Here is the transcript for: Codependency Recovery with AVAIYA Teacher, Heather Monroe

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, Heather Monroe, is back with us today to talk about codependency versus interdependency. Welcome back to Avaiya, Heather.

Heather Monroe [00:00:21]:
Thank you. I love being here.

Ande Anderson [00:00:23]:
Yeah. Love having you here. And, another great conversation lined up today. So we're obviously talking codependency and interdependency. So let's let's start with interdependency. What is interdependency to you?

Heather Monroe [00:00:36]:
Yeah. So, just a little background kind of how I go into interdependency is that there I find that in our culture, American culture, there tends to be this emphasis on being anti dependent. And if you aren't anti dependent, if you can't do everything and regulate your own nervous system by yourself and, you know, not look to your partner to fulfill your needs and wants, then you are codependent. And that is a huge misunderstanding of how we work as humans, psychologically and emotionally. And we actually the reason why we have survived this long is not out of anti dependency. If we were anti

dependent by nature, we would not survive. We are pack mentality. We live in tribes back way back in the day, and we're incredibly social.



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Heather Monroe [00:01:32]:
And as we know, we are hardwired biologically for connection. So with that connection comes interdependency. Interdependency is when we are intertwined and love, love our partners, love our friends, etcetera, but are able to also function autonomously. So interdependency in a relationship is when 2 people care for each other, they're intertwined in each other's lives, but they function autonomously as well. And that autonomy is really about, I want this person in my life, but I don't nest but if but if they aren't in my life, I will be able to find that self esteem, that grit, that resiliency inside myself to not only move on, but seek another partner that can be in my life that fits that fits more with my value system, with my belief system. So it's a lot of codependency. You can fall into a codependent relationship even even as a healthy, secure person. It's in the staying in a codependent relationship versus leaving that kind of sets you up for more codependency or moving on to a more interdependent relationship.

Ande Anderson [00:03:01]:
Yeah. Interesting distinction. I love all that. I love that you focus on right. Definitely our culture is very much a the as we talk about the western culture, the American culture being very much, I can do it on my own, and that's right. It's so true. It's funny to to hear other cultures talk about us and how much we're like that and, how a lot of other cultures are not like that. They're more interdependent.

Ande Anderson [00:03:25]:
And, so I I'm glad that you preface that at the beginning. Right? It's not about us just, you know, going it alone and and and all of that.

Heather Monroe [00:03:34]:
Yeah. Exactly. And there's lots of research that shows so there's a great study that was done with women. So they put a controlled, they they put a group of women. They they walked into a room and someone said, okay. You're going to hold this this buzzer, and the buzzer is gonna give you an electric shock. And there was a group of women that could hold, their partner's hand that they have a a loving relationship with. Right? So they're group of women that can hold their their their partner's hand through the shock, a group of women that would hold a stranger's hand, and a group of women that were totally alone.

Heather Monroe [00:04:17]:
And they would monitor they monitored their blood pressure and their heart rate, during and their cortisol levels during all of this. And what they found was that the women who were completely alone, their pain, the pain of the of the shock, was much greater. Their, their blood pressure went up significantly as well as their heart variability went up significantly. The women hold, holding a stranger's hand, not as much, but still significant amount, but not as much as the as the women that were alone. And the women who were holding their partner's hands, they had minimal pain, almost, some reported no pain at all. Heart rate variability pretty much stayed the same, and their blood pressure pretty much stayed the same,

which just shows how we coregulate each other. That our fastest way to regulate our nervous system is through somebody that we trust and love. And that's okay.

Heather Monroe [00:05:15]:
We're wired that way. So, again, we're wired for interdependence on each other.

Ande Anderson [00:05:20]:
Speaker one: I love that example. That that is so great and such a great, right way of showing showing that wiring and how we're biologically right designed to be this way. And, I get the chills over here thinking about it.

Heather Monroe [00:05:32]:
But a caveat to that, which was interesting is that women so they did another study and women who were in insecure relationships, toxic relationships that weren't securely attached to their partner, they, actually felt just as much pain as the women who were alone or holding a stranger's hand.

