



Rethinking BPD: exploring the world for other possibilities

Flick Grey

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Where I've come from

- Childhood trauma (abuse & mis-attunement)
- Diagnosed informally with BPD in 2005, by the CAT Team (suicidal, self-injuring, explosive anger)
- Read A LOT (nerd) about BPD
- Stumbled across the work of Merinda Epstein (“high profile nutcase”) & became part of consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement
- Continued engaging with BPD for years:
 - Speaker at 2011 International Society for the Study of Personality Disorders (ISSPD)
 - Organizer and speaker, inaugural BPD Awareness Day, 2011
 - Contributed chapters to a mental health textbook, 2012
 - Inaugural Consumer Consultant, Spectrum 2015-6

What I am up to these days ...

- **Open Dialogue practitioner** (studied Open Dialogue UK 2015-7)
- Lead **Intentional Peer Support facilitator**, Expanding Post-Discharge Support Initiative, Department Health and Human Services
- **Peer Support Manager**, PartnerSPEAK
- **Project worker**, Self-Help Addiction Resource Centre (adapting IPS to AoD)
- **Advocate for alternative ways of understanding madness and distress** (beyond psy expertise)
- **Mad Studies academic**

Recent career highlights

- Keynote Speaker, Danish Open Dialogue Network Annual Meeting, Feb 2018
- *Co-Production: Putting Principles into Practice in Mental Health Environments* (2018), with Cath Roper and Emma Cadogan
- Invited to the US and NZ to speak and train (2017)
- 'Just Borderline Mad' published in *Asylum Magazine for Democratic Psychiatry* (2017)
- Keynote Speaker, The Mental Health Services Conference, Aug 2017
- Interviewed twice on ABC Radio National (2015 & 2017)
- 2015 SANE Australia Hocking Fellowship to explore intersection b/w Open Dialogue and Peer Support

But how I *really* identify

- Wandering Mad academic
- Part-unicorn
- Person with child parts
- Relational barometer / canary in the mine / receptacle for disavowed emotions



Rethinking BPD ... some possibilities

1. Complex trauma

- “Some of the most painful traumas are the ones we don’t have words for.”
- Whose expertise?

2. Child parts

- E.g. Molly/Lucy conundrum (attach/mistrust)
- Max (superhero protector “adults suck!”)
- Mischa (inexpressible anger)
- Lily (compliance)

3. Relational emotional disavowal / canary in the mine

Expecting marginalized peoples to disregard their own emotions to calmly educate you is the epitome of entitlement.

6 gifts of those who might be labeled BPD

1. Our sensitivity can be an incredible radar for toxic social environments
2. Self-harm can be a truly ingenious way of meeting multiple competing needs (e.g. express anger without being punished/be able to stay in a toxic context)

6 gifts of those who might be labeled BPD (cont.)

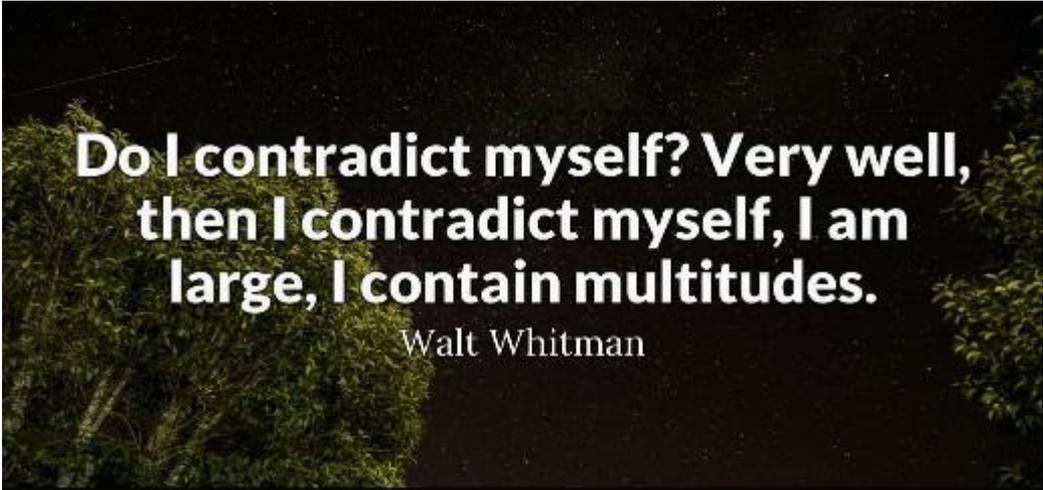
3. What gets called “splitting” can be a really useful way of bringing into the light tensions between people that haven’t yet registered on other people’s radars.
4. Many of us speak truths (possibly explosively) that others know are too fraught with social consequences to say aloud.

6 gifts of those who might be labeled BPD (cont.)

5. Everyone dissociates (e.g. zoning out when someone is speaking BS). When we dissociate intensely, often something really bad is happening but it's not relationally safe to say anything (e.g. the person speaking BS is in a dominating position of power). This is an insightful gift to our networks.

6 gifts of those who might be labeled BPD (cont.)

6. Our uncertainties about who we “are” can often tap into deep existential *human* questions about what it is to be inconsistent. Otherwise, people can be stuck in conformity and compliance.



**Do I contradict myself? Very well,
then I contradict myself, I am
large, I contain multitudes.**

Walt Whitman

Resources

- Epstein, Merinda (2006). 'Let's face it! She's just too f*****d" – the politics of borderline personality disorder.' Keynote at Sisters Inside Conference (<http://www.sistersinside.com.au/media/papermepstein.pdf>)
- Grey, Flick (2017a). 'Just Borderline Mad' *Asylum Magazine for Democratic Psychiatry* 24(1) (<http://asylummagazine.org/2017/03/just-borderline-mad-by-flick-grey/>)
- Grey, Flick (2017b). 'Opening the Dialogue about Madness and Distress' Keynote, The Mental Health Services Conference. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqqLYJp-PeE>)
- Grey, Flick (2012). 'My name is Flick Grey, my diagnosis is Borderline Personality Disorder' In Meadows et al (eds) *Mental Health in Australia: Collaborative Community Practice*.

Resources (continued)

- Grey, Flick (2011). 'How can we talk about this?' Australian National BPD Awareness Day 2011 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ip02oRvrFil>)
- Malcolm, Lynne, (2017). 'Lived Experience in Mental Health Care'. Radio National interview with Flick Grey and Mike Slade (UK) (<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/allinthemind/lived-experience-in-mental-health-care/9107916>)
- PD in the Bin (Facebook Group – google it!)
- Roper, Cath, Flick Grey and Emma Cadogan (2018) *Co-Production: Putting Principles into Practice in Mental Health Environments* (https://recoverylibrary.unimelb.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2659969/Coproduction_putting-principles-into-practice.pdf)