



## Conscious Life presents

### The Trauma Boundary Connection

Guest - Dr Avery Neal

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#### **[00:00:09] Alex Howard**

Welcome everyone to this interview, where I'm super excited to be speaking with my good friend, Dr Avery Neal. We're going to be talking about the relationship between trauma and boundaries. How do you learn to set healthy boundaries, and particularly, how do you navigate toxic relationship dynamics as you're learning to put those boundaries in place.

To give you a little bit of Avery's background, Dr Avery Neal is a practicing psychotherapist, international author, and speaker. In 2012, she opened Women's Therapy Clinic, which offers psychiatric and counseling support to women.

Avery is the author of *If He's So Great, Why Do I Feel So Bad?: Recognizing and Overcoming Subtle Abuse*, which has been translated and published in 12 languages.

Her articles and interviews have been published on Oprah.com, American Counseling Association, Daily Om, Best Self Magazine, Hitched Magazine, Bustle, POPSUGAR, PKWY Magazine, and her courses have been taken by over 18,000 people worldwide. So Avery, firstly, welcome. Lovely to have some time with you again.

#### **Dr Avery Neal**

Thank you. I'm happy to be here.

#### **Alex Howard**

So we're talking about the relationship between trauma, past conditioning, and how that impacts our ability to set and to protect boundaries in our life. Now, I'd love you to talk a little bit about how past experience really shapes that ability to have healthy boundaries in life.

**[00:01:47] Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. It's really huge to look at how our past experiences have shaped our current ability to set healthy boundaries. Certainly, past experiences from childhood or even in adulthood can really inform how we interact in the world and in our environment and in our relationships in the current moment.

When we're talking about past experiences that may have been less than ideal, and certainly traumatic, of course, is a part of this. Then what we do is we develop certain survival skills in order to deal with it and to create the best environment we can for ourselves.

These survival skills may not necessarily be really healthy for us. But they're just a way of coping with our environment and getting through it. You can see this a lot in abusive relationships or in unhealthy family systems where a child or a person will develop ways to survive their environment.

Then what happens is they continue those patterns or they continue those coping mechanisms into their future. And so even though their environment may change, their relationships may change, their surroundings may change, they're still holding onto those same coping mechanisms or skills, and they no longer maybe serve them.

**Alex Howard**

I think also worth bringing in, in some of our previous interviews, we talked about your work on subtle abuse, and I was just thinking that often we don't always recognize trauma as trauma.

What I mean by that is unhealthy patterns that we've got so normalized to that we don't see that impact. I'd love you to say a few words around some of the subtlety sometimes of the trauma and the abuse that we can experience.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. So this is really an important thing to understand because it's actually the more subtle aspects or the less overt forms of abuse that cause a person's self-esteem and confidence to deteriorate. Then that makes it increasingly difficult to set healthy boundaries for ourselves.

A lot of times what we see is this questioning and second-guessing ourselves and feeling like maybe I'm crazy, I'm the one that messed up, or I am the one that is at fault because if I hadn't done this or that or the other, I wouldn't be experiencing this real pain or this struggle in the relationship.

What happens in the case of these more subtle patterns is that because they are subtle, the person maybe finds an insecurity and just digs at that, or uses gaslighting as a way to make you think you're losing your mind.

Those types of things start to make us really question ourselves and what's going on in the whole relationship. Then that puts us at an increased risk for not really standing up for ourselves and saying, "Hey, this is wrong. This isn't working. This is not healthy."

**[00:05:09]**

And in addition to that, you can almost think of this as like, grooming. Often when we're talking about grooming, we're thinking of it in terms of sexual abuse and a victim becoming groomed over time for the bigger abuse to occur.

That's exactly what we're talking about. It's these underhanded ways of undermining us and making us feel bad about ourselves while also simultaneously giving seemingly love and care and support.

It really keeps us off balance. We don't really know what's going on and what to believe. And so, in the context of trauma... Trauma, if you think about it, it really is a boundary violation.

So something that we think is going to be safe, whether that's a relationship, whether that's a situation, even... We have laws to provide some predictability in society. So the same thing is true in our relationships. And when the boundary is violated, that's when we typically experience trauma, if it's a significant violation.

### **Alex Howard**

It's also interesting, I think, that when a boundary is violated, we feel it. And of course, the challenge is when we're in a toxic relationship, we become trained to override that feeling, or we get gaslit for having that feeling. So it's almost like that inner alarm system gets dampened.

