



Borderline Personality Disorder: Knowing the Facts

What is the technical definition of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)?

- A complex and debilitating neurological disorder marked by impairment in regulating emotions that leads to impulsivity, distortions of thought, identity disturbance, stormy interpersonal relationships, anger outbursts, self-harm and suicidality.

How does it feel to live with BPD from a patient's perspective?

- It's like driving an emotional vehicle that is accelerating, and one cannot hit the brakes.
- It's like riding an emotional rollercoaster, with ups and downs, multiple times in one day.
- It involves intense shifting feelings that can lead to terrible emotional pain and even hopelessness.

How is BPD affecting our population?

- 6 people out of every 100 (6%) will develop BPD in his or her lifetime.
- Men and women are equally affected by BPD.
- 10% of those with BPD end their lives by suicide.
- Up to 75% of individuals with BPD attempt suicide during the course of their illness.
- 50 - 80% of those diagnosed also have a substance abuse disorder.

What are the societal issues people suffering from BPD face?

- BPD is a highly stigmatized mental illness. Because of a lack of education and understanding about BPD, people who suffer from it are often labelled as “acting out,” difficult or manipulative.
- BPD is often not recognized by clinicians as a legitimate mental health diagnosis. This lack of recognition leads to misdiagnosis and perpetuates the stigma, which can be harmful to patients.
- Although there are effective treatments, many parts of the country lack trained BPD therapists.
- BPD gets 1/10th the funding of bipolar disorder from federal agencies, yet it is as prevalent in society.
- BPD is often not a billable diagnosis and therefore does not get covered by health insurance.

Why is it important to have compassion for individuals with BPD?

- Individuals with BPD are typically deeply ashamed of their behavior and are in real distress.
- It makes it easier to validate their feelings and experiences of emotional distress, while presenting other options for expressing their experiences and for positive coping.
- BPD is a brain disorder. The part of the brain which processes emotions is not functioning properly. With therapy, people with BPD can get better. But it takes time, support and hard work.



Debunking the Stigma

Myths vs. Facts

“BPD can’t be diagnosed in adolescence or childhood.”

A major problem is that BPD is often diagnosed too late, after the individual has made detrimental life decisions. The signs of BPD are usually exhibited by adolescence. Even infants and children can display temper tantrums that are disproportionately longer and more frequent than the average child. See a specialist in BPD and adolescence for a proper diagnosis and interventions.

“All BPD patients have been abused.”

Although a history of abuse can lead to the development of BPD, this is not always the case. There are other factors that can contribute to the development of BPD, such as genetics; there simply hasn’t been enough research on the causes of BPD yet!

“They are untreatable or treatment resistant.”

There are effective treatments out there, such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT), and Transference Focused Therapy (TFP) and Schema Therapy. Additionally, family members play a huge role in recovery by understanding the disorder and creating an environment in which the individual feels stable and validated. BPD is rooted in neurobiology and cognitive distortions, which means it can be treated!

“Medications are effective.”

There have been no clinical studies proving the effectiveness of medications in the treatment of BPD, however, it is worth trying various medications to manage symptoms of BPD, such as anxiety and depression.

“People with BPD are manipulative.”

The reality is that individuals with BPD experience such intense misery and pain that, out of utter desperation, they will do anything to numb their feelings, including resorting to intolerable behaviors.

“It is impossible to live a normal life with BPD.”

With proper treatment and support, individuals CAN recover and live a happy and healthy life with BPD! Research shows that over 90% of those with BPD will experience recovery in their lifetimes, and many move on to become highly creative, talented, and successful individuals.

Understanding BPD Treatments

There are a variety of treatment options.

Treating BPD is extremely personal and individualized. You need to find what is best for YOU. The most common evidence-based treatments for BPD are:

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

DBT emphasizes individual psychotherapy and group skills training classes to help people learn new skills and strategies to develop a life worth living. DBT skills include mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, and emotion regulation.

Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT)

MBT is a psychodynamically oriented psychotherapy. Its focus is helping people to differentiate their thoughts and feelings from those around them. It teaches someone how to mentalize, which is the ability to reflect on a situation while entertaining other viewpoints.

Transference Focused Psychotherapy (TFP)

TFP is based on the belief that an individual's psychological structure (based on internal images and experiences of oneself and important other persons) is not fully developed. In TFP, the individual experiences and lives out these internal images through his or her relationship with the therapist. This familiarizes the individual with these images and helps develop more realistic and accurate ones.

Good Psychiatric Management (GPM)

GPM treatment utilizes cognitive, behavioral and psychodynamic interventions. It focuses on case management, psychoeducation, and strategies for coping with BPD in daily life. GPM is a once-weekly therapy that also includes prescribing medications and family interventions.

Schema Therapy

Schema therapy is designed to help individuals strengthen healthy coping with emotions by examining prior maladaptive thought or behavioral patterns. It utilizes a combination of behavioral, cognitive and object relations theories.

Community Support

You are not alone.

Millions of people have BPD, and yet this disorder is rarely talked about. Connecting with others through organizations, such as Emotions Matter, can help reduce feelings of isolation, and promote peer support. Here are some messages of hope from individuals with BPD on recovery:

“It is going to be incredibly difficult to get better. You have to be ready to do a lot of hard work and put the time into it. But the reward is worth it.”

“Don’t give yourself a timeline. Sometimes I wonder why am I not better. But then I remember, there is no set time frame for how long it will take.”

“Ignore the people who tell you you are not going to get better. You will. Validate yourself even when you feel that you are not getting anywhere.”

“You do have a future—a happy one. It may seem like it is not possible, but it is.”

Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Offers resources, information and local support groups for families and persons with mental disorders, including BPD.

www.nami.org

National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder (NEA-BPD)

Offers Family Connections, a 12-week manualized family program in group or teleconference format.

www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.com

New York-Presbyterian Hospital

Borderline Personality Disorder Resource Center

Offers assistance in locating resources for all levels of care in BPD.

1-888-694-2273 | www.bpdresourcecenter.org

Treatment and Research Advancements, National Association for Personality Disorder (TARA)

Provides workshops, referrals, and education on BPD.

1-888-4-TARABPD | www.TARA4BPD.org

Get Involved with Emotions Matter!

Emotions Matter, Inc. is a non-profit 501c3 organization founded in 2015.

Our mission is to connect and empower individuals impacted by BPD, as well as to raise awareness and advocate for better mental health care.

Get Involved! www.emotionsmatterbpd.org

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References and Disclaimer

REFERENCES

For references to the information found in this brochure, go to www.emotionsmatterbpd.org.

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