Ande Anderson [00:05:54]:
Interesting.

Heather Monroe [00:05:55]:
So that also shows disconnection happens within relationships too and codependent relationships. It kind of suggests that codependent relationships, we do not get the same benefits of that of that biological connection and regulation as we do with interdependent relationships.

Ande Anderson [00:06:13]:
Right. Yeah. Because you can be I know this from personal experience, having lots of years of codependency behind me and continuously recovering that I you can absolutely be alone in a relationship. You can be with someone for years years years, but totally feel disconnected and alone.

So yeah. So let's talk like, what's your definition of codependency now that we've talked about interdependency?

Heather Monroe [00:06:35]:
So my my simplest definition of codependency is overfunctioning in other people's lives and underfunctioning in our own. It's like the simplest way I can describe it. It's just that we're all over managing other people's lives, and we are nowhere near, being able to function our own life.

Ande Anderson [00:06:58]:
I like that. Yeah. There's so many definitions out out in the world of what codependency is. That's a that's a great way of of describing it. And what are some of the characteristics that you see most common to codependency?

Heather Monroe [00:07:10]:
So going back to the research, they, so as a therapist, there's actually no criteria that meets codependency in the DSM, which is the book that we use to diagnose people. So codependency doesn't exist in the diagnostic manual for for psychology just therapists, like, psychiatrists. So what they did, what researchers did is that they combed through all the literature that was written in, these big psychological and medical magazines, and publications. And what they found was that there was actually there actually was 4 characteristics that all these publications cited. And so they kind of put them together. So the 4 characteristics of codependency that I like to look at and really study and see where my clients are with this would be, external focus, meaning that our self esteem is dependent on other people's opinion of us. So my self worth comes from outside of me instead of within me. The other one is self sacrificing.

Heather Monroe [00:08:19]:
So I overlook my personal intrinsic needs in order to fulfill my partner's personal and intrinsic needs. So incredibly self sacrificing. That would be the second one. The third one is emotional suppression. And I would also say repression. So suppression is more conscious. Repression is unconscious. So it can be either or.

Heather Monroe [00:08:43]:
But emotional suppression or repression is the avoidance of feelings, limited self awareness. There's a restraint there around emotions. The 4th is interpersonal conflict and control. So interpersonal conflict and control is we engage in relationships where we want to control what the other person is doing. And those are kind of the tenants of of codependency. Those are kind of the 4 pillars of codependency that I like to look at. Mhmm. And what I think is interesting about these 4, 4 things is that they actually relate to insecure attachment styles.

Heather Monroe [00:09:29]:
Like, not just it it actually also relates to, the avoidant attachment style, not just the anxiously attached style, which I think is is cool because I think that I, that avoidant attachment style would be anti dependent. So we kind of look at that as, like, the, thing to aspire to, and it actually is very much in the realm of codependency.

Ande Anderson [00:09:56]:
Yeah. Interesting. And I'd love it if you'd like go through those 4 and kind of take a look at how they link up to the attachment styles. Like, how does external focus, right, relate to either anxious or avoidant? If you just kinda go through them in a little bit more detail, that'd be great.

Heather Monroe [00:10:14]:
Yeah. Sure. So x so anxiously attached people, we very much tend to be, our self esteem is externally focused that we really looked the outside world to tell us who we are. We have a really I call it like a watery sense of self. There's not it's not solid. So it's always kind of like, tell me who I am. Tell me if I'm worthy. And so that kind and especially with partners that the, that that we love or are engaged in.

Heather Monroe [00:10:51]:
So we are constantly looking for our partner to validate us in order for us to feel worthy of them or of love. And what's so sad about this about this way

of managing our anxiety is that it's a Band Aid. So, you know, your partner says, yes, I love you. You're amazing. Or in a really tender moment, they tell us how wonderful we are. It's as if, like, they put a Band Aid on it, and we immediately rip it off because our attachment style is always looking for that loophole. It's always looking for where's the abandonment, though? Where is like, he's not that person's not saying it enough. Oh, they didn't say it just then when I did this, so it must not mean anything.