### **Dr Avery Neal**

Exactly. Absolutely. And so let's talk for a moment about the short-term implications and then the longer term ones, because I think it's really important that people know.

In the short term, when our boundary is violated, we may have this nagging feeling. We may feel a knot in our stomach, tightness in our chest. We may feel like we're confused and questioning what's going on. But maybe thinking, "Well, maybe it's just me or maybe I misunderstood."

We may even be consciously aware that we're putting our own needs aside for the sake of keeping the peace in the relationship or not making the other person angry or upset.

Those are the short-term mind and body aspects of this type of dynamic. If you're looking at the longer term aspects of not setting healthy boundaries, and certainly in a toxic or abusive relationship, that's when we start to see what you're describing, which is the numbing, the detachment.

We become a shell of ourselves because we've basically given up. When we've tried to assert ourselves it doesn't work. We just start to turn inward. As we become increasingly helpless, and sometimes more hopeless. That's when you start to see things like depression, anxiety, addiction as a way of coping.

That's when you also start to see some physical health and greater physical health conditions, such as insomnia, other sleeping disorders. You can also start to see pain syndromes,

gynecological problems in women. Even cardiovascular events increase with this long-term exposure to trauma.

**[00:08:45] Alex Howard**

Yeah, of course. One of the challenges here is that we get so normalized to the patterns that we have, right? And so if we've got used to our boundaries being violated. Then over time, we stop putting the boundaries in place in the first place.

Or to put it another way, if the boundary should be out here, and then gradually we get more and more eroded, or more and more normalized to not having the boundary. That one starts to go, "Why is it that I always end up in all these toxic relationships?"

And I think sometimes it sounds a bit cold to put it like this. But of course, we are the common denominator in all the relationships in our life. And I guess that's a message that can be, I guess, frightening. But also it's empowering, right? Because if it's partly us, then we can change.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. So some of this is luck, right? We only know what people reveal of themselves once they reveal it, right? And so whether that takes a day or a year or 10 years. Sometimes we don't have all the information. But as you said, once we have all the information, it's what we do with that that really does determine our overall patterns.

For instance, with some of these toxic relationships, once you start setting a boundary, it's really important to look at how the other person responds. If we're used to shying away from the boundary-setting because we're afraid.

And we're afraid of the punishment. We're afraid of some big fallout or an escalation of the abuse. Then we really are giving that other person more and more power while we become increasingly helpless.

One of the things that is incredibly important and empowering, to your point, is that instead of shying away from the boundary and feeling afraid of it causing an escalation, we, in fact, do set the boundary, and then we just watch how the other person reacts.

Their reaction, if we learn to embrace that, is just more information. Then it doesn't become quite so scary and overwhelming. It's like, "Okay, now I know this. Now I can see this, and it's more information to guide me in next steps and what I need to do moving forward."

So you start to look at it as a gift rather than something to be avoided. Certainly in a healthy relationship, we can express our needs and our feelings and ask for what we need moving forward.

Even though the other person may be a little bit defensive at first, you talk it through and you figure out some resolution that's respectful for both parties.

**[00:11:37]**

In an abusive or a toxic relationship, that is not the sequence of events. When you establish your boundary and you ask for what you need, there's a punishment, there's a rejection, there's a withdrawal of affection, there is sometimes this blackmailing-type behavior. I mean, there are all kinds of intimidating behaviors.

There's basically an escalation of punishment. That is more information. Instead of being so afraid of it, if we can shift that perspective and reframe it to, "Okay, this is a gift because now I have more clarity and insight as to what the dynamic is here. And with that information, I can make other choices."

### **Alex Howard**

Let's spend a little bit of time defining what a healthy boundary looks like, and then we can explore a bit how healthy boundaries may, or an effective boundary may, then be with a toxic person. But let's start more generally. What are some examples of an effective and a healthy boundary?

### **Dr Avery Neal**

Sure. In a healthy relationship... And by the way, a lot of times, if you've been in toxic relationships, what is considered normal, basic, standard healthy behavior seems like, "Oh, my gosh, that's too good to be true. I can't imagine it."

For anybody that's watching that has a history of mistreatment, I think that these things are just basically what should be expected. They're just the fundamental ground rules in any relationship. But in a normal healthy relationship, we should not feel fear.

We should feel free to say what's going on, how we feel, and then ask for what we need. A really good pattern for that is to let the other person know your account of things or your take on things.

And then letting them know how it's making you feel, if you're needing to set a boundary, and then asking for what you need. That last piece is really important to be clear because your partner or your coworker or whomever is not a mind-reader.

