Here is the transcript for: Codependency Recovery featuring AVAIYA Teacher, Kevin Petersen.

Ande Anderson [00:00:00]:
Hello, Avaiya family. I'm Ande Anderson. My partner, Ike Allen, and I are teachers, mentors, and the co owners of Avaiya University. Avaiya is the creator of over a 1000 books, films, courses, teachings, and other supportive resources. Thank you as always for joining us. Our fellow teacher, Kevin Peterson, is back with us today to talk about how to manage codependency. Welcome back to Avaya, Kevin.

Kevin Petersen [00:00:20]:
Wow. That was a mouthful. You did it so well.

Ande Anderson [00:00:24]:
Well, there's so much more to say about all of your expertise, Kevin. But, good to good to see you again. So okay. Right? A lot of times in the conversation with codependency, we do hear about addiction. Right? A lot of households have both addiction struggles as well as codependency. Why is it that these tend to go hand in hand?

Kevin Petersen [00:00:44]:
Well, you know, I always say it's kinda like peanut butter and jelly. You know? They just kinda naturally gravitate towards one another. Initially, what I would say is that someone who struggles with codependency, the first thing I always like to sort of say is, you know, look. Let's, you know, let's take a look at you, and let's take a look at your your background or your childhood, the family of origin, and where you came from. And pretty quickly, we start identifying that as a child, they were they had a lot of

responsibility lumped onto them. And almost always, that's where we start to see where the addiction starts to play the role, is that as a child, they were forced into a position to be parentified because 1 or both parents were struggling with either mental health or addiction or alcoholism. And and they had to fill the void. They had alcoholism, and and they had to fill the void.

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Kevin Petersen [00:01:31]:
They had to take care of things. And the funny part is as kids, we get rewarded for that behavior. Like, oh, you're such a good helper. You're so great at solving problems. You're so great at taking care of me. It's all. Thank you so much. And we get lots of love and affection for it.

Kevin Petersen [00:01:46]:
The problem is as an adult, it doesn't really serve us well. Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:01:49]:
Yes. Definitely doesn't doesn't, create the same, opportunities for us as an adult as it did when we were kids. Right? When we're just surviving and getting through, you know, what what we had to get through as children. So so what are some symptoms that you see common in codependency?

Kevin Petersen [00:02:06]:
Well, you know, one of the first ones, and it's like the big it's the big dirty word. Right? It's enabling. You know? And and so what does that mean? You know? How do where do we draw the line? How do we know what's right and what's wrong? And what I always tell people is, ask yourself this question. Is this something they're capable of doing themselves? And the first thing they will always say is, well, yeah. But I'm like, I didn't ask you if they will do it. I asked you if they're capable of doing it themselves. And if the answer is yes, then you need to stay out of it. You know, one of our big things is telling people there's 2 kinds of business.

Kevin Petersen [00:02:42]:
There's my business and not my business. You know? And and you gotta remember which one is which. And and then my other favorite little cutie pie phrase that I've learned long, long time ago is help is the sunny side of control. So, you know, there's always this vision of, well, I'm just trying to help. Well, yeah, you're trying to help make sure everything gets done the way you want it to get done. Because that makes you feel comfortable. It makes you feel safe. As opposed to allowing the person to learn how to problem solve and take care of their own issues.

Kevin Petersen [00:03:14]:
Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:03:15]:
I love the yeah. I love that part because that is so true. Right? Like, how uncomfortable we can feel when we can't control or we can't, yeah, make sure something happens the way we want it to. I guess, what would you say are some ways that we can deal with our own discomfort in those situations?

Kevin Petersen [00:03:36]:
Well and, you know, again, I you know, under understanding that I spend the majority of my time working with families that are struggling with addiction and codependency. Right? And and and I would say that most

people that come from codependency or have codependency, if we shake the tree hard enough, there's alcoholics and addicts are gonna start falling out, you know, or severe mental health, or both. So what I always tell people is, you know, the best thing you can do to help your person is to help yourself. And so you gotta get into your own recovery. You know, this one of the most important things I always tell people is you gotta remember that setting boundaries isn't about the other person. Setting boundaries is about you making a commitment to change your behavior. Because if you change your behavior, you inherently change the entire system's behavior. And and the parallels I try to draw are, like, think about the best boss you ever had.

Kevin Petersen [00:04:35]:
You know? And did they micromanage you? Did they hover over you? Did they shame you? Did they punish you? No. They stood back and said, hey. Look. I'm here. I'm here to help. Let me know what you need. And and they may have watched you fail a couple of times. And and that's kinda how you wanna start looking at this, whether it's your spouse or a family member or a child.