Heather Monroe [00:11:36]:
So it's it's just it's an incredible hypervigilance around, abandonment and around, am I going to get my needs met this time?



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Ande Anderson [00:11:48]:
I love what you just said. It's just so like, so personally resonated with that. The loophole, always looking for the loophole because yeah. Right. That's our, that's our pattern. Then it doesn't matter how many times we get that external love validation reassurance or what have you, if right, we're gonna

keep constantly looking for, well, I'm gonna be left at some point. I will be a baby or whatever.

Heather Monroe [00:12:13]:
Yes. Completely. I, you know, when I was, so I'm definitely a recovering anxiously attached person. And when I was pregnant with, my first baby and the you know, I was worried. It's like, oh my gosh. Am I you know, you just worry. Like, is something you know, is is it okay? And is it going to, you know, continue to be a viable pregnancy? Very much like an attachment. Right? Like, is this relationship gonna be okay? Is it continued to be a wonderful relationship? Is something gonna happen? And I remember getting, a sonogram and hearing the baby's heartbeat and being so relieved in that moment.

Heather Monroe [00:12:54]:
Like, the doctor would be like, everything's great. The baby's healthy. You know, you're gonna be great. Come in in 2 months. And as soon as they took the the the the monitor off my stomach and I couldn't hear the heartbeat anymore, that anxiety would come back. It's like I had to have a pulse on that on on that baby the whole time to, like, make sure that it was safe. And that's kind of what it's like in an anxiously attached relationship. It's like you have to have a pulse on on the relationship at all times to make sure it's okay.

Heather Monroe [00:13:28]:
Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:13:29]:
Mhmm. Yeah. That's a great example. Thank you for sharing that.

Heather Monroe [00:13:33]:
Yeah. And I was very aware of it too. So I was able to and because of that, I was able to regulate it a lot more, which is a lot like, recovering from an anxious attachment. You're able to recognize that anxiety and then regulate your nervous system through it and just talk yourself through it in a lot of

different ways. The other one self sacrificing is very much an anxiously attached tendency. We tend to bend ourselves like a pretzel in order to in order to fit the other person's idea of us until we're so tangled up that we don't recognize ourselves anymore. So our world gets smaller and smaller and smaller, and that person that we're intertwined with gets bigger and bigger and bigger. So we lose.

Heather Monroe [00:14:26]:
And a lot of the times after we leave the relationship, we part of the reason it's so devastating is because we've put our entire identity into that relationship. So when they when we leave or they leave us, it's like this sense of death, because they've taken this person that we were with them. We don't we we don't have much left to pick up. Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:14:51]:
Yeah.

Heather Monroe [00:14:51]:
So that self sacrificing is very much like it eats away at us. For avoidantly attached, even though I would say interpersonal conflicts can be with both attachment, styles, but emotional suppression can happen with avoidance or anxiously attached. So avoidant avoidantly attached people, they tend to have a very hard time recognizing their emotional needs. Their emotional needs, let alone the emotional needs of their partners. They have, learned how to repress, to suppress and repress their needs. The point where they don't even know what that looks like. They don't know what intimacy and true authentic connection feels like because to them on the surface, if on the surface, it feels like smothering. It might feel like just feels like danger.

Heather Monroe [00:15:48]:
Danger. Danger. Danger. Because unlike any an anxiously attached person whose parents sometimes got it right, an avoidantly attached person's parents never got it right. So imagine being a child, your parents are never attuned to your needs. You have to you have to start denying your own needs in order to survive in that family. So we start just putting aside,

putting away what our needs are for connection and and creating a focus on just getting the job done, being an island. So emotional suppression and repression is tends to be an avoidant, the attached style need.

Heather Monroe [00:16:32]:
I would also say that it can be an anxiously attached style need because anxiously attached people, we tend to overlook, signs, our intuition that says you gotta leave. This isn't right. They're not treating you right. You deserve more than this. You deserve more love than this. So I would say that we suppress our intuition as anxiously attached people, avoidantly attached people suppress their emotional needs in general. Got it. A lot of restraint in in avoidantly attached.