So taking the legwork out of it for them to try to guess what it is that will make you happy, it's much more effective to go ahead and say, "Here's what I would really appreciate moving forward", or "Here's what would make me feel more connected to you moving forward."

Then give the other person the opportunity to do the same thing. Let you know how they're feeling and ask for what they need moving forward. Then part of your work is to not get defensive, but to remain open to what they're telling you that they need. In a healthy relationship, this process just goes back and forth until you can figure out a mutually agreeable resolution.

### **Alex Howard**

Part of what I think you're saying here is really important. I think it's important that people hear it, because it's a reciprocal process. There's an expression of one's emotions and needs. There's space for that to be heard.

**[00:14:50]**

And there's also a mutual expression of maybe completely differing emotions and needs that's also given space. And so what you're describing is a balanced power dynamic in the relationship.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Exactly. There should not be an imbalance in power ever, because where there is, there is fear. One person is afraid of the other person, and that's not okay.

So going back to some of our patterns, too. It's not uncommon if someone's experienced an abusive relationship or an abusive childhood to hold to their own patterns of shying away from expressing any need in the relationship.

That's not necessarily fair to their current partner, for instance, because maybe their current partner really wants to know what will make that person happy in the relationship or what will make that person feel comfortable.

It's really incumbent upon all of us to speak up in our relationship so that we are giving our partner the opportunity to support us in the ways that we need to be supported.

**Alex Howard**

Now, one of the challenges can be that we're in a relationship where the dynamic has been the same way for many, many years. And then we start to do our inner work, right? And we start to realize that this dynamic is not healthy, it's not sustainable, and we start to change the dynamic.

The challenge is the other person is like, "What the hell? This is not how we do our relationship." So what are some of the ways that can help... What are some things that can support setting a boundary with someone where we're now restating the terms of the relationship?

**Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. So this happens a lot, so I'm glad you're bringing it up. I think the important thing is to address the elephant in the room. "Hey, I'm growing and I'm learning all kinds of things, and I'm feeling really excited about it. It's helping me in my life and in my healing.

My goal here is to have this with you or this in our relationship." Maybe that's more connection or closeness or affection or whatever it is, whatever the goal is in the relationship.

Let your partner know, "Hey, this is what I really want with you." And ask your partner, "What is it that you want? What are your goals? What do you want out of this relationship?" And start seeing if you can find alignment.

Interestingly, a lot of times when we're first dating, these are conversations... Or we're early on in the relationship. These are conversations that happen with regularity about our hopes, our dreams, what we want, and what we want in a relationship.

**[00:17:46]**

Then over time, those conversations just fall by the wayside as we get busy and do other things. But these are really important conversations to continue having throughout the course of the relationship.

Again, you can watch how your partner reacts to it, and it gives you more information. If your partner is open to it and receptive to it, and if your partner feels like you're open to meeting their needs as well... Well, then you're establishing a healthy boundary there that is mutually agreeable.

If your partner responds with some punishment or threat, that's something to pay attention to. Because the only hope for change is if there's accountability and if someone takes responsibility for their behavior. Without that, it isn't going to change. Change isn't possible without that.

So that's what you really want to be paying attention to, is what the other person's reaction and looking at that, because that's going to give you a lot of information about what your future looks like.

### **Alex Howard**

Let's take the worst case... Or what will probably feel in the short term, like the worst-case scenario. Might be the best-case scenario in the long term.

But what may feel like the worst-case scenario in the short term, which is that this all falls on deaf ears, or this actually results in an increase in the toxic behaviors of the relationship.

How does one start to navigate that? Because that can be really difficult, right? It's like one's excited about their inner growth, and then they try to bring that to the relationship, and actually, they just get more of what they're trying to move away from.

### **Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. That's an indication that usually what you've been feeling in the relationship is actually maybe spot on, and your intuition has been telling you this for a while. If the person responds that way, then that certainly gives you a lot more to go off of in terms of what's possible in the relationship and not.

A lot of times, if we're somebody that wants to keep the peace or we shy away from conflict or don't want to get into it, a lot of times when that person responds negatively, the reaction is maybe literally and metaphorically to put our hands up like, "Whoa, I don't want to go there. Never mind. Never mind. Just forget it."

If you're feeling the need to do that, something is wrong. I would encourage everyone then to have the ability, again, literally or metaphorically, to say... To actually put your hand out and say, "Stop, I'm not going to allow you to speak to me this way", or, "I'm not going to engage with you when you get like this."