Kevin Petersen [00:04:55]:

You wanna stand back and be like, well, okay. But, you know, I'm gonna have to let you handle this and learn how to solve your own problems. And that's gonna be hard for me because I already know the answers. And I wanna jump in and I wanna guide you down the right way. But then the irony is those are the same people that are like, I don't understand why he can't take care of himself. It's like, why should he? He knows you'll do it. You know? There's no incentive for him to change. You have to create that incentive for the change by changing you, not changing them.

Kevin Petersen [00:05:28]:
Mhmm. Mhmm. That will be much more like

Ande Anderson [00:05:30]:
Yes. That therein lies our business. Right?

Kevin Petersen [00:05:34]:
Yeah. That's that's my business.

Ande Anderson [00:05:37]:
Well, thank you. I appreciate you sharing a little bit about that because I know it can be really if if we're used to that pattern of, oh, I want things done or this to happen in a certain way and, we have that kind of controlling mechanism in us. Yeah. It can be really uncomfortable to let that go and just see what happens. So, yes. Good ways to to kind of, deal with that.

Kevin Petersen [00:05:58]:
Right. And what I always tell people is that your answer is the exact same answer for the other person. If we want the other person to go to therapy in maybe a 12 step program or some sort of, you know, behavior modification program, you have to do the same thing. Right. Yeah. It's not just this idea this is old idea of taking someone who has a problem, removing them from the family system for 30, 60, or 90 days, and then bringing them back to the same family system that hasn't changed, and then wondering why they fail. Mhmm. It's like, what? They never stood a chance.

Kevin Petersen [00:06:32]:
You know? You gotta get everyone's gotta get on board with changing the way they operate and changing the way they interact with one another. And and, you know, once we can do that, that's when we can really implement wholesale change. Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:06:45]:
And so in that instance, Kevin, if someone in the family, whatever that looks like, is just not willing to do that, what how do how does the rest of the family, I guess, deal with that? Like

Kevin Petersen [00:06:56]:
Sure. And and now we're into my favorite my favorite thing, boundaries. You know, it's just being able to tell someone, you know, I love you, and I'm gonna respect your choice not to participate in a in a program of recovery, whether it's for yourself or alcohol or drugs or whatever it is, mental health, whatever it is. But I'm also gonna put up some boundaries between you and me because I'm not gonna continue to have you take me down the road. I I'm not gonna continue to have my life defined by your chaos, drama, and crisis. And I wanna be super clear that I will help you. I'm not shutting the door on you. This isn't the old tough love world.

Kevin Petersen [00:07:36]:
This is look. I get it. I'm respecting your choice. If that's how you wanna live, that's fine. I'm just not gonna go with you. But if you ever want help and you want want help changing, I'll point you in the right direction, and I'll I'll but I won't do it for you. I mean, I I can't. But but I will always be able to be there for you to help you walk through the door of getting help.

Kevin Petersen [00:07:58]:
But then you actually gotta do the work yourself. So Mhmm. That's really what I would say to someone in the family system. Whether it's someone who's struggling I mean, I have let let me tell you something. I have families where someone will get sober or dig into their mental health issues and

come back to the family system. And the family system's like, we're not changing. You know, good for you, but we don't have a problem. And then that it's it's it's so it's the person that's got the identified issue that comes to me and says, I think I need some help.

Kevin Petersen [00:08:28]:
They're they're not they're not willing to support me in this process. And it's like, okay. That's cool. You can still say I love you, but I'm just not gonna do this. I'm not gonna participate with this. But if you're interested in joining me in this process, let me know, and I'll be happy to share it with you. Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:08:43]:
Yeah. I I would imagine that definitely happens. That's yeah. So interesting. Any other suggestions you have for people on, like, strategies they can implement to manage codependency? Anything else you wanna say about that?

Kevin Petersen [00:08:56]:
Well, you know, the thing I always say is that when we take a look at the you know, you don't have to go to a 12 step program, you know, or there's that's not necessary if you don't want to. The 2 things we're looking to identify is, 1, we have to get abstinent around the behavior. Whether it's drugs, alcohol, porn, gambling, controlling people, managing things, being in charge of everything. You know? That's an addiction as well, by the way. And then, you know, so we have to get abstinent from that behavior. And then then we have to also change the way we treat other people. Okay? So we have to start addressing our behavior and how we interact with others. How you achieve that, whether it's through church or therapy or yoga or CrossFit or whatever.

