

BPD & Relational Mindful Thinking and Practices

24/5/2011





Your 'Local Knowledge' & Experience

Our hopes & aspirations for working
with BPD/complex needs clients and
supporters

Think of times when this hope was not realised—challenged:

- What got in the road?
- What effects did this have on you; your relationship with the client/supporters

Think of times when this hope, to some extent, was realised or honoured:

- What do you think made this possible?
- What steps did you take for this to happen?

‘Families have been missing from the [treatment] plan [for BPD].’

There has been a real reluctance to discuss ‘the sources of the painful ambiguity and difficulty of their position ... and negotiate the dangerous shoals of blaming the family and blaming the patient.’

(Gunderson & Hoffman 2005: xii)

- Gunderson, J. & Hoffman, P. 2005. *Understanding and Treating Borderline Personality Disorder: a guide for professionals and families*. American Psychiatric Publishing .Inc. Washington DC
- Porr, V. 2010 *Overcoming Borderline Personality Disorder: a family guide*. Oxford Uni Press.
- Bateman, A. & Fonagy, P. 2006. *Metallization-Based Treatment for Borderline Personality Disorder: a practice guide*. Oxford Uni Press.
- *Caring for people with Borderline Personality Disorder: a reference guide for health professionals*. Australian Gov, National Health & Medical Research Council 2013.

Cyclical interactions

- **This means the environment/significant others and the individual are influencing each other continuously and as a result...**
- ***‘... the individual is surely affected by the environment [/relationship], the environment [relationship] is also affected by the individual’*** (Milton 1986a Dialectical and Biosocial Underpinnings of Treatment, pg39)

- ***Pushing Each Other's Buttons***

In other words, family carers may be acting or responding in a certain way because of the actions/behaviour by the individual, who in turn reacts or acts in a certain way due to the way that family members act or respond to them – often creating a conflictual cyclical interaction.

Attachment relationships

It is important to note that:

- It is usually within significant relationship and attachments that BPD symptoms (e.g. sense of *abandonment*) are triggered
- This can often can lead to conflicting relationship patterns that everyone becomes stuck in

Trauma

It has often been noted by researchers that the experience of trauma can be linked to and be a way of understanding the experiences and symptoms associated with BPD.

Deeply embedded unconscious emotional experiences can be triggers for trauma responses of *flight, fight, freeze* (dissociation) severely affecting the ability to cope and regulate emotions and responses.

Vicarious trauma is also a way to understand the on-going triggers and responses for families living with the effects of BPD.

The 4 Rs Resisting, Resting, Reflection & Responding

- ✓ **Resisting** from being drawn into the vortex (chaos) of emotional storms and relying on rational explanations to change things.
- ✓ **Resting** from intervening or trying to fix it - knowing when to simply step back, with *mindfulness* and start noticing - creates a space for...
- ✓ **Reflection** and consideration of when and what *relationally mindful* action to take on your own behalf or on behalf of the person you support
- ✓ **Responding**: *with informed understanding, relational mindfulness, acknowledgement & validation, restor(y)ing conversation & relational limit setting*

- The purpose of a *relationally mindful* stance is to gain some space and actuate relational information in order to thoughtfully reflect on and consider when and what action to take on your own behalf or on behalf of the person. ‘Stepping back’ and noticing what is happening (both the person we care for and our own responses). Taking this stance help us recognise and begin to work with the often hidden and unhelpful habitual patterns of responding that we become stuck in.

The 5 key aspects of Relational Mindfulness

- 1) **Triggers**
 - 2) **Doing the same/doing it differently**
 - 3) **Not retaliating/or not demanding change right now - is not giving in or giving up**
 - 4) **Timing**
 - 5) **Considerations**
- *Practice/Home work*

1) *Noticing the Triggers*

Taking the emotional temperature

- Recall previous situations with the person, what did you notice that triggered or lead them to becoming upset or confused?
- Can you name and describe some of these triggers?