**[00:20:44]**

So you really are giving that actual nonverbal cue that, "Hey, there's a boundary here and you're overstepping it, and I'm no longer tolerating it."

Then distancing yourself from the situation and starting to sort through your own feelings around this, and how you need to move forward in the most healthy and empowered way. And of course, there's a lot of work that goes into that.

### **Alex Howard**

Yeah. It just struck me as you were talking that if we've become normalized to a toxic relationship dynamic, and we put the effort into trying to move on, and then we find ourselves being drawn into staying, I think one of the things that also can underlie that is a core self-esteem issue, which is that, "This is all I'm worthy of. This is all... I deserve to be treated like this."

Can you say something about the role of self-esteem in these dynamics and the importance of, in a way, reclaiming one's authentic, genuine self, like reclaiming one's power in the journey?

### **Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. This is why I'm so passionate about studying psychological abuse, because psychological abuse is truly the underpinning of all forms of abuse. The psychological aspect, and the subtle psychological aspect, is actually the most difficult to recover from.

For instance, you often hear women who have been battered or physically abused say that recovering from the physical abuse was not the worst part of it. The hardest part of it was moving forward and trying to recover from the psychological damage that was done while in one of these relationships.

Because it does. It undermines us. It undermines our confidence. It undermines our sense of worth. This is something that causes a lot of emotional and physical deterioration, if we've been in one of these abusive or toxic relationships for a long time. Even in a short period of time, it's amazing the damage that can be done.

It also makes... That psychological abuse component makes it more likely that we stay in the relationship because we start to believe all these things. We start to believe that, "Okay". Like you said, "I am not so great", or "Who else would want me?", or those types of things. "I'm so lucky that this person will tolerate me."

It creates more dependency on the abusive person or on the toxic person, making it less likely that we will get out of the relationship. It is really, really important to understand that if you're experiencing that.

If you're feeling poorly about yourself or unworthy of better treatment, that is an indication that something's very wrong, that something has either happened to you in the past or is going on in your relationship that is causing you to feel that way.

**[00:24:04]**

Because in a healthy relationship, your partner is supportive and your biggest fan and your cheerleader and wanting good things for you and wanting you to be your best, happiest self.

And if that's not occurring and your partner is tearing you down in overt or covert ways, that's certainly something to be paying attention to.

And it's also more likely that when you do confront the issues and what you need moving forward, you're going to be met with resistance and even an escalation of the toxic behavior.

### **Alex Howard**

What helps us... Well, actually, I'll ask the question slightly differently. Knowing that you and your team do a lot of work with, particularly women who have been in abusive relationships and reclaiming themselves on the other side.

When you're sitting with someone and you can see that their perspective on themselves has really got skewed, right? Sometimes the way that I experience it with clients is that I realize that as a relatively neutral party, the way that I see them is very different to how they see themselves.

And you can see that negative self-image, and you can see it on a macro level in terms of how they see themselves. But all the subtle ways that it comes in, and the subtle rejections, and putting oneself down and so forth.

What are some of the tools that you're using to help rebuild that self-esteem? Some of the practical pieces, some of the perspective shifts, or some of the homework you're giving to people? What are some of the building blocks to start to rebuild that self-esteem?

### **Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. There's so many pieces to this that are really powerful and quite healing. I think the first step is addressing the trauma first, because a lot of times people who've been in this type of situation, they're so dysregulated.

And the anxiety, the fear, the hypervigilance is so acute that getting to the point of that self-actualization, feeling more confident in themselves, all of that, that's secondary.

I think starting with that inner emotional regulation and working through the trauma and often some of the PTSD-type symptoms, that's the first component. Then it's really about doing some of that inner child work.

And looking at, when was the last time you did feel good about yourself? And was there a time that you felt good about yourself? And for some people, there's not. And so there's got to be some grief work around all of that and then rebuilding from there.

And so even looking at what are the things that you enjoy? What are the things that make you feel at peace? What are the things that make you feel happiness, when you're immersed in them?

**[00:27:16]**

And really helping the person to establish an identity for themselves. That then becomes the North Star, and everything can fall into place from there.

But this, depending on the level of trauma and when it started, this process can take some time. But it's certainly well worth it.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. One of the things that I love about doing therapeutic work... And I'm interested in your reflection on this as well, is the moment where... This may be a very British expression, where the penny drops, or maybe where the lights go on.

Where someone has the recognition that... Either the recognition that they find their courage and they realize that they can do it, or they suddenly see themselves more clearly and not through the filter of that history.