Heather Monroe [00:17:05]:
Does that make sense so far?

Ande Anderson [00:17:06]:
Yeah. It doesn't. I'm I'm curious too. Right? Isn't isn't like disorganized attachment kind of like a ping pong between those? Yes. Okay.

Heather Monroe [00:17:14]:
Yeah. So I like to think of disorganized attachment is, so avoidant. It's pretty predictable. Like and anxious is pretty predictable too. When there are signs of abandonment and an anxiously attached person is going to get hyper vigilant, they're going to look for reassurance constantly. That feeling of I can never be close enough. I need a person to save me. I would emotionally die without this person in my life.

Heather Monroe [00:17:43]:
Whereas anti or avoidantly attached people, when I get close to them, they push away. Closeness equals smothering. Closeness is repelling to them. That kind of thing. There's a predictability to it. With disorganized attachment, that is when there has been, abuse in the home, physical abuse, ex emotional, verbal, sexual abuse where the the person that is supposed to

protect them, their caretaker is terrifying. So I go to my caretaker. So my caretaker just hit me or abused me in some way.

Heather Monroe [00:18:23]:
Who do I go to for for that love and for that balancing of my nervous system if the person who is loving me is also terrifying me? And there tends to be an oscillation in, you know, especially if you grow up with, a a drug abuser. There can be moments of incredible softness and then incredible disconnection or rage or hardness. Mhmm. So it's very confusing for the child, and thus, their attachment style becomes very unpredictable. 1 minute, they're submissive, terrified of abandonment. The next minute, they're pushing you away. They're, you know, they're totally anti dependent and cold and, you know, very avoidant.

Ande Anderson [00:19:08]:
Mhmm. Mhmm. Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate you, making that distinction too for people who do have that experience of of going between those 2. And the last one being that interpersonal conflict in control, can you share a little bit more about that? Like, how does that show up in in people's relationships?

Heather Monroe [00:19:26]:
Yeah. So interpersonal conflict control, it's like, so this can be, again, an avoidant trait or an or an anxious trait in different ways. For the avoidant, we tend to find, a way that we distance ourselves from our partners is that we find their vulnerability repelling to us. Any vulnerability is repelling and can sometimes even feel repulsive, like, to us. And so we can engage in controlling behaviors, in the sense of, like, you know, don't cry. Like, leave me alone. I'm gonna go over here. You go over there.

Heather Monroe [00:20:12]:
There's there's almost like a need to control the other person in order to not be repelled by them or to feel in control of the relationship and anti dependent. So there's a need to, like, to control the circumstances of the relationship, especially with avoidant attachment styles because you don't

trust anyone else. Right? But yourself. You tend to want to control every situation, every circumstance to yourself. And that entail it also includes controlling your partner or sometimes and controlling the way that they do things, you know, and constantly, like, saying that they're not doing something right, that kind of control. Whereas anxiously attached control looks a lot more anxious. It looks like, more nagging, more, you know, why can't you just come home at the time that you say you're gonna come home? Why can't you do this? Why can't you do that? Why don't you do this? Why don't you do that? Those kind of things. So it's that attempt to control the behavior in another way so that you feel secure so that you feel like that Band Aid's being placed on you.

Ande Anderson [00:21:25]:
Mhmm. Right. And then that leads to right. What is real security if right. What we think if we're anxiously attached and we think what's gonna bring us security is the Band Aid. But at the end of the day, the Band Aid isn't gonna bring us security. Right? Like, how do we how do we get to that, like, real true essence of security?

Heather Monroe [00:21:44]:
So that I believe is the journey that a lot of us are on. You know, not everybody, but it is it is the journey of the human experience for a lot of us. And part of that is learning how to okay. A couple of things. Taking time for ourselves to really understand what do we like to do independent of our partner. You know, because it's so easy to fall into, oh, they like that. I like that. They like that.

