Tips for Borderline Personality Disorder
Developed in collaboration with the mental health centers of NBHP and FBHP & the
Client and Family Advisory Board

1. **Recovery is possible.** Despite the myth that personality disorders persist throughout the lifetime, research shows that many people improve over time. Ask your therapist about effective psychotherapy techniques, such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.

2. **Educate yourself.** Stigma exists about Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) because of misinformation. Increasing your knowledge of how BPD develops, what the symptoms are and how it is treated can help you differentiate the myths from reality.
   - **Symptoms of BPD** include emotional instability, feelings of worthlessness or emptiness, extreme reactions when feeling angry, sad or alone, and a pattern of intense and often conflictual relationships.

3. **Practice the skills** learned in therapy and actively work toward improving relationships and feeling more in control of your feelings and behaviors.
   - **Mindfulness and relaxation** exercises help you to observe your thoughts and feelings in the moment before choosing how to respond. Talk to your therapist or search “mindfulness” videos on Youtube to learn more about how to use this technique.
   - **Increase your positive emotions** by engaging in activities you enjoy and take your mind off of the current stressor. When feeling upset, you may feel like staying home or staying in bed, but this only serves to increase negative thoughts and feelings. Getting out of the house, spending time with a friend, or watching a funny movie can break the cycle.
   - **Identify triggers that impact your mood.** If you are aware of the types of situations that can make you feel upset, you can then rehearse how to respond in the future. Remind yourself that acting impulsively out of anger usually does not lead to positive outcomes.
   - **Use skills to manage impulses.** Before responding to something that upsets you, wait for the strong emotions to pass and thoughtfully decide how you choose to respond. For example, journal about your feelings in the moment, and then wait 24 hours, review your feelings from a new perspective, and then choose how you want to respond.
   - **Notice thinking patterns** and practice new ways of thinking. For example, consider how a friend may look at the same situation differently or how you might feel about the situation six months from now and try to avoid all or nothing thinking (“always”, “never”, etc.). When making a decision, try thinking in terms of what would be “effective or ineffective” in getting your needs met.

4. **Reach out to others for support.** You may feel frustrated at people at times, which may lead to wanting to avoid others or wanting others to automatically know how you feel. Although it can be uncomfortable, talk to a trusted friend, be assertive and ask directly for the help you need, and be open to their perception of the triggering event.

5. **Create a healthy lifestyle** that includes a stable schedule including exercise, proper nutrition and getting regular sleep. Avoid using alcohol and/or drugs to cope. Alcohol and drugs can increase the intensity of your moods and also lead to more impulsive behaviors.

6. **Be consistent with therapy.** Keep going to therapy even when you feel frustrated or things get hard. If you feel upset about something that happens in therapy, tell your therapist what you’re thinking in order to work through barriers together.
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7. **Medications may be recommended.** Your therapist may identify symptoms that you experience, such as depression or anxiety, that could be treated with medication. If this is the case, your therapist may recommend consulting a mental health prescriber. Take medications consistently if prescribed.

8. **Set goals for yourself,** based on what is important to you and what you want your life to look like. Ask your therapist for help with tools to keep you moving towards your goals. It helps to break goals into small, achievable steps, so you can build your confidence and see the progress you are making.

9. **Develop healthy relationships** with others. In relationships with family, friends and loved ones, people with BPD can sometimes switch back and forth between feeling extreme closeness and love to viewing them with extreme dislike or anger. Working to see relationships in more realistic ways, recognizing that all people have strengths and weaknesses, and that we all make mistakes can help strengthen relationships.

### Resources for Clients and Families

**Web Resources for Clients and Families:**
Borderline Personality Disorder: An Information Guide for Families: [https://knowledgex.camh.net/amhspecialists/resources_families/Documents/Borderline_Personality_Disorder.pdf](https://knowledgex.camh.net/amhspecialists/resources_families/Documents/Borderline_Personality_Disorder.pdf)

Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) [http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/health_information/a_z_mental_health_and_addiction_information/Pages/default.aspx)


National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), Borderline Personality Disorder: What you need to know about this medical illness [http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Borderline_Personality_Disorder_(BPD)&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=81017](http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=Borderline_Personality_Disorder_(BPD)&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=81017)

**Books and Skills Training Workbooks:**

The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook (2007) by Matthew McKay, Jeffrey C. Wood, and Jeffrey Brantley

The Essential Family Guide to Borderline Personality Disorder (2008) by Randi Kreger

I Hate You, Don’t Leave Me (2010) by Jerold J. Kreisman and Hal Straus

Mindfulness for Borderline Personality Disorder: Relieve Your Suffering Using the Core Skill of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (2013) by Blaise Aguirre and Gillian Galen

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