, without worrying about success or failure.

You might be surprised to hear that detachment is an important quality for relationships. But in fact, it is much more than that. Detachment is a highly beneficial state of mind in all the fields of life, and in our relationship with objects, people, even our own physical body.

## ■ DETACHMENT IS NOT INDIFFERENCE

You might think that a detached person is one that has no human relationships at all, or if he does, then they must be cold and superficial. Detachment has nothing to do with indifference. Indifference means a lack of interest and sympathy towards a person or object. Detachment, on the other hand, refers to the state of mind of being objective and not clinging, and it springs from a deep consideration of the conditions of human existence. Detachment in real life does not mean indifference : on the contrary, it will empower you to live every relationship with love and intensity, knowing that it could end at any moment.

Detachment is a state of mind that will help you both in times of joy and sorrow. We all know that life is a mixture of pleasure and pain, of comfort and hardship. Probably, you tend to cling to pleasure, hoping that it will never leave you, and you are overwhelmed by pain, fearing that it will never end. But when you start practicing detachment, you will be able to endure difficult moments with patience. In the same way, you will enjoy the beautiful moments of life without being tainted by the fear that they will end – as they undoubtedly will.

Being detached from success and failure, from pleasure and pain, will bring you back into connection with the only thing that is invariably present, stable, and safe : **your center of pure awareness and pure love**. Detachment is necessary to reach a state of equanimity, and to be able to live fully in the present moment, without worries or regrets.

Learning to practice detachment is one of the most important tools to develop unconditional love, a non-clinging attitude towards both things and people, and the capacity to enjoy the present moment with intensity.

### Hinduism

The Hindu view of detachment comes from the understanding of the nature of existence and the true ultimate state sought is that of being in the moment. In other words, while one is responsible and active, one does not worry about the past or future. The detachment is towards the result of one's actions rather than towards everything in life. This concept is cited extensively within Puranic and Vedic literature, for example :

One who performs his duty without attachment, surrendering the results unto the Supreme Lord, is unaffected by sinful action, as the lotus is untouched by water.

— **Bhagavad Gita 5.10**

Vairagya is a Hindu term which is often translated as detachment.

### Jainism

Detachment is one of the supreme ideals of Jainism, together with non-violence. Non-possession/Non-attachment is one of the Mahavratas, the five great vows Jain monks observe.

A contented man is rarely disappointed. He who knows when to stop does not find himself in trouble. He will stay forever safe.

## HOW TO DETACH : 5 STEPS

### 1. Observe Your Mind

What kind of thoughts you usually think. What things or factors do you identify with most? Become a student of self and heighten your awareness of where attachment happens more frequently for you. Recognize attachment comes with an emotional charge. Notice where you feel this in your physical body. It's different for each individual and learning your patterns is a useful tool in creating change.

### 2. Distinguish between the Voice of Your Ego and the Actual Situation

Your ego might tell you that not getting the job you want has ruined your career. The actual situation is : you are disappointed because you don't have something you never had in the first place. **There has been no loss.** Nothing has changed except your thoughts about your future potential. The actual situation is the same as it was prior to not getting the job.

### 3. Embrace Uncertainty

Only a willingness to embrace the unknown provides security. As Deepak Chopra says, "Those who seek security in the exterior world chase it for a lifetime. By letting go of your attachment to the illusion of security, which is really an attachment to the known, you step into the field of all possibilities. This is where you will find true happiness, abundance, and fulfillment."

### 4. Meditate on it

Meditation is a vehicle to help your mind release patterns of thought and action that no longer serve you. Spend some time in meditation each day and watch how the patterns in your life begin to change.

### 5. Don't Beat Yourself up for Falling into Old Habits

The first step in making change is recognizing what it is you want to change. Instead of getting frustrated or disappointed when you fall back into an old habit, celebrate that you are now noticing when you repeat the pattern of thought or habit. In time, this will allow you to transform your behaviour.