

Treatment and Theory: Borderline Personality Disorder

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Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is individualized in the way it presents. Research shows that there are 256 different ways that this disorder can present (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022, p.3179). BPD is a very different experience for each person that has it, with their own struggles and strengths. Borderline personality disorder affects every aspect of an individual's life. Borderline personality disorder impacts their biological, psychological, social, and spiritual functioning. The symptoms of borderline personality disorder typically begin to appear in adolescence. Since this research has come out, which has disproved many prior beliefs that BPD only appeared in adulthood (Paola et al., 2021, p.1). Many believe that borderline personality disorder can be a result of trauma, biological, and psychosocial factors (Paola et al., 2021, p.2). Individuals with borderline personality disorder have a higher risk of suicide or self-harm. This population is vulnerable and has a need for further research.

Psychologically, borderline personality disorder definitely impacts an individual's state of mind. Borderline personality disorder can cause abandonment issues, feelings of emptiness, unstable sense of self and others, suicidal ideation, psychotic episodes, increased impulsivity and more (Fagan et al., 2022, p.1327). All of the symptoms can drastically impact one's quality of life. According to psychodynamic theory, BPD may stem from extreme loneliness, sensitivity to change, fear of others being untrustworthy, and trauma related to attachment, relationships, and self-image (Paola et al., 2021, p.2). These feelings are often discussed throughout therapy, because these topics impact the individual's day to day life.

One of the main symptoms of borderline personality disorder is unstable close relationships (Moltu et al., 2023, p.1). Individuals with borderline personality often fluctuate between idealization and devaluation of the people closest to them. This causes individuals with

borderline personality disorder to have a difficult time maintaining long lasting relationships. It is also assumed that the unstable relationship symptom stems from potential aggression or neglect