

## HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

### For people with lived experience of borderline personality disorder (BPD) - Share your story

We are always looking to share stories of recovery and hope!

Provided below is a guideline for you to write about your lived experience of BPD.

Your story can be incredibly impactful and supportive for other people who may be experiencing similar challenges living with BPD. Share the 'gems of wisdom' you have learnt in your own journey. We aim to keep all our lived experience content strengths-based. That doesn't mean it has to be all rainbows and unicorns (although – yay!) but it does mean that we try and see the positive changes that we have made from our struggles. Your story can be impactful for people still struggling with BPD and so we want to be hopeful and find the amazing things you have accomplished in your life!

If your story includes reference to others it is absolutely essential that they are aware that you are participating and have approved what you have written.

#### BEFORE YOU CONTRIBUTE:

#### Sharing your story safely is essential!

- You should have a good support structure available before you share your story – it can be confronting and attract attention you might not expect! We highly suggest having a mental health professional you can work with available if needed.
- Many people are negatively affected by key words and themes. These might include experiences of child abuse, sexual assault, self-harm and suicide. Whilst it is your right to acknowledge them, it is not appropriate in our spaces to detail or recount them as stories. This is unhelpful to your healing and the healing of others. These specific stories are best expressed in safe and secure environments with trained mental health professions who know how to respond and validate them. Hearing about detailed events of abuse and pain of others can cause distress to others and yourself. Re-experiencing trauma is common for people sharing difficult events in their lives – we need to keep everyone safe, especially you.
- Your contribution when told safely is important, valid, and impactful. Making sure that your contribution is fully heard is key, and this is why we suggest describing the feelings and actions you took to overcome your challenges as opposed to what held you back or hurt you. This is the information that others are lacking and **need to hear to heal**.

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- Our audience is largely people with lived experience, their carers and those who work with BPD – make sure what you are sharing helps them to move forward in a positive way. Many people with lived experience know what ‘bad treatment’ looks and feels like – what they might not know is what ‘good treatment’ is like – share what worked!
- By sharing your valuable experience, you will be supporting others and they may want to contact you about this. Make sure you have strong safe boundaries, professional support and let us know if this becomes an issue.
- We may ask you to re-structure or focus your content to make sure your story is effective and strong. Your contribution feedback will come from people with extensive experience in lived experience advocacy, so please keep in mind that they have a strong knowledge of the complexities of sharing and are trying to support you.
- If you are feeling unsure, you can contact our team and speak to one of our experienced consumer or carer advocates, we are here to support you to have a voice.

#### **Format for sharing your story:**

- Word document or PDF
- About 250 words
- Please refrain from using profane language, naming family members, friends, clinicians or places of treatment/services/hospitals
- Please remember to not include graphic details or traumatic or distressing experiences.

#### **Things you need to know before sharing**

- We will only share your first name, and how you identify. For example: Mahlie (Lived Experience Advocate). Alternatively, we can use a pseudonym.
- Nothing ever goes away on the internet – even if we try to make it go away, we have little control. We also cannot force other agencies or websites to remove or unshare your information once it is placed in the public domain.
- Your story may be shared and re-shared – and we can’t always monitor this!
- Your story is about you and should not mention other people in your life *without their express permission*.
- You will be asked to sign a disclaimer form before your content is shared and you have the final say in the content’s editing.
- You have rights and should always use them when needed! (Contact the Foundation for more information.)
- To read an additional great resource about telling your story – visit <https://wayahead.org.au/telling-your-story/>