

DETACHMENT: NEITHER KIND, NOR UNKIND

There are valuable principles we can learn from the Al-Anon program. Al-Anon teaches men and women to live with alcoholics, both practicing and sober. These people have learned to live with drunks, as selfish and self-serving as any abuser. In fact, many abusers also suffer from related disorders such as alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, and sex addiction. So it is no surprise that we can learn a lot about living with an abuser from spouses who have learned how to deal with addiction in their relationship.

Detachment is a good way focus on ourselves and not our abusing partner. Al-Anon literature says, "Detachment is neither kind nor unkind. It does not imply judgment or condemnation of the person or situation from which we are detaching. It is simply a means that allows us to separate ourselves from the adverse effects that another person's alcoholism can have upon our lives." Wow—think about that—it allows you to lead your life and not be sucked into their dysfunction. You “separate yourself from the adverse effects of another person's” abuse. Once you get the concept of detachment, which is necessary to enforce the 12 Respect-me Rules, you don't have to hate them any longer.

IT IS WHAT IT IS

Many times targets find they have become just as obsessed with changing the abuser's behavior as the abuser is with controlling them. The Al-Anon program teaches members to "put the focus on ourselves" and not on the alcoholic, or in our case, the abuser.

If we put the focus on ourselves, we will no longer be in the position to:

- Allow ourselves, children or pets to suffer because of the hurtful actions of our partner .
- Allow ourselves to be used or abused by a partner or anyone else.
- Do for our partner what they should do for themselves.
- See ourselves as a victim wait to be rescued.
- Cover up for their misdeeds and make excuses for their behavior.
- Create a crisis so the cycle of abuse will begin and we can get to the honeymoon phase.
- Prevent a crisis if it is the natural course of events.
- Think we can change them to fit into our romantic dream.

When you detach from your partner while they abuse, they may tell you it is unkind and you may feel guilty like you are doing something wrong, but it is not kind or unkind—it is you taking care of you. Face it, your partner has already proved that he or she will not! You do not judge, retaliate, or hurt—you stand tall and draw the line—this is what you can do to me , this is what you can't. Period.

But what about the our marriage? What happens if I stop doing all of these things that I have done all these years to keep us together, to please my partner?

Have you pleased him? Al-Anon members learn that no individual is responsible for another person's disease or recovery. The simple answer to what to do about the verbal and emotional abuser: "Refuse to dance and the dance ends."