Detachment is a process in which the loved one of an addict separates the addiction from the person underneath. The goal of detachment is to depersonalize the addictive behavior and limit the harmful effects that it has upon you.

Letting go of a false sense of control over your loved one’s behavior and ending enabling are both necessary steps toward detachment, but do not complete the process. Full detachment requires that you no longer allow your loved one’s addiction to control your own life. Detaching from your loved one’s addiction frees you of emotional baggage and allows you to concentrate on your own healing. When you detach you no longer carry the burden of:

- Responsibility for fixing your loved one’s problem
- Worry for how your loved one’s behavior reflects upon you
- Having to lie or make up excuses for your loved one’s behavior problems
- Worry about whether your loved one is using drugs or drinking
- Keeping track of your loved one’s chemical consumption
- Feeling a need to control your loved one
- Feeling a need to punish your loved one for his behavior
- Feeling resentment toward your loved one
- Cleaning up after your loved one’s mistakes

Detachment is a perspective that can be very difficult to achieve. Most individuals who are in crisis due to the addictive behavior of a loved one can benefit greatly from professional counseling, 12-step assistance through Al-Anon or similar groups. Al-Anon is the sister organization of Alcoholics Anonymous that helps the loved ones of addicts in their own recovery from both the effects of alcoholic behavior and the patterns of coping that emerge in response to it. Detachment is a key skill learned from others who share their strength, hope, and experience.