



## **What is Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)?**

The primary problem experienced by people with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is emotion dysregulation. This is characterised by emotions that are intense, changeable, and slower than average to resolve. This emotion dysregulation tends to contribute to other difficulties including impulsive and/or self-damaging behaviours, intense interpersonal relationships, and confusion about self. BPD affects approximately 2% of adults, is most likely to be diagnosed in young women, and often co-occurs with other psychological problems. Symptoms of BPD may disrupt relationships, work, or other important aspects of life.

Diagnosis of BPD is not usually made before adulthood and may be made when a person is considered to meet at least five of the following nine diagnostic criteria\*:

- *Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment*
- *A pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships*
- *Identity disturbance*
- *Impulsivity in at least two areas that are potentially self-damaging*
- *Recurrent suicidal behaviour, gestures, or threats, or self mutilation*
- *Affective instability (marked reactivity of mood)*
- *Chronic feelings of emptiness*
- *Intense anger or difficulty in controlling anger*
- *Transient, stress-related paranoia or dissociative symptoms.*

These symptoms should be pervasive, be present in a variety of contexts and begin by early adulthood.

### **Treatment for BPD**

*Effective treatment and support is available for people with BPD!*

In the past, people with BPD have had difficulty accessing effective treatment. However relatively recent advances in the understanding and treatment of BPD mean that effective treatment options are now more readily available. Research has shown that effective treatment can greatly increase the speed of recovery from BPD symptoms and improve quality of life. Therefore people with BPD should be encouraged to seek treatment for their difficulties early.

Some medications may be helpful for people with BPD. Medications usually target other disorders that co-occur (eg. depression, anxiety disorders). Unfortunately, no one type of medication has been found to be reliably effective in the treatment of BPD. Best practice treatment for BPD involves psychological therapy approaches such as Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). While some other treatment approaches have yielded results for some people it is important that the chosen therapy has a clear focus and structure, research evidence for its effectiveness, and is delivered by appropriately trained professionals in a supportive environment. \

\* *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM IV, American Psychiatric Association).*