

Borderline Personality Disorder

A pervasive pattern of instability with interpersonal relationships, self-image, and emotions, with marked impulsivity. This pattern begins by early adulthood and is present in a variety of contexts.

Hints that a borderline personality disorder may be present.

- Little insight into behavior--unaware of how his/her behavior affects others.
- Few, if any, long lasting relationships.
- Feelings of extreme loneliness and isolation.
- Flip flopping between therapists or treatment programs without success.
- Frequently complaints that no one cares or understands them fully.
- Blame is usually projected upon others.
- When interacting with the person, you quickly experience boundary issues and sense high dependency needs.
- The person drains your energy and divides staff.

Treatment Approach

Expect slow progress. This is a chronic condition.

Establish boundaries early within the therapeutic relationship. Define these clearly.

Become a skills coach instead of being a supportive therapist.

Do not rescue the client. Instead, teach them how to manage their emotions.

DSM-IV-TR Diagnostic criteria

Five of the following criteria need to be present.

- Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment.
- A pattern of unstable, intense interpersonal relationships alternating between extremes of idealization and devaluation.
- Identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self.
- Impulsivity in at least two areas that are potentially self-damaging (e.g. reckless driving, promiscuity).
- Recurrent suicidal behavior, gestures or threats, or self-mutilating behavior.
- Affective instability due to a marked reactivity of mood (e.g. anxiety or irritability). May last hours or days.
- Chronic feelings of emptiness.
- Inappropriate, intense anger or difficulty controlling anger
- Transient, stress-related paranoid ideation or severe dissociative symptoms

Skills Training Model Includes:

- Maintain a present focus vs. focusing on the past or future which cannot be controlled.
- Social Skills Training
 1. Provide step by step instruction.
 2. Review, practice and role play use of new interaction patterns.
- Teach Emotional Intensity Regulation Skills
 1. Label feeling.
 2. Rate intensity of feeling.
 3. Delay and minimize reaction.
 4. Determine the best way to react.
- Teach Problem Management Skills
 1. Decrease reaction.
 2. Describe problem.
 3. Define strategies that will help the person get through it.
 4. Create/use distractions.
 5. Ask for help. Some treatment programs provide a phone support network.
 6. Do something to the improve situation.
 7. Use a therapeutic notebook to label and describe emotions.
- Teach Self Care and Self Soothing Activities
 1. Relaxation.
 2. Healthy behaviors.
 3. Humor.
 4. Exercise.
 5. Healthy sleep routine.
 6. Avoidance of substance abuse.
 7. Cognitive restructuring.
 8. Intensity Continuum.
 9. Reinforcements.
 10. Positive Distractions.
- Crisis Management Questions.
 1. Where are you on the emotional intensity continuum?
 2. Did you use your notebook?
 3. What skills should be used?
 4. How should you react?