And I'm not quite sure what my question is. I suppose my question is perhaps two things: one, the things that you recognize help people find those moments.

But also what becomes possible because of those moments, right? It's almost the magic or the secret sauce of great therapeutic work when someone realizes, "Holy shit! I can do this, and this can change."

**Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. I mean, it's one of the most beautiful things to witness, when there's a shift. And usually there's a real emotional response to, like you said, all of a sudden, it just all clicks. And it's this real compassion, like a deep compassion for oneself and what you've been through.

Really this love... Fostering this love for yourself in the present moment and moving forward. That's the best way I know how to describe this shift. It's like all of a sudden there's this overwhelming compassion and realization or recognition that I'm worthy, and it is profound.

Then that's when you really can start to look at what are things that are in alignment with that worthiness, that support that worthiness, that can strengthen you, that can facilitate more growth and more optimism and increase the quality of life. That's when that part of the work begins to occur. It's a beautiful thing.

Interestingly, when we're talking about PTSD and trauma work, a big part of that is not only regulating the person's internal response.

But it's also starting to build their future in a way that feels really good to them, that feels safe, that feels predictable, that feels hopeful, and is what they've always really wanted.

Working backward from there and figuring out, okay, what components need to be put in place in order for you to have this wonderful life that you really are starting to envision for yourself?

**[00:30:55] Alex Howard**

As you were talking, I was formulating a question that then I withdrew because I realized I couldn't answer the question, which was a question around how do we create those moments?

Because my reflection is... And maybe you've got an answer, I haven't. But my reflection was often those moments... At least it seems to me, they come out of nowhere sometimes. It's like sometimes the penny that drops or the light that goes on, as the practitioner...

Sometimes we think we're steering towards a really big moment of insight, and it's like a comedian that drops a joke that just goes nowhere. And then other times it's like, you don't think you've even said anything particularly insightful or something particularly important happened, and then suddenly... I'm just interested in your thoughts on those moments.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. Yeah, well, you said it so well. It's so funny. I mean, sometimes people will come back and say, "Remember when you said X, Y, Z" or whatever? And I'm thinking, "No, I don't remember saying that to you at all." But it was a pivotal point for them, right?

And then sometimes you're leading somebody somewhere thinking that they're just right on the edge and then it just falls flat. So it's exactly what you say.

But I think more than anything, it really is about each individual because some people are really able to do the healing work when they're able to connect with more of a spiritual side of things.

And when I say spiritual, I don't necessarily mean religious, although for some people that resonates. But what I mean is more a connection to a higher power and a connection to oneself.

Even being able to separate your soul or your spirit or your essence from your body, which is just your form. A lot of people are really able to make some profound breakthroughs doing that type of work.

Other people say, "I have no idea what you're talking about." Some people love doing the inner child work, and other people go, "This feels awkward and doesn't resonate."

There are just different things that speak to all of us. I think one of the beautiful things about the therapeutic relationship is exploring that together and seeing where the client leads you and what helps to connect the dots.

Because this point that you made about how the client views themselves, there being a disconnect between that and then what the outside world sees or what you as the therapist see.

It's equivalent to body dysmorphia that someone with an eating disorder has. They can't see themselves clearly, and so it perpetuates the problem. When you're able to bring everything together and it becomes an alignment, yeah, it's magic.

**[00:34:01] Alex Howard**

Yeah, it's something about... I think sometimes clients will say things like, "But you're being so kind to me." And often my response is, "Well, not really, because I was actually being really quite tough with you five minutes ago."

It's that I'm seeing you objectively, and the problem is, I suppose, when someone's so used to seeing themselves through a negative lens, that... Neutrality appears like kindness, if that makes sense.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Yes, absolutely. That also speaks to the traumatic bond that often happens in these abusive relationships, where when the person becomes so accustomed to mistreatment or these overtly abusive episodes, whether they're...

Whatever form of abuse, when that abusive person or when that toxic person is being nice or, like you said, neutral, they're so flooded with gratitude and relief and feelings of closeness that it really bonds them to that abusive person.

But that being said, that same pattern of the victim of the abuse, or the survivor of the abuse, extends well past the relationship being over, where they are not accustomed to someone being consistently kind and consistently supportive.

It does feel shocking for a long time. And a lot of times, they're uncomfortable with it, they don't believe it. There's usually a pattern of having a really difficult time receiving.

