

Family Voice Bulletin 2.0 – Issue 15 (April 6th/2021) Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

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Welcome to the new re-boot of our Family Voice Bulletins. Thank you for your continued support of The Royal Family Information and Support Groups, as well as this publication. We are happy to announce that the Family Voice Bulletins will now be offered in both English and French. We hope you continue to find it useful!

In our last session, we had Dr. Deanna Mercer, MD from The Ottawa Hospital, and Dr. Heidi King, MD, Clinical Lead of the BPD program at Montfort Hospital join us for their presentation on Borderline Personality Disorder. They covered some current research as well as treatments such as good psychiatric management and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT).

Borderline Personality Disorder is a mental illness which presents itself mainly in large shifts in mood/ or intense negative emotions, poor self-image, and impulsive behaviours due to how one interprets the world around them. Often symptoms lead to difficult or strained interpersonal relationships. Typically, it presents in adolescence or early adulthood. BPD has a high rate of improvement (90%), and full recovery (50%) over time.

While BPD does not have a specific medication for direct treatment; psychotherapy has been found to have a number of positive outcomes. These include: improved psychological functioning, as well as reduced symptoms of self-harm, depression, and suicidality. While Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is one of the most popular/available forms of psychotherapy, in general research has shown no clear differences in the variations of talk therapy. The main helpful attribute is having a safe space to speak (counselling) openly about what one is experiencing with guided direction (skills training) on how to cope and process those same feelings.

Particular discussion was given to some of the misunderstandings that have arisen around family interactions and the development of BPD within “bad” families. Research has shown that there can be links between traumatic life events or childhood adversity- but this is not always the case. It is also helpful to keep in mind that what may be called “bad parenting” can be signs of parents who are uninformed, or facing their own illness. Learning management strategies such as boundaries and working together, can help reduce negative family interactions. Support to family units through discussion, therapy, and psychoeducation can help foster healthy family living, thus reducing the

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stress on individuals living with BPD. Families play a very important role on the road to coping, and recovery from BPD.

It is important for family members/caregivers to do their best to work together with their loved one where possible. Understanding is the first place to start. Education for personal understanding, and also believing that change is possible. Harm reduction is a good approach for difficult behaviours- displaying acknowledgment of any efforts towards change. Small steps towards goals are absolutely markers of progress. Validation can also help ease distress for loved ones. Showing understanding of the exhaustion that comes with emotions like anger/ sadness/confusion will help express empathy. Lastly, when appropriate, model skilled behaviours such as processing your own intense emotions, modeling your own ways of coping, and displaying your own problem solving for interpersonal conflicts.

Tips & Strategies

- Establish boundaries to allow transparency around your limits.
- If your loved one agrees, attending counselling together where possible can provide both parties a safe space to express feelings, with guided understandings. This can also be a safe space to establish guidelines as a family, for the family.
- Attend support groups for new ideas, and to meet others who may offer new perspectives.
- Develop self-awareness to better understand your own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours.
- Accept help

Resources

- Treatment and Research Advancements National Association for Personality Disorder www.tara4bpd.org
- National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder <https://www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.org/>
- Behavioral Tech (Btech) DBT website www.behavioraltech.org
- Family Guidelines <https://www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Family-Guidelines-standard.pdf>
- Ottawa Network for Borderline Personality Disorder <https://on-bpd.ca/>
- New Hope for Borderline Personality Disorder Neil Bockian
- DBT Skills Therapy Workbook, second edition. McKay, Wood, Brantley
- Borderline Personality Disorder. New Reasons for Hope