

## Effective approaches for people with borderline personality disorder

Finding the best 'fit' for therapy and treatment(s) to support the person's mental, emotional and social wellbeing is a process that may take time. It can be helpful to keep the following in mind:



### Treatment, especially psychotherapy (talking therapy), can help develop:

- Ways of understanding and responding to stress and intense emotions
- A stable sense of who the person is and their self-esteem
- Autonomy, independence and self-agency
- Connections between feelings and thoughts to actions and events

### Treatment works best when:

- Health care workers are validating, responsive and active in their support
- It is collaborative and people are actively involved in their own treatment
- Unless inappropriate, families, friends and support networks are included
- It is structured, evidence-based and recovery-oriented

## Where to access treatment

### Professional support/services

GP

Request a Mental Health appointment

Area Mental Health/  
Community Mental Health Services

[www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealthservices](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealthservices)

Spectrum Personality Disorder and Complex Trauma Service

[www.spectrumbpd.com.au](http://www.spectrumbpd.com.au)

### Private psychiatrist

[www.ranzcp.org/Home](http://www.ranzcp.org/Home)

### Psychologist – registered with APS

[www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au)

### Psychotherapists – registered with PACFA

[www.pacfa.org.au](http://www.pacfa.org.au)

### Social workers

[www.aasw.asn.au/find-a-social-worker/search/](http://www.aasw.asn.au/find-a-social-worker/search/)

### Credentialed mental health nurses

[www.acmhn.org/find-a-credentialed-mental-health-nurse/](http://www.acmhn.org/find-a-credentialed-mental-health-nurse/)

## Online/Telephone Support

### Websites and call centres

#### Lifeline

13 11 14

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

#### Sane Helpline

1800 187 263

[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

#### Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council

03 9380 3900

[www.vmiac.org.au](http://www.vmiac.org.au)

#### Australian BPD Foundation

[www.bpdfoundation.org.au](http://www.bpdfoundation.org.au)

*"I'm not saying there aren't tough days, but instead of being a victim to it, I survive the crises, then get back up and fight for a life worth living. There's hope if you truly believe in it."*

– Person with Lived Experience of BPD

# What is Borderline Personality Disorder...

## and other helpful information



## What is borderline personality disorder?

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) refers to a particular set of difficulties that affects a person's sense of self, their emotions, and their relationships. Whilst we may all experience similar difficulties from time to time, a diagnosis of BPD is based on an assessment of these difficulties over time and across a range of situations and how they impact a person's life.

The term 'borderline personality disorder' is a diagnostic term that is not intended to describe the person's personality.

*"BPD for me, once consisted of daily crises, scrambling for anything to numb the intense agony I couldn't seem to get away from. Nobody seemed to understand me no matter how I explained how I was feeling."*

– Person with Lived Experience of BPD

## Experiences of BPD include difficulties with:



### Emotions

People with BPD describe having intense, unstable and often painful emotions that can be very overwhelming for them.

When people experience such intense emotions they may turn to unhelpful ways of trying to cope with such unbearable experiences.

### Relationships

People with BPD can experience strong and sometimes rapidly changing feelings which can make navigating or being in relationships really difficult and confusing.

This may include feelings of intense closeness, or disconnection / distance. People with BPD often find it difficult to feel like they can trust others and may find loss and separations particularly distressing.

### Perceived impulsivity

Sometimes people with BPD experience difficulty with impulsivity and potentially harmful behaviours as a way of trying to cope in the moment with immediate or sustained unbearable emotional distress.

The nature of impulsive and harmful behaviours is very individual and can vary according to the distress being experienced and may serve a range of different purposes.

### Unstable sense of self

This is a highly complex and nuanced area, however, generally people with BPD may feel unsure of who they really are or how they fit within the world, which can lead to feelings of emptiness, feeling misunderstood or alone.

The person may have difficulty identifying or sustaining long term ambitions, or a sense of direction in life as their perspective can change rapidly.

## Common misconceptions about BPD

### *"BPD is a personality flaw"*

Receiving a diagnosis of a personality disorder does not mean that there is something broken or fundamentally wrong with the person's personality.

### *"BPD is untreatable or difficult to treat"*

There is a range of helpful and effective treatments and therapies available in public, private and primary care services. People with BPD can and do live meaningful lives.

### *"People with BPD are manipulative or attention seeking"*

People with BPD experience significant psychological distress that they may struggle to regulate. This is not deliberate or wilful on their part. When distressed, it becomes difficult to communicate effectively, especially when there is a fear that their needs will go unmet. A desire to have our needs met is not 'manipulative' and is something many of us take for granted.

### *"BPD is caused by childhood trauma"*

The causes of BPD are not fully understood. Whilst many people with BPD have experienced trauma, the disorder is thought to arise through a combination of environmental, social and biological factors. For some people with BPD, trauma does not appear to be a factor.

### *"Only women are diagnosed with BPD"*

Though more women tend to receive a diagnosis, studies show that the likelihood of people meeting the diagnostic criteria for BPD is not linked to gender.

### *"BPD is rare"*

**Currently between 1% and 2% of Australians, that's 250,000 to 500,000 individuals, are diagnosed with BPD at some stage in their lives.**



## Will things for people with BPD get better?

**ABSOLUTELY!** Many people with lived experience of BPD can be described as being passionate, vibrant, intelligent, creative, compassionate, and resilient just to name a few. Sometimes, however, these attributes might not be quite as noticeable or identifiable to someone living with, or supporting someone living with BPD. However, as people begin their recovery, these wonderful attributes often begin to re-emerge.

There are helpful treatments and therapies that are available to help someone with BPD towards recovery. This can take time and people work through their recovery in different ways.

It is important to remember that people can and do recover from BPD. **The goal is to gain a life that is worth living.**

*"...Then with the right determination, things started to change. My case manager started working with me, doctors started hearing me and my will to take charge of this life of mine evolved..."*

– Person with Lived Experience of BPD