Kevin Petersen [00:09:44]:
You know? I don't care. But those are the 2 things that have to happen. Those are the 2 measuring sticks. Mhmm. You know? And and if we if you can however you get that accomplished, that's fantastic. And there's

certainly alternative ways of going about it. I'll tell you what I get a lot of is these people that are like, well, yeah. You know, my dad was an alcoholic, and that was a long time ago, and da da da da.

Kevin Petersen [00:10:07]:
And I don't really have any problems with that. And then we start talking, and they and they really start to sort of show themselves. And they're like, oh, yeah. But, you know, I keep repeating bad relationships or I keep repeating bad relationships at work or I keep taking jobs where I'm getting abused and emotionally drained. You know, where they keep referring to every past relationship is that person was crazy. They were borderline. They were narcissistic. And that's I always seem to attract those people.

Kevin Petersen [00:10:31]:
I'm like, okay. So let's talk about that. You know, what do all those things have in common? You. You know? And and I'm not trying to shame you. I wanna help you. But but in order to help you, I gotta you we gotta call it what it is. Mhmm. You know, it's not just you having a series of bad luck.

Kevin Petersen [00:10:49]:
You know? You're drawn into that situation because you're looking for your next project. Right. You know? And and and that's a hard pill to swallow.

Ande Anderson [00:10:58]:
It is. And I'm glad you mentioned it though, because yes. Who wants to hear that? Right? We never probably probably most people don't want to hear. Right? That, oh, it's I am the common denominator. But, but, yeah, you gotta get present to, okay. Well, it is true that I am the common denominator in all these things happening or these unhealthy relationships, in my life for sure. And I'm curious too. Like, what happens when people can ching they struggle with codependency and they don't manage it? They don't do the strategies that you're you're telling them to implement?

Kevin Petersen [00:11:30]:

Well, you know, and this definitely happens a lot. You know? I mean, I definitely the families that I work with or the individuals that I work with, I always tell them after my first session. It's like so here's what's gonna happen. This is my experience of doing this for a long, long, long, long time. In our next appointment, you will have done the homework and you will have followed through or you won't. And if you don't, I'm not mad at you. And, again, I'm not shaming you. But that tells us where your priorities are.

Kevin Petersen [00:11:59]:
You know? That you're okay with having drama, crisis, and chaos in your life. Yeah. You're okay with that. You're okay with, you know, spending a lot of your time and energy managing other people and then complaining about them not following through. And and you're okay with continuing down that path and continuing down that lifestyle. And so to answer your question is, you know, what happens to people that don't follow through or don't address this? Here's what I would always say. Things don't get better, they get worse. Mhmm.

Kevin Petersen [00:12:30]:
You know? And they get exponentially worse. Because once you become aware of something, then it's like, oh. Okay. And then you start looking around you, and you're like, wow. It's not just my family member. It's my work. It's my friends. It's it's the people I hang out with.

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Kevin Petersen [00:12:46]:
I play this role where I'm kind of like the adult babysitter for everybody. And and I don't like that role because it's incredibly disrespectful. And when I need something, they act like I'm, you know, trying to steal their children. You know? It's like, no. I you know, it's okay to stand up for yourself and that sort of thing. Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:13:05]:
Yeah. Absolutely. And, so okay. Like, so we're talking about right? That was, like, the person who's struggling with the codependency. And then, right, there's the people struggling with the addiction as well. So and I get those 2 can also be, hand in hand. So how does this all affect someone struggling with addiction?

Kevin Petersen [00:13:24]:
Well, here's the thing. And I'll tell you from my personal experiences. What happened is that my parents circled the wagons when I was 26. And they were like, we love you. You're all you're our only son, and we think you're great. But we're not okay with the lifestyle that you're choosing. You drink. You do drugs.

Kevin Petersen [00:13:41]:

You sort of live this chaotic party lifestyle, and it's just not something we wanna engage with. So until you choose to change your lifestyle, we're gonna put up really big boundaries. And and I didn't live at home. I, you know, I wasn't dependent upon them financially. You know? I was living I had a job. I had a place to live. I had a car. Blah blah blah.

Kevin Petersen [00:14:01]:
And, you know, they were like, yeah. You know, that's cool. But we're just we're not we're out. And and they were getting some coaching in the process. And what it forced me to do was to pay attention to myself and start realizing that the system that I had been a part of my entire life was now having some very severe limits with me. What I will tell you, and I feel really strongly about this, because that was 1990, and I ended up getting sober in 1991. And, you know, I was drinking and smoking marijuana and doing the occasional cocaine, not a whole lot. Nowadays, when we start looking at people that are playing with drugs that are laced with Fentanyl and that can kill them instantly, you know, there tends to be this attitude I get of, well, what you're telling me to do is just stand back and let him hit bottom and he might die.

