

TOOL: DETACHMENT – TAKE A STEP BACK TO FIGHT URGES AND CRAVINGS



Have you ever looked back on a decision and now see that you made the wrong decision because you were too close to the situation? You were so close to the situation that you couldn't see it for what it was. You couldn't look at it objectively.

Now that time has passed, and the thoughts, pressure, and stress are gone, you can look at it with fresh eyes. You can do this in the moment, too. You can take a step back and view the situation objectively, even amid chaos. In other words, you can 'detach.'

DETACHMENT IN RECOVERY

Detachment, in the context of recovery, is about cultivating the ability to step back and objectively observe your thoughts, emotions, and situations, especially in relation to urges and cravings. It involves recognizing the urge or craving and taking a step back. You distance yourself from the situation mentally and emotionally. It's about being able to observe yourself from afar. It puts distance between you and the urge or craving, allowing you to make a rational decision.

APPLYING DETACHMENT IN RECOVERY

Recognizing the Need for Detachment: Acknowledge moments when you're overwhelmed by urges or emotions. Recognize these as key opportunities to practice detachment.

Creating Mental Distance: Imagine stepping back mentally and viewing your situation as an observer, not a participant. Visualize yourself in the situation from a third-person perspective.

TOOL: DETACHMENT - TAKE A STEP BACK TO FIGHT URGES AND CRAVINGS (CONTINUED-1)

Identifying Thoughts and Emotions: As an observer, identify the thoughts and emotions you are experiencing. Label them objectively, such as “Here is anxiety” or “This is a craving for alcohol.”

Practicing Mindful Awareness: Engage in mindfulness techniques to enhance your ability to observe without judgment. Focus on your breath or bodily sensations to anchor yourself in the present.

Reframing the Experience: Reframe your urges or emotions as temporary and not defining your actions. Remember, “This is just a feeling, and it will pass.”

Decision-Making from Detachment: From this detached viewpoint, consider the best course of action that aligns with your recovery goals. Make decisions based on long-term well-being rather than immediate urges.

IMPLEMENTING DETACHMENT IN THE MOMENT

Initial Acknowledgement of an Urge: As soon as you notice an urge, pause and acknowledge its presence. Saying to yourself, “This is an urge,” can help initiate the detachment process.

Shifting Perspective: Consciously shift your mental stance to that of an observer. Imagine stepping back and viewing yourself and the urge from a distance as if you’re a neutral bystander.

Describing the Urge Objectively: Mentally describe the urge. What does it feel like? Where in your body do you feel it? Try to be as descriptive yet impartial as possible, like a scientist observing a phenomenon.

Focused Breathing: Use deep, focused breathing to maintain your observer status. Each breath can remind you that you are separate from the urge.

Mindful Observation: Observe the urge without trying to change it. Notice how it may increase in intensity, peak, and eventually start to fade, much like a wave in the ocean.

The impermanence of Urges: Remind yourself that urges are temporary and will pass. They do not have to dictate your actions.

Choice and Power: Recognize that you can choose how to respond as an observer. You’re not compelled to act on the urge.

Considering Consequences: From your detached viewpoint, consider the consequences of acting on the urge versus not acting on it.

Aligning with Recovery Goals: Reflect on how your actions affect your recovery goals. Choose the path that aligns with your long-term well-being.

Reflection: Once the urge has passed, spend a moment to reflect on the experience. Acknowledge your success in observing and not acting on the urge.

TOOL: DETACHMENT - TAKE A STEP BACK TO FIGHT URGES AND CRAVINGS (CONTINUED-2)

Learning and Adapting: Consider what you learned from the experience and how you can apply this learning to future urges.

BENEFITS OF DETACHMENT IN RECOVERY

Detachment, when practiced in the context of recovery, offers many benefits crucial for long-term success and emotional well-being. Understanding these benefits can help you appreciate the value of this skill in your journey toward sobriety and personal growth.

Enhanced Emotional Regulation

Balanced Response to Stress: Detachment allows you to respond to stressful situations or triggers in a balanced way, reducing the likelihood of relapse due to emotional reactions.

Reduced Impulsivity: By maintaining a level of detachment, you're less likely to act on impulsive urges that can jeopardize your recovery.

Improved Decision-Making

Objective Analysis: Detachment aids in analyzing situations objectively without the clouding influence of intense emotions or cravings.

Informed Choices: You're more likely to make decisions in your best interest and aligned with your recovery goals when you can detach from immediate emotional responses.

Increased Self-Awareness

Understanding Triggers: Detachment helps recognize and understand personal triggers without being overwhelmed.

Self-reflection: It encourages deeper self-reflection, leading to insights about the underlying causes of addictive behaviors.

Better Stress Management

Coping with Cravings: Detachment is a key tool in dealing with cravings, as it allows you to observe them without giving in to them.

Handling Pressure: It also equips you to handle pressure and stress more effectively, preventing these from escalating into triggers.

