BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER (BPD)

FACT SHEET

About BPD

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a serious mental illness marked by unstable moods, behavior, and relationships. It is important to note that, by nature, adolescents are moving through a significant period of human development in which hormonal changes and identity development may result in changes in peer groups, formation of relationships, and struggles with self-image. These symptoms alone do not indicate the presence of a personality disorder and must be identified in a pervasive and rigid pattern by a qualified professional in order to make a diagnosis.

What Does It Look Like?

Borderline personality disorder is characterized by changeability in relationships with others, emotions, and self-esteem, and can include behaviors such as:[1]

- Extreme attempts to prevent abandonment (whether the perceptions are true or not)
- Sudden changes in values, goals, opinions, or career plans
- Ups and downs in personal relationships, specifically involving dramatic shifts between closeness and veneration to hatred and hostility
- Feelings of anger or hollowness
- Patterns of risky behavior such as substance use/abuse, reckless buying, dangerous driving, and unsafe sexual experiences
- Suicidal or self-injurious behavior
- Variations in mood (anxiety, irritability, or sadness) that shifts relatively frequently (hours or days)
- Paranoid or disconnected thinking in response to high-stress situations or perceived abandonment

Symptoms and Interventions

	Symptoms	Interventions
Classroom	• Demonstrates severe responses to being left alone or with someone new/unfamiliar • Experiences extreme shifts in relationships with others (adoration to hatred) or emotions • Struggles with interactions with peers	• When possible, provide the student with advanced notice of unexpected changes and practice appropriate responses • Use social skills groups and work with SMHPs to help student monitor and manage emotions and behaviors • Maintain consistent interactions with student • Provide student with space to de-escalate if necessary
School Work	• Struggles with completion of work • May demonstrate change in processing based on mood • Is easily frustrated • Experiences lack of confidence in work or ability	• Consider modification of assignments (e.g., smaller portions of work) when needed • Use checklists • Identify instructional or learning methods that the student responds to positively (e.g., using technology or frequent breaks) and embed in daily work when possible • Practice positive support and praise for student successes
Desk	• Engages in restless movement • Struggles with staying on task	• Consider having items at desk to use for movement (collaborate with school staff such as occupational therapists) • Assist student in developing and maintaining an organized work area • Provide student with opportunities for movement and regular exercise throughout the day (walks in the hall, assisting with distribution of supplies, etc.)
Outside the Classroom	• Engages in behavior that is considered risky or dangerous • Demonstrates lack of interest in usual activities • Experiences suicidal thoughts or self-injurious behavior	• Communicate with parents or caregivers to identify patterns in behaviors or events at home that may impact the student's behavior (e.g., lack of sleep) • Consider a crisis plan for when student is experiencing a manic episode (e.g., staff members who should interact with student)
Transitions	• Experiences difficulties moving from one task to the next • Struggles with transitioning from one teacher to the next (or with changes in staff such as substitutes)	• Provide student with additional notice of upcoming transitions or allow extra time to finish a task • Maintain regular schedule when possible (place schedule on student's desk and notify of any changes if known) • Prepare student for changes in instruction if known ahead of time • Use social skills or individualized instruction to practice appropriate responses and facilitate understanding of changes

Student Strengths

- Energetic
- Sensitive
- Resilient
- Bright
- Caring
- Creative
- Passionate

References

[1] American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5)*. Washington, DC: Author.

Resources

- **National Institute of Mental Health**
  http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/borderline-personality-disorder/index.shtml

- **Child Mind Institute**
  http://www.childmind.org/en/health/disorder-guide/borderline-personality-disorder

- **National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder**
  http://www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.com/
  - ✓ *Family Guidelines* (helpful suggestions for all individuals working with individuals with BPD): http://www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.com/family-connections/family-guidelines/ `

- **SAMHSA: An Introduction to Co-Occurring Borderline Personality Disorder and Substance Use Disorders**
  http://newsletter.samhsa.gov/2015/03/03/introduction-co-occurring-borderline-personality-disorder-substance-use-disorders/