They feel guilty, they feel like a burden. That's another piece that has to be worked through that, wait a minute, that's not what's going on here. This is a healthy thing for you to receive. It's a healthy thing for somebody to want to be kind to you and to support you.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. I'm just thinking as you're speaking... In a way, it's like the sign that really good healing is happening is our relationships start to feel unfamiliar. If we've been consistently in toxic relationships, that's become the norm. Sometimes people will say, "Oh, it just feels really scary and unfamiliar." That's often the sign that one's moving in the right direction.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Exactly. Absolutely. There is a vulnerability that comes from that. A lot of times people will feel very exposed, very raw, and have a difficult time getting adjusted to the new relationship dynamic or a healthier relationship dynamic. I always just say, "Give it time. Keep going."

**Alex Howard**

Suck up the unfamiliarity because you spent years taking pain, so you could take this unfamiliarity, right?

**[00:37:14] Dr Avery Neal**

Exactly. This will become your norm. And it's, wow, it's a wonderful, beautiful thing.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. So we're nearly out of time, Avery, but maybe let's have a few practical starting pieces. So someone who...

Whether it's an intimate relationship or it's even the recognition of family relationships or friendships that one can see from this conversation that boundaries need either establishing or reinforcing or defining, what are some things that can help one get started?

**Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. So I think the biggest takeaway that I would like to say is that don't look at the other person's reaction as... It's often the case that we try to manage someone's reaction, and that's what is determining our behavior.

Their reaction, their negative reaction or overwhelmingly scary reaction is what we allow to drive our behavior. So long as we're doing that, we cannot have a life that is authentically ours. We just can't, because we're allowing someone else's behavior to really determine how we move about in the relationship and in our lives.

The biggest component that I really want people to keep in mind is that it's most important to figure out what you need in your life and allow yourself that space to imagine what it would look like if your external life reflected your true internal feelings and what you really wanted, and allow that to be your North Star.

Then as you set boundaries with a person or people in your life, instead of worrying so much about their reaction, just observe it. It's more information.

You don't have to react to it. You certainly don't need to acquiesce. Just observe it and look at it as more information about whether or not this person can move forward with you on your path or not.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. It's almost like people tell us who they are by how they respond to a boundary, right?

**Dr Avery Neal**

Yes.

**Alex Howard**

Is the response one of love and respect? Or is it one of, no, their needs are more important than our boundary?

**[00:39:49] Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. Do they threaten? Do they put it back on you and blame you and try to tear you down? Do they make you question and second-guess yourself or make you think you're so unreasonable to where you get caught in this whole shame cycle and spiral within yourself? So yes, those are all big red flags.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, it's almost like what you're saying is, if they try to make you responsible for their behavior. That's the ultimate red flag, right?

**Dr Avery Neal**

It is. And often that's so clear to us when we're talking about physical violence. But then when it's psychological violence, we're not recognizing that that's actually what's happening, because it's not so overt.

But the pattern is there, whether the physical violence is happening or not. It's the classic, "This person hit me because I deserved it because I said X, Y, Z."

No, no. So even if there is no physical violence, if that's happening emotionally, it's still not okay, and it's still unhealthy, and it's still something you need to be paying attention to.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah, fantastic. Avery, for people that'd like to find out more about you and your work, tell us where people can go and tell us some of the things you have to offer.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Absolutely. So two websites, [averyneal.com](http://averyneal.com), A-V-E-R-Y-N-E-A-L.com. And then [womenstherapyclinic.com](http://womenstherapyclinic.com).

We offer individual sessions, virtual and in-person, as well as different courses and different tools to help people in terms of their healing and their journey. We support a lot of women going through depression and anxiety, various life stages and transitions, not only associated with abuse.

Then we also have just added a component where we help people with genetic screening so that they can then take it to their doctors if they're needing psychiatric medication to cut down on the trial and error that a lot of people experience when they need medication.

But they're afraid to start it because they don't want to be a guinea pig, and rightfully so. We have that available as well for anybody who's looking for it.

**Alex Howard**

That's a whole new interview. I want to ask you about that some time. Also, Avery, your book is a great starting point as well.

**[00:42:32] Dr Avery Neal**

Oh, yes. Thank you. Yes, I appreciate it. And yes, my book is *If He's So Great, Why Do I Feel So Bad?: Recognizing and Overcoming Subtle Abuse*. And that is available through the website and on Amazon.

**Alex Howard**

Fantastic. Avery, thank you so much. I really appreciate you. I appreciate your work. Thank you for today's interview.

**Dr Avery Neal**

Thank you. Likewise.