



## MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Task Force

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**Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)**

### What is Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

BPD is a mental health disorder that impacts the way you think and feel about yourself and others, causing problems in daily functioning. It includes issues in one's self-image, difficulty managing emotions and behavior, and a pattern of toxic, destructive and unstable relationships.

Persons with BPD, have an intense fear of real or imagined abandonment, they have difficulty being alone. Their inappropriate anger, impulsiveness and frequent mood swings push others away, despite their pathological need to be attached and accepted.

BPD usually begins by early adulthood. Though symptoms may appear in the teen years, it cannot be properly diagnosed until age 18 or above.

### Symptoms of BPD

Avoiding real or imagined abandonment, by quickly initiating intimate (physical or emotional) relationships, or suddenly rejecting someone in anticipation of being abandoned.

Intense and unstable relationships with family, friends, and romantic interest, often swinging from extreme closeness and love to extreme dislike or anger. It is named **Borderline**, because it appears they live on the borderline between emotional extremes (love-hate, adoration-loathing), *no in-between*.

Distorted and unstable self-image. Their self-image and self-concept often depend upon validation from others, including strangers

Impulsive, dangerous behaviors, such as spending sprees, unsafe sex, substance abuse, reckless driving, and binge eating (**must first rule out mood disorder symptoms**)

Self-harming behavior, such as cutting or recurring suicidal behaviors or threats. *May manipulate others with these behaviors*

Intense and highly inconsistent moods, lasting from a few hours to a few days

Chronic feelings of emptiness

Intense anger or problems controlling anger

Difficulty trusting, and irrational fears of other people's intentions

Dissociation, feeling cut off from reality such as **feelings/thoughts**, of being separate from their body or environment (least common symptom, **psychosis must be ruled out first**)

### Risk Factors

The cause of BPD is not yet clear, Research suggests that genetics, cultural, and social factors play a role in developing Borderline Personality Disorder.

**Family History.** People who have a close family member, such as a parent or sibling with the disorder may be at higher risk of developing BPD.

**Brain Factors.** Studies indicate that people with BPD can have structural and functional changes in the brain especially in the areas that control impulses and emotional regulation. These studies are not conclusive and this theory continues to be investigated.

**Environmental, Cultural, and Social Factors.** Many people with BPD report experiencing traumatic life events, such as abuse, abandonment, or adversity during childhood. Others may have been exposed to unstable, invalidating relationships, and hostile conflicts.

Although the factors above may increase a person's risk, it does not mean that all persons that have those elements in their history will develop BPD. Likewise, there may be people **without** these risk factors who **will** develop BPD at some point in their lifetime.

Though many BPD sufferers will use self-harm and suicidal behavior or gestures to manipulate others, it is important to note that up to **10% of BPD persons will die by suicide.**

Like all Personality Disorders BPD is a **developmental disorder** which means that in most sufferers it manifest for various reasons due to the maladaptive development of their personality and self-concept over time.

### To Help a Family or Friend with BPD

Offer emotional support, understanding, patience, and encouragement—change can be difficult and frightening to people with BPD, and they may not trust your efforts at first. Be aware of their propensity to manipulate others. You must have clear, concrete personal boundaries in your efforts to help.

Encourage them to get psychotherapy. Cognitive Behavioral or Dialectical Behavioral Therapy modalities demonstrate the most evidence based efficacy with this particular disorder.

You may need to seek therapeutic advice for yourself in order to learn proper coping skills, avoid your own emotional harm, and to effectively relate and communicate with your friend or family member with BPD. It should **not** be the same therapist that your friend or family member is seeing.

### REFERENCES

The following sources were used in the creation of this Mental Health Newsletter. The G.C.S.O. Mental Health Tasks Force encourages you to utilize these and other sources such as the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** and the **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)** to learn more about this and other important mental health topics.

**Diagnostic Statistical Manual –V**, American Psychiatric Association, June 2013

**National Institute of Mental Health (2018).** *Borderline Personality Disorder*. Retrieved December 12, 2021 from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/borderline-personality-disorder>

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