Kevin Petersen [00:14:49]:
I'm like, oh god. No. I would never say that. What I'm saying is set the boundaries and tell them, hey. Look. If this is the choice you're gonna have and you're gonna follow through with this, that's fine. And at the same time, you need to plan for doing an intervention and and stepping in if they're doing something that's life threatening. Mhmm.

Kevin Petersen [00:15:07]:
I I would never say if someone's doing something life threatening that you should just stand back and be we're just gonna wait for you to hit bottom. That's crazy talk. You know? And and I believe in stepping in because that's what my family did to me. They stepped in on me. It took some time, but they held their ground. And when they held their ground, I'm like, oh, crap. They're serious. You know? And it forced me to address my stuff.

Kevin Petersen [00:15:29]:
So so back to my theory. Right? They changed the family system. They didn't force me to change. They changed themselves and said, it's okay for you to do what you want, but we're not gonna we're not gonna participate. And if you wanna participate with us, this is what has to change. Mhmm. And and that's just, you know, that those are good solid boundaries. Yeah.

Kevin Petersen [00:15:51]:
You know?

Ande Anderson [00:15:52]:
Yeah. Go go your parents.

Kevin Petersen [00:15:55]:
Yeah. I know. Right? I mean, thank god for them. They were Yeah. They my life. You know?

Ande Anderson [00:16:00]:
Yeah. Well, I I appreciate you sharing that, Kevin. And also stressing the importance of right. If someone is doing something life threatening because like you mentioned, the fentanyl and, I mean, I we have a neighbor whose son died of an overdose, you know, accidental, fentanyl overdose and, the millions I don't even know how many these days. Right? Who that's happened to. Right? So, it's very important that you mentioned that. Absolutely. It's

Kevin Petersen [00:16:23]:
just awful. And it's I gotta tell you something. It happens more and more and more. And I mean, every, honestly, everyone I talk to says what you just said. We have a friend. We have a neighbor. We have a thing. And it's that's how serious this is.

Ande Anderson [00:16:35]:
Mhmm.

Kevin Petersen [00:16:36]:
You know? This this is this is really it's become life or death, and I really think it's important for people to understand that you can intervene on that and just hold your boundaries and tell them we don't want you to die. We love you so much that we don't want you to die.

Ande Anderson [00:16:50]:
And And, like, if if someone's in that space, I'm just curious. Right? Like, where what resources can they get support from to create an intervention for someone they love?

Kevin Petersen [00:17:01]:
That's a great question. Obviously, you know, that's the kind of work we do at the Chronic Hope Institute. We do family addiction coaching, and part of that process with the family is sort of triaging the household initially and getting an idea of what's going on, getting all the scoop and the information. And then we make a plan. And we have plan a, we have plan b, and we even have plan c. And plan a is that if someone is just doing drugs and alcohol and marijuana, we're gonna give them 30 days to sort of straighten up and fly right. It's and we look at 3 categories. Drugs and alcohol, work and school, and behavior at home.

Kevin Petersen [00:17:34]:
And we're just gonna set some boundaries that, hey. No drugs, no alcohol. You gotta go to work full time or school full time or the combination of the 2. And behavior, it's like, you know, these are the these are the standard list of behavior like the stuff you learned in kindergarten. And we're gonna meet once a week and make sure it's all being handled. And if it's not, then we're gonna have some accountability and and we're gonna have consequences. And it's just very straightforward. It doesn't matter how old they are.

Kevin Petersen [00:17:57]:
It doesn't matter what position in the family. And it the system works no matter what. Mhmm. And then, you know, but if they are playing with

heavy drugs, then they go straight to plan b, which is intervention and treatment. So we teach people how to find an interventionist. We teach people how to pick a treatment center based upon their finances, their needs, the individual situation. You know, the last thing we want people doing is googling, because, you know, in my estimation, you kinda get the predators at that point. You know, I'd rather somebody spend a little bit of money with me or read my books and walk through the process.

Kevin Petersen [00:18:31]:
It's all outlined in there and said you know, like, okay. Here's how to do it. Again, at least walk in educating me and and prepare it. And then, you know, that's what we do for a living is we point people in the right direction. We don't do the interventions. We point people in the direction and people that we trust.

Ande Anderson [00:18:47]:
Yeah. Well, I appreciate you sharing about that in case people are in that space right now and really need, help with that and that you provide that for them. Anything else you think people should know about codependency before we start wrapping up?