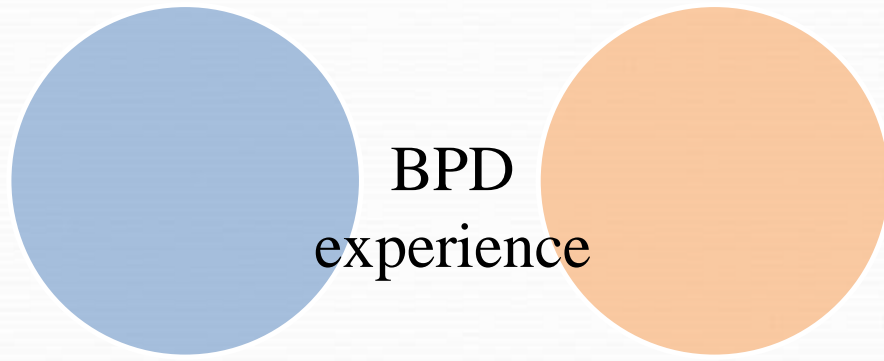
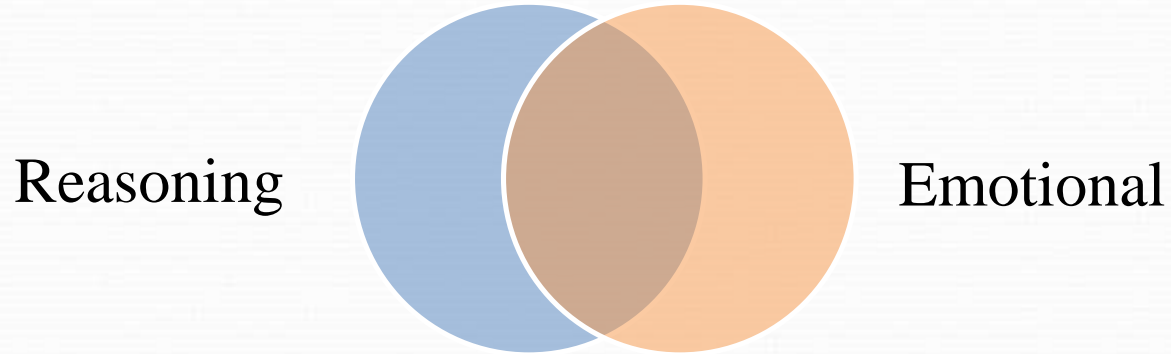
E.g.,

When ... feels I am being judgmental. When we tell her what to do or offer solution when not ask for.

2) Doing the same/doing it differently

- How have you usually responded?
- Can you recall or imagine a situation where you responded differently than you usually do and things didn't seem to get so out of hand?
- What did you notice that motivated your different response?
- What values, intentions might you have been drawing on to do this?

Basic elements of mind/brain



Examples:

- *Not wanting to make things worse*
- *Realising that they are not in control and you can be*
- *Acceptance that you won't be able to change the situation right now*
- *Not losing sight of your goals*

3) Not retaliating/or not demanding change

- **right now** - is not giving in or giving up

In conversations with suffers and family members, one of the things that they identified trying to do differently was 'taking a step back' and 'not retaliating/or not demanding change right now'. But this was hard and they had some doubts about this strategy in terms of 'not to stand up for yourself' or not retaliating/demanding change means that you are surrendering or giving up.

Cont/

- Can you imagine a situation when refusing to continue to retaliate/or not demanding change straight away is not simply about surrendering or giving up?
- What would you notice yourself doing if you were not retaliating/or demanding change?
- What would your purpose be in not retaliating/demanding change right now?

Examples:

- *Harm minimisation to the relationship*
- *Looking after yourself*
- *Showing the courage to step back*

Cont/

- Can you come up with a list of things that you have tried or might try immediately while in conflict, to work with the situation without attacking back - retaliating/or demanding change right now?

Examples:

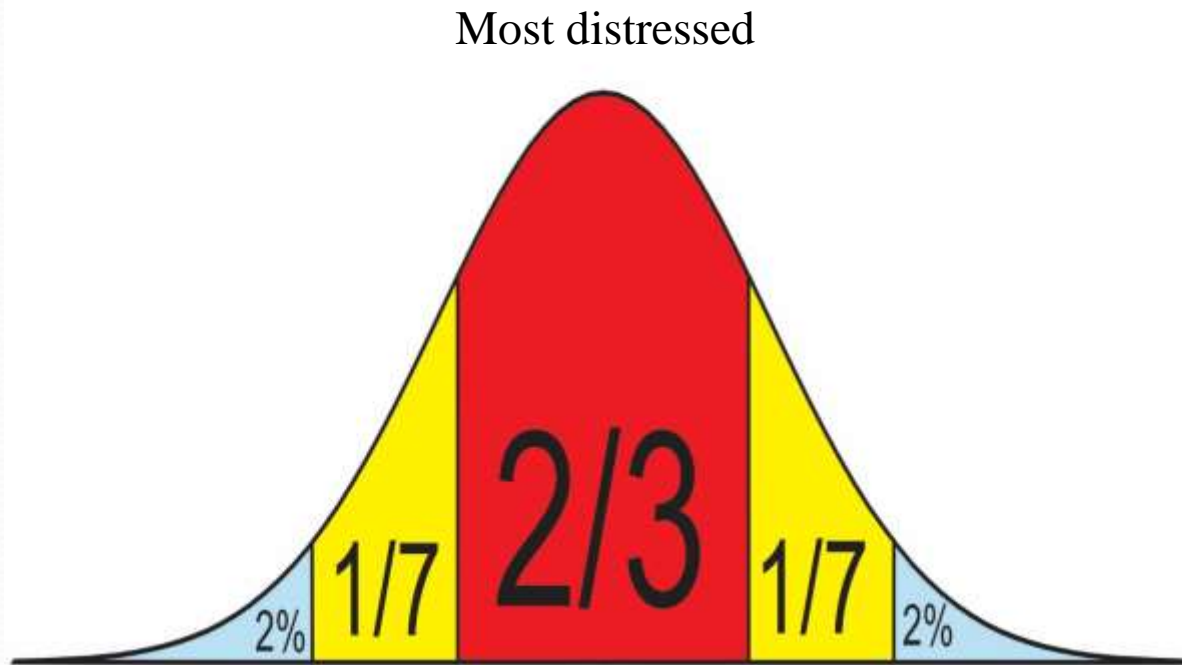
- *What did you say to yourself?*
- *What did you focus on?*
- *What might have helped distract you?*
- *What might soothe you or calm you down?*
- *What other things might help you 'step back'?*

4) Timing

Suffers and family members often speak about 'picking the right time' to speak or have a discussion

- What might be important to notice and consider when choosing this 'right time'?

Stress - bell curve



Examples:

- *Am I or the person able to pay attention? What gets in the road and what allows us to pay attention?*
- *What helps us calm down?*
- *Are you able to sustain attention and keep focused? What gets in the road and what allows you to keep focused?*

5) Considerations

Before saying something to the other person at a time of conflict, what might be useful to ask yourself?

Examples:

- *Is this going to make things worse?*
- *Is this going to help me with what I want to happen?*

Building a narrative to encourage reflection

Narrative & Mindfulness work





Externalising the problem and identifying *it's* effects

Accompanying Validation and opening inquiry when the emotional **temperature** is high

Re-authoring conversation & unique outcomes



'Double Listening'

Michael White



- Listening to what clients and families want to share about their experience of the problem... (naming and acknowledging the effects of the problem ...and at the same time,
- Listen for expressions that might provide some hint about the steps they have taken to resist the effects of problem and the abilities and strengths they drew upon to do this.

Some talk about the brain (Siegel 2007)

Through often associated with logic, language, literal processing, the left hemisphere also appears to be dominate for the narrative drive to tell a story...

Research findings suggest that this left prefrontal cortex also seems to be activated with mindful attention [enacted with the] describing and labelling with words - [or telling ourselves/constructing a story] facilitating conceptual processing – is fundamentally initiated/a part of mindful awareness [also suggested in the notion of ‘mentalizing’].

Starting to pay attention to ‘thinly known’, ‘not usually appreciated’ descriptions of experience, allows exploration beyond automatic assumptions, conclusions – moving away from top-down cortical processing as ‘invariant representations’

The Matter of Metaphors

- The metaphor used to acknowledge the problem significantly influence the way people tackle their problems E.g.s



Totalizing & vilifying the problem

- Is founded upon the dualistic, either/or habit of thought that have become pervasive in Western culture'

To get rid of something unpleasant/opposite it & replace with something comfortable

Encouraging a more mindful & relational stance towards problems



- **observing-noticing**
- **empathic attunement**
- **sitting with**
- **working with**
- **acknowledging messages that problems may contain for us**

- 'staying with the feeling'
- feelings into words

These are some of my preferred stances

- **Linguistic distance:** ‘the creation of distance (spaciousness) to provide people with an observer’s view/experience of life events’ (Bird)
- **Acknowledgment & Acceptance:** the message of feelings

