

The Detached Self Soother

When the Detached Self-Soother mode is activated within our personality system, we shut off our unwanted emotional experiences by engaging in activities that distract us from the uncomfortable way we simply don't want to feel. These activities might be things that are stimulating, for example, working, playing video games, having sex with random people, excessive gambling, participating in dangerous sports, or the abuse of stimulant drugs. Alternatively, and sometimes simultaneously, they might be things that help us to "numb out," for example things like overeating certain foods, watching television for long periods, some computer games, spending time oversleeping, excessive shopping, or the abuse of substances that are Central Nervous System depressants.

The intention behind this behaviour is that the activity we turn to is sufficiently distracting or "soothing" to allow us to escape from our current uncomfortable and therefore unwanted emotional experience. When parts behave in this particular mode on a regular basis it's a dominant way of life for people who identify with having addictive, obsessive, or compulsive coping mechanisms. It's a learned behaviour that usually, but not always starts early in life with things that we may not even identify as the precursor to this type of adult coping mechanism. The primary focus of the Detached Self Soother is to avoid the emotional experience that's connected to our Vulnerable Child because it thinks we can't handle these feelings without the ability to escape at the drop of a hat.

“The part of me that wanted to escape by using alcohol and drugs was a part that had the solution to all of my problems. When I removed the possibility of using these solutions, it simply switched to a different excessive solution.”

~Steven Morris RP

Parts of our personality that behave in the Detached Self-Soother Mode get a lot of attention when working with the addictive lifestyle. As a person who's in recovery myself, I'm very aware that in the early stages of this journey, we focus all of our efforts on limiting its presence within our personality system in an attempt to stop the constant stream of thoughts inviting us to use our substance or process of choice. The problem with this strategy is that these substances or processes are not the real issue or the long-term solution to our problems. They are the short-term fix for our inability to cope with the emotional experience we are desperately trying to avoid. When I stopped using substances to cope with my emotional experiences I was confronted with an overwhelming sense of fear. I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to deal with life without the ability to detach in a way that would allow my emotional child parts to feel a sense of calm.

Of course, I wasn't aware of it from this perspective at that time, I was only conscious of the uncontrollable itch that I felt like I constantly needed to scratch. It manifested in my thoughts and feelings as a desire to just run away, to escape from my current situation, even though at the time, I

wasn't even sure what it was that I was running from. There was somewhere I needed to be, I didn't know where that was, it just wasn't right here or right now. The Detached Self-Soother exists within our system as a means to an end, its purpose is to provide an escape from what we fear. When a schema gets activated and our vulnerable child is under threat, our system goes on high alert to respond to the fear that exists in our personality system by running towards those coping behaviours that we think are going to soothe.

Whether we run by using stimulating behaviours including sex, gambling, video games or drugs like cocaine or meth amphetamines, or sedating behaviours including food, sleep, binge watching television, or abusing substances like alcohol, heroin, or benzodiazepines, the end result is the same. We detach from our current circumstances using these behaviours to Self-Soothe. What I learned as I progressed along my own recovery journey was that fighting with the part of me that wanted to escape was not sustainable for extended periods of time. Sooner or later, it would overpower my system and take over my behaviours with what this part of me truly believed was the solution to my current predicament. Distraction and avoidance helped me in the beginning, it got me through some difficult times. However, eventually I had to face the problem, which started with my ability to listen to my parts and understand the fears I was attempting to escape from. Mindful Awareness, and an abundance of self compassion, self empathy, and self forgiveness is what helped me to finally accept this part was a necessary and important part of my personality. That way, I could teach it how to be a part of the internal conversation about Living the Life I Want to Live.

Next, let's check in to see how you relate to this Mode in your own behaviours. Answer the questions below based on your personal experiences and the rating scale provided.

Never 0	Sometimes 1	50/50 2	Often 3	Always 4
Description				Score
I often find myself doing things that I find exciting or soothing to avoid my feelings, like working, gambling, eating, shopping, sex, or using substances.				
I don't like to sit still, doing nothing, so I usually make sure that I'm busy doing something, that way I am bothered less by my thoughts and feelings.				

Based on the scores you gave for the questions above, and the way you relate to the description provided on the previous pages, how Relevant is the Detached Self Soother Mode to you in your life? Add the two scores together to calculate your prevalence score. On a scale of 0 – 8, 0 being not present at all, and 8 being present in my life every day, rate your experience of the Detached Self Soother Mode.

My Detached Self Soother Mode has a prevalence score of ___/8.

On the next page, take the time to explore your experience of the Detached Self Soother Mode, see if you can identify how you feel when this Mode is active, how you are thinking when this Mode is active, what you do when this Mode is active, and what situations you might need to be aware of that can activate this way of thinking in your personality system.

- a. When I am in the Detached Self Soother Mode, I experience the following feelings (List the emotions you experience in the Detached Self Soother Mode, focus on the feelings in your system when you want to escape, when you feel uncomfortable in your skin, or you have an itch that you just can't scratch).

- b. When I am in the Detached Self Soother Mode, I am having the following thoughts (List the thoughts you are having when you're in the Detached Self Soother Mode, be specific, focus on thoughts that point out how the story in your system is an accurate one, how the narrative has to be true, and how there is no alternative to what you are hearing).

- c. When I am in the Detached Self Soother Mode, I behave in the following ways (List the things you do, the way you act, and how you react when you're in the Detached Self Soother Mode).

- d. The following situations are likely to be involved in triggering my Detached Self Soother Mode (List the situations you are aware of that have activated this mode of behaviour in the past).