Kevin Petersen [00:19:01]:
Yeah. You know, I would say one of my, my wife says we're gonna print t shirts, and we're gonna put, my favorite phrases. And and the first phrase on the front is gonna be, you know, healthy families come from healthy individuals. Healthy individuals work on their stuff. Actually, I say shit. And everybody has shit. Everybody. I don't care who you are.

Kevin Petersen [00:19:23]:
Everybody has shit. You know? My funny the funniest thing for me with working with families is literally, they'll start they'll start off with, there's no history of mental illness or addiction in our family since Adam and Eve ever, except this guy. And I don't even argue with that anymore. It's like, oh, oh, okay. That tells you how layered in the fantasy, you know, or the denial

is. Right? And then on the back of the t shirt, we're gonna put, of course, we're gonna talk about your childhood. You know? Right. Yeah.

Kevin Petersen [00:19:53]:
Because that's where it comes from. Mhmm. You know? And and I that's the thing people one of the things I would say I want people to understand is codependency isn't a reaction to somebody else's behavior. It's already lurking inside you, you know, just waiting for a project to come out. You know? Right. It's how you live. And and so what we wanna do is dig into your experience, and we wanna change you so that you can change the system. And that will actually give the other people a better chance.

Kevin Petersen [00:20:23]:
Right? If that makes any sense. Yeah.

Ande Anderson [00:20:25]:
Yeah. And that's the case for all of them. So it's the same, right, same story. Right? Yep.

Kevin Petersen [00:20:29]:
Exactly. Yeah. Yeah.

Ande Anderson [00:20:31]:
Yeah. I love your t shirt idea. That would

Kevin Petersen [00:20:34]:
It's gonna happen. Trust me.

Ande Anderson [00:20:36]:
I can see it. Next time we do this, you'll be wearing

Kevin Petersen [00:20:39]:
it. Exactly.

Ande Anderson [00:20:40]:

Yeah. Any last insights before we wrap up?

Kevin Petersen [00:20:43]:
You know, I think one of the most important things to understand is don't be hard on yourself. Don't beat yourself up. Almost every family I work with, when they start reading my stuff or watching my videos, they're like, oh my god. We did everything wrong. This is all our fault. And I'm like, no. It's not. Let's not do that.

Kevin Petersen [00:21:00]:
Let's not shame ourselves. Let's not beat ourselves up. Let's not be punitive. It's important for us to sort of sift through everything and figure out what's what. Right? I always tell people that families that I work with are like jigsaw puzzles. The more we talk and interact, the more pieces of the puzzle I get. And I understand, oh, okay. That make this makes perfect sense.

Kevin Petersen [00:21:22]:
Mhmm. And I wanna help them understand that, you know, that what they were doing was because of how they were raised. And that's okay. You're not a bad person. So but now let's fix it. That's the last thing I wanna say.

Ande Anderson [00:21:36]:
Wonderful. Well, thank you. Yes. Good good reminder for everyone watching. Absolutely. And thank you so much for doing this again, Kevin.

Kevin Petersen [00:21:43]:
It's my pleasure, Andy. I'm yeah. Like I said earlier to you beforehand, I every time you email, like, I get all excited. I'm like, oh, cool. I just love working this so much time because I believe in your mission. I believe in you and I believe in your mission. You know?

Ande Anderson [00:21:56]:
Well, thank you so much, and we right back at you. So thank you for what you do in the world, and and thank you, Avaiya students watching or listening. We wouldn't be here without you. So thank you for showing here

showing up for yourself today in this journey, and we will see you all again very soon. Take care. Hey, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us for this last class with Kevin Peterson. He was back with us today talking about how to manage codependency.

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Ande Anderson [00:22:17]:
In this conversation, we talked a lot about how codependency and addiction often go hand in hand, amidst families. And this is definitely something that, is has affected so many people's lives, myself included. And maybe it is also affecting your life in some way, shape, or form, right, in some generation of your family. Right? So we talked a lot about, the symptoms of codependency and different ways to manage it. And I think the overall theme that I just wanna leave people with is is how we all talked about, right, all of our families have their stuff. Right? We all have our dysfunction. We all each of us as individuals have our dysfunction. And at the end of the day, we're never going to ever be able to change, right, the other family members and control and micromanage and and make them do what we want even if it's for their own best interest.

Ande Anderson [00:23:04]:
Right? What we can focus on, however, is right ourselves and and how we interact with our family and how, you know, the choices we make and how

that influences us and our our family members and and really be focusing in on that. Right? Staying in your lane, staying in your own business and at the same time, setting up people in your life that you care about, you know, for success in getting their own support and getting their own help. So hope that you found this helpful today, everyone, and we will see you again soon. Take care.