

Power of non-attachment

Distinguishing non-attachment, understanding its benefits and exploring how to foster this for ourselves in our life



What do we mean by non-attachment?

Non-attachment may not necessarily be a word that we often use in our lives. So, it is important to distinguish it from related words:

Attachment relates to control, having to have things 'our way'; this can fuel a fixed, win-lose mindset (David Emerald, 2018). Conversely, detachment can be when we disengage and stand back; others may experience us as aloof (David Emerald, 2018).

Non-attachment is different from both of these. This is where we care and stay connected to what we want and believe in, whilst not being attached to a particular outcome (David Emerald, 2018).

"It is not about giving up having goals or dreams, but it is about releasing our emotional attachment to it."

When being non-attached, we release the need to control and we separate ourselves from needing to gain a particular outcome (Ward Andrews, 2020).



Why is it important for us?

Being unattached to the outcome generates many benefits for us. It frees us up to take action, to learn lessons from our decisions and foster a sense of optimism in our life (Ward Andrews, 2020).

"Not being attached to the outcome allows us to free our mind to explore possibilities."

Robert Ringer, 2008

Whereas living a life where we are attached to achieving a goal or dream fosters many negative emotions, including: anxiety, fear, anger, jealousy and disconnection (Tamara Lechner, 2019).

"By attaching to an outcome, you give your power away to external forces or circumstances."

Tamara Kotsos, 2020

By being wedded to achieving a specific outcome, we become more vulnerable to fear and unnecessary suffering, less likely



to take risks and explore new ideas. We may feel heavier in ourselves and to others around us, and take life seriously.

"You only lose what you cling to."

Buddha

So, living a life where we can dream whilst not being attached to outcomes has many benefits for us.

What is it like living a life of non-attachment?

When we are unattached to an outcome and let go, it allows us to live in the flow. We can create possibilities, and dreams, let go of the attachment to them and allow circumstances to emerge. The outcome may arrive in a different form (Robert Ringer, 2008).

Living like this allows life to be like a game, and to be enjoyed (Tania Kotsos, 2020). We can play, living a freer, happier and more creative life. As we live our life, each moment or situation may be a source of possibility.

We can create possibilities around things that matter to us.

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We can dream, plan and take action in line with this. By letting go of our emotional attachment, we can allow the situation to unfold.

“Accept the present and intend the future.”

Deepak Chopra, 2020

We can accept the end result by understanding that the best for us will show up.

What can I do if I get stuck?

Sometimes we may find that we end up stuck in a situation, which leaves us feeling upset. Things may be feeling difficult and we may be attached to a particular outcome and things haven't gone the way that we had hoped.

Firstly, it may be useful to reflect upon the situation. Consider what were your hopes or intentions from the situation. Identify whether you had become attached to getting something or achieving something in the situation. Reflect upon what you need to let go of to be complete.

Secondly, in your upset, work out what expectation(s) have not been met, and what still needs to be said to whom to close the loop.

“An upset is an unmet expectation and a missed communication.”

Landmark Education

By working these out, you can dismantle the upset and let it go, releasing the negative feelings.

How can I foster a mind-set of non-attachment?

Observe your internal signals – become aware of the thoughts you habitually have. Notice when you become attached to gaining something or achieving a particular outcome. Consider what happens within yourself. What do you feel? Learning our own signals will help us to tune in to know when we have and are becoming emotionally attached

Embrace uncertainty – recognise the universality of impermanence. Nothing stays the same. Everything is gently evolving. There is power in understanding and accepting this

“By letting go of your attachment to the illusion of security, which is really an attachment to the known, you step into a field of possibilities.”

Deepak Chopra, 2020

Sharing possibilities freely – reflect upon the things that matter to you and on your dreams. Share about these to people that you come across in your life. Notice what happens. Often possibilities can begin to take shape when we share freely with no agenda. Support may come our way; ideas can evolve and develop. A way forward may emerge

Setting an intention – when we focus on things that we are passionate about, we can set an intention to take our ideas forwards. We can create plans and a direction of travel whilst not being fixated on a particular

outcome. An even better outcome may emerge for us

Following our energy – when we are in action taking our intentions forward, notice our energy. Go with the flow of the energy, learn to play and have fun with our possibilities. If something begins to feel like hard work, notice this. We may be attached to achieving a particular outcome. If we feel like we are needing to push and work hard at something, we may need to let go and allow a new way forward to emerge

Top tip



If you'd like to explore in more depth the topics that this article has raised, then I would totally recommend reading:

The Secret by Rhonda Byrne
ISBN: 1847370292

The Celestine Prophecy: An Adventure by James Redfield
ISBN: 0553409024



About the writer

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Cathy Brown is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, consultant and writer. She runs Evolve Consulting Services Limited which works with individuals, teams and businesses to manage transition and change.

She works as a transition coach and a career counsellor with individuals and teams. She is also a guest lecturer at Henley Business School and University of Derby. In addition, Cathy is a founding trustee of the Evolve Transition Trust, which supports disadvantaged people through life transitions.