Heather Monroe [00:22:17]:
I like that. But, you know, this is why I think it's so important when we are not in a relationship and we are looking to heal codependency, that we really take a look at the internal focus. What are my values? What are my beliefs? What are my interests? Really take the time to cultivate those interests and cultivate those values and beliefs and boundaries. Like and I find as somebody who, who uses somatic experiencing, which is using the body to heal trauma, is really getting comfortable with our internal nervous

system. So understanding how I feel inside when my boundaries are crossed, understanding how I feel inside when my anxious attachment is being activated, when my attachment system is being activated, understanding how I feel inside when my avoidant attachment system is feeling active. So really looking inside our body interception to understand our nervous system, how it operates. So taking the time for yourself, also building community. In the healthiest of relationships, there is a community around this relationship where both partners can be autonomous at times in knowing what they can't get from their partner and what they can and what they can't get or what isn't appropriate to get further from their partner.

Heather Monroe [00:23:45]:
They go into their community and into their support system. So when I was first working on my anxious attachment system about I don't know, must be 11 years or 12 years ago now when I started on that journey. What I did was I had a couple of really important mentors and people in my life that when I was feeling that anxious attachment coming up, I would not call the person I was dating. I would not reach out to I would not reach out to the person that was causing it. I started seeing that it wasn't the person causing it. It was my attachment system causing it and reaching out to people that didn't trigger it. That really could reassure me that this is the work. Like, this is the work.

Heather Monroe [00:24:33]:
Don't go to that person. They aren't the problem. They're not this they're not the you think they're the problem, so you think they're the solution. The attachment style is the problem. The internal the internal, the internal focus is the solution. So that goes to my next, my next point about healing attachment styles and codependency is learning how to regulate our nervous system on our own. So this would be breath work, meditation, a mindfulness practice. I know you guys hear this all the time, but there's so much science behind mindfulness practices.



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Heather Monroe [00:25:08]:
It's like we just can't ignore it anymore. Is it hard? Absolutely. Does it take practice? Absolutely. And it changes our brain and it changes the wiring of our nervous system. So getting into a mindfulness practice, yoga helps our nervous system, being in community, being with friends, doing something that we love to do where we find ourselves in a flow state. So our mind is when we're in a flow state, that's like a meditative state for our minds as well. So that's gonna help us regulate our nervous system too. Those are like the big the big characteristics of healing our own codependency in ourselves.

Heather Monroe [00:25:48]:
And then when we enter back in a relationship, it's again checking in to see, am I compromising my values and beliefs in order to stay in this relationship? Am I getting my intrinsic needs and wants met in a personal and emotional in this relationship? Does this relationship help me grow into, into my, evolve as a person, or does it make me devolve as a person? Those are the type of things we're asking ourselves.

Ande Anderson [00:26:18]:
Mhmm. Mhmm. Awesome. I thank you. Those were all great examples. I especially loved your your advice to not go to the person that you are, right, being triggered by. Right? And I I, resonate with that a lot because my codependency shows up mainly in my romantic partnerships. Actually, romantic partnerships and my relationship with with the pets, dogs in our life, which is something not that many people talk about, but no, but it makes so much sense.

Ande Anderson [00:26:46]:
It totally does. And and but I I love that point because, yeah, our inclination right with that anxious attachment style is obviously to go to the person that we're, you know, this person is the one that's going to save me and all these things that we've told ourselves as opposed to having some right great support system outside of that, those great friends or whoever, that you can, that you can rely on, even when what we really want to do

Heather Monroe [00:27:11]:
is talk to the partner. But Yes. And when we talk to the and also our children, this is really important for parents. Our children makes it makes us make us anxious. You know, when we see our child in pain, it makes us anxious. When we see that they're dealing with something and it's hard, it makes us anxious. It's so important for us to first check our nervous system, get regulated and not come at them with that intensity of anxiety because that is gonna dis regulate them. So, yeah, it's just it's really important to make sure that we're regulated before we go to that person.