TOOL: DETACHMENT - TAKE A STEP BACK TO FIGHT URGES AND CRAVINGS (CONTINUED-3)**Strengthened Relationships**

Avoiding Co-dependency: In recovery, detachment helps avoid co-dependent behaviors, leading to healthier relationships.

Effective Communication: By staying emotionally balanced, you can communicate more effectively with friends, family, and support groups.

Personal Empowerment

Sense of Control: Practicing detachment can give you greater control over your life and decisions.

Empowerment: Empowers you to take charge of your recovery and not be a passive victim of your emotions or circumstances.

Mastering the art of detachment is a profound step in your recovery journey. It's about developing the ability to step back and observe your thoughts, emotions, and situations without getting entangled. This skill is crucial, as it empowers you to respond to life's challenges with clarity and composure rather than being driven by immediate emotional impulses.

“YOUR VISION WILL BECOME CLEAR ONLY WHEN YOU CAN LOOK INTO YOUR OWN HEART. WHO LOOKS OUTSIDE, DREAMS; WHO LOOKS INSIDE, AWAKES.” – CARL JUNG.

EXERCISE: DETACHMENT PRACTICE

Objective: To practice detachment by reflecting on a past urge or craving.

Identify a Triggering Situation: Consider a recent situation that triggered a strong emotional response or craving. Write down your thoughts, feelings, and emotions about the urge or craving.

FOR EXAMPLE:

SITUATION: I HAD A TOUGH DAY AT WORK, WITH SEVERAL DEADLINES AND DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS. ON MY WAY HOME, I FELT A STRONG CRAVING TO STOP BY THE STORE AND BUY A BOTTLE OF WINE TO RELAX AND UNWIND.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE: I FELT HIGHLY STRESSED AND OVERWHELMED. THE THOUGHT OF DRINKING SEEMED LIKE THE ONLY WAY TO EASE MY ANXIETY AND FRUSTRATION.

Reflect Objectively: Write down the facts of the situation, separating them from your emotional responses. Describe what specifically led to the urge or craving. Where were you? Who were you with? How were you feeling mentally and physically?

FOR EXAMPLE:

FACTS OF THE SITUATION: THE DAY WAS FILLED WITH BACK-TO-BACK MEETINGS AND TIGHT DEADLINES. I SKIPPED LUNCH DUE TO MY WORKLOAD, WHICH LEFT ME PHYSICALLY DRAINED AND MENTALLY EXHAUSTED. THE URGE TO DRINK AROSE WHILE DRIVING HOME FROM WORK, A ROUTINE I USED TO HAVE WHEN I FELT THIS WAY.

EXERCISE: DETACHMENT PRACTICE (CONTINUED-1)

Take a Step Back and Analyze Your Response: Imagine taking a step back from the situation and objectively viewing it. Consider how detachment could have altered your response. What would a neutral, objective perspective have looked like? What would you tell someone else in the same situation to do?

FOR EXAMPLE:

DETACHED ANALYSIS: IF I TAKE A STEP BACK AND VIEW THIS SITUATION AS AN OBSERVER, I SEE A PATTERN OF USING ALCOHOL AS A COPING MECHANISM FOR STRESS. OBJECTIVELY, THE STRESS RESULTED FROM EXTERNAL WORK FACTORS AND POOR SELF-CARE (LIKE SKIPPING MEALS).

NEUTRAL PERSPECTIVE ADVICE: TO SOMEONE ELSE, I WOULD ADVISE ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE STRESS RATHER THAN USING ALCOHOL AS A TEMPORARY FIX. I WOULD SUGGEST PLANNING FOR REGULAR BREAKS, EATING WELL, AND PERHAPS SEEKING SUPPORT FROM A COLLEAGUE OR SUPERVISOR TO MANAGE THE WORKLOAD BETTER.



EXERCISE: DETACHMENT PRACTICE (CONTINUED-2)

Plan for Future: Based on this reflection, plan how you might use detachment in similar situations in the future.

FOR EXAMPLE:

FUTURE DETACHMENT STRATEGY: IN SIMILAR FUTURE SITUATIONS, I PLAN TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF MOUNTING STRESS EARLY ON. I WILL REMIND MYSELF THAT ALCOHOL IS NOT A SOLUTION. INSTEAD, I'LL FOCUS ON HEALTHIER COPING MECHANISMS LIKE TAKING SHORT BREAKS DURING WORK, ENSURING I EAT PROPERLY, AND PERHAPS GOING FOR A WALK AFTER WORK TO DECOMPRESS.

WHEN I FEEL THE URGE TO DRINK, I'LL PAUSE, ACKNOWLEDGE IT, AND REMEMBER THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF GIVING IN TO THIS OLD HABIT. INSTEAD, I'LL EMPLOY A RELAXATION TECHNIQUE, LIKE DEEP BREATHING OR LISTENING TO CALMING MUSIC, TO MANAGE MY STRESS IN A HEALTHY WAY.

