

## SEX Talks

# Borderline PD



Borderline Personality Disorder is a mental disorder that often causes complicated relationships because of its symptoms. Personality disorders are patterns of long-term thinking and behaviours that do not always line up with cultural expectations. Sometimes, personality disorders can wreak havoc on interpersonal relationships.

People who have BPD may experience mood swings, splitting (seeing someone as all-good one moment and all-bad another), or seeing things in black or white terms. They may do everything they can to prevent people from abandoning them, which can include behaving impulsively or reacting to the slightest criticism. In essence, many people with BPD will engage in behaviours that challenge a relationship because they are terrified of losing that person. "I hate you, please don't leave me" is one way to describe their symptoms.

Needless to say, the symptoms of BPD can cause a lot of conflict in a relationship. The drama isn't intentional; it is the result of emotions that cause great pain to the people with BPD and makes it hard to relate to their friends and loved ones. Many people with BPD have experienced childhood trauma or sexual violence. BPD has a genetic component as well, but it is worth remembering that many folks are carrying traumatic memories with them.

# When you have Borderline PD



- First of all, remember you deserve to have fulfilling relationships! You are worthy. You really are.
- Never hesitate to talk to your health care provider if you feel your sexual health is suffering from your condition, or any medications you are taking.
- Sometimes people with BPD fall in love quickly. If you feel yourself falling, take the time to ask yourself if it is love or lust. If it is lust, appreciate for what it is.
- If you are upset, find a healthy way to regulate your emotions. Listen to some music. Go for a run.
- Learn to set boundaries and respect your partner's boundaries. We are all allowed to say yes and no to things.
- Sometimes cisgender women can feel more pressured into engaging in sexual activity. Remember no one has the right to pressure you into something you don't want, even if they threaten to leave you.
- If you get angry with someone, remember their positive qualities even if it feels like they have become a bad person in your life. None of us are perfect.
- It's okay to talk about your feelings and be honest. When emotions are such a big part of your life, it's okay to discuss your feelings.
- If you need help communicating your feelings in a healthy way, talk to your health care provider. You can learn to communicate your emotions in productive ways.
- If you have experienced sexual trauma or any kind of abuse in your past, seek out healing, like chatting to a mental health care professional. Healing is possible.
- Offer your partners educational material about your disorder so they can become educated about your symptoms. Although these symptoms are not your fault, they can put a strain on your relationships if your partner isn't educated about BPD.



# When your loved one has borderline PD



- Focus on emotions, not words. The feelings of someone with BPD often communicate their true message. Validate what someone with BPD is feeling. You don't have to agree with them. But you can agree they are feeling that way. Listen to the emotion they are trying to communicate and honour it. "I see you are upset that I didn't call you."
- Stay calm. Don't waste time getting defensive. If you engage in an argument when someone with BPD is emotional, it is like pouring lighter fluid on a fire. Step away from the fire and let it burn itself out safely.
- Sometimes people with BPD have trouble reading body language and the non verbal parts of a conversation. Their intense fear of being abandoned may cause them to react to the slightest change in body language. If they act in an upsetting way, remember to stay calm, honour how they feel, apologize if you were wrong, or talk about it later when things have calmed down.
- Know when to talk. If someone is extremely upset, let them know you support them and are willing to talk when things settle down.
- When communicating, pay attention and be an active listener. You don't have to agree with everything a person says, but you can listen sympathetically and honour their feelings.
- Set boundaries you can live with. Sometimes these boundaries will get tested, so you need to create ones that are manageable. For example, "If you yell at me, I am going to go to a different room until things are calm." Follow through every time.
- You cannot change another person's behaviour. And you are not responsible for it. The only person you can change is yourself.
- Sometimes your partner will be unable to offer you emotional support because they are in such pain themselves. Learn to find support with other people in your life so you don't have to depend on just one person.
- There may be some behaviours that are deal-breakers. It is okay to have boundaries and enforce them. We are all responsible for our well-being.



## *Things to keep in mind*

- The fear of being alone or abandoned drives people with BPD to react to certain situations with intense emotions. This is a key feature of BPD.
- People with BPD may be more prone to engaging in high risk sexual behaviours, such as casual sexual activity without protection. However, this is not general to everyone who has BPD. Many people with BPD avoid sexual activity completely.
- Some people with BPD who have vaginas may experience pain during intercourse or sex because emotions prevent them from relaxing and enjoying the sexual experience. Trauma from sexual violence can also make sexual responses challenging.
- Many cisgender women with BPD feel dissatisfied with sex, and may also feel more pressured into sexual activity than other people.
- If someone is taking antidepressants or other psychiatric drugs, they may experience issues including low desire, low arousal, and difficulty having an orgasm. Some people may experience increased desire.
- Some folks with BPD may be more likely to have unplanned pregnancies, suggesting a long term contraceptive might be helpful (e.g. an IUD).
- Research does not show that people with BPD are more likely to cheat on their partners. However, they are more likely to worry about their partners cheating on them.
- Like all mental disorders, treatment is important, along with support from loved ones and friends.



## References

Borderline Personality Disorder.com. "Relationships and Borderline Personality Disorder." Retrieved 29 Oct 2018. <https://www.borderline-personality-disorder.com/relationships>

BPD Central. "Why Borderline Relationships are so Complicated." Retrieved 29 Oct 2018. <https://www.bpdcentral.com/borderline-disorder/bpd-relationships/>

Help Guide. "Helping Someone with Borderline Personality Disorder." Retrieved 29 Oct 2018. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-disorders/helping-someone-with-borderline-personality-disorder.htm>

National Alliance on Mental Illness. "Borderline Personality Disorder." Retrieved 29 Oct 2018. <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-conditions/Borderline-Personality-Disorder>

Sansone, Randy A., MD, Lori A. Sansone, MD. "Sexual Behaviour in Borderline Personality Disorder: A Review." *Innov Clin Neurosci*. Feb 2011; 8 (2): 14-18.

Very Well Mind. "Understanding Romantic BPD Relationships." Retrieved 29 Oct 2018. <https://www.verywellmind.com/understanding-romantic-bpd-relationships-425217>

## Resources

Borderline Personality Disorder.com

BPD Central at <http://www.bpdcentral.com>

Out of the Fog at <http://outofthefog.website>

Very Well Mind at <http://www.verywellmind.com>

*This guide isn't meant to replace your health care professional, but think about bringing up the topic at your next appointment.*