Heather Monroe [00:27:48]:
And speaking to what you said, there's such a difference when I go to my husband, when I'm feeling anxious, my anxious attachment getting kicked up. There's such a difference between saying to him, gosh, I'm feeling so insecure right now. I'm gonna I gotta I gotta deal with this. Versus, do you love me? Tell me you love me. Tell me that we'll never get divorced. Tell me

you're not gonna leave me. I'm feeling so insecure. You know, it it literally when I do that, it feels like the Band Aid versus just saying owning.

Heather Monroe [00:28:22]:
I'm feeling super insecure right now. I'm gonna you know, I gotta I gotta I gotta figure this out. Mhmm.

Ande Anderson [00:28:29]:
Yeah. That's that's a very good point too. I had a similar experience recently with my with my partner and and and yeah coming to him in a different way. Doctor Caroline Rakus where like yeah I totally get I'm super activated right now, like things are like fear of abandonment is off the charts and everything's just crazy and and, yeah, I need to go to yoga class. I need to go talk to a friend or do something Nice. Yeah, to manage it. So, well, thank you. This has been amazing as always.

Ande Anderson [00:28:55]:
Do you have any last insights before we wrap up?

Heather Monroe [00:29:00]:
I would say the an insight would be that all these things, you you are all the things that are creating the codependency, you have all the answers already inside you. You are your own healer. So what's so exciting about this time in psychology and spirituality in the world is that we have so much information that is, and so much science to back the information that we truly can heal our brains, our attachment style, our nervous system. It takes work and discipline, but there is so much hope that is not just like, you know, whimsical hope. This is hope really grounded in science. And, and so if you are feeling toxic shame, if you are feeling like, oh my gosh, I have been in a co you know, in cycles of codependency for more 2 decades, 3 decades, it's never too late to change.

Ande Anderson [00:30:06]:
Thank you. Perfect. Last hopeful words, which are so true. I really appreciate you doing this with us again, Heather.

Heather Monroe [00:30:13]:
Yep. Absolutely.

Ande Anderson [00:30:14]:
See you. Absolutely. Thank you, Avaiya students, for showing up for yourself today. We'll see you again soon. Take care. Hey, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us for this last class with Heather Monroe. She was back talking with us today about codependency versus interdependency.

Ande Anderson [00:30:28]:
We talked about what interdependency is. We talked about what codependency is. We talked about the different, 4 pillars that she talks about in her work around codependency. Those being externally focused, self self sacrifice, emotional suppression and repression, as well as interpersonal conflict and control. And it was really great because she broke those down into how they relate to the different attachment styles. So, we primarily talk about right anxious attachment style as it relates to codependency often. Natalie Taylor but we also talked about avoid an attachment style and how that can show up in different ways, amidst codependency. One of the things that I really loved is when we talked about the anxious attachment and this tendency to always look for a loophole.

Ande Anderson [00:31:12]:
Always look for proof, signs, evidence that we are not good enough, that we will be abandoned one day, that the relationship will end. And I mentioned this because it is something that is, like, very often active in my own mind. So if if you also have this kind of anxious attachment that is always looking for what's wrong, what's gonna fall apart, I just want you to know that you're not alone. It is something that I I continuously, have to be aware of in my own life and my own relationships because it it tends to show up a lot. So, right, that's where that external focus comes from. We want that person outside of us, where whoever you tend to be codependent with, whether it's a romantic partnership or friends or, pets, or what have you. Right. Looking for that person, to give you the reassurance that everything's

gonna be okay, but then that anxious attachment is gonna keep looking for loopholes.

Ande Anderson [00:32:08]:
No matter how many times people tell you it's gonna be okay or we're we're gonna make it or what whatever it is in a relationship that's important to you. Right? That part of you that's always looking, that's hyper vigilant, looking for danger, looking for something to go wrong. So it's, definitely first step always in in taking a look at that as being aware of it and being aware of how it operates, being aware of when it shows up so that you can shine awareness on it. So I hope that this was helpful, everyone. As always, it's a pleasure to have

Heather Monroe [00:32:35]:
you, and

Ande Anderson [00:32:35]:
we will see you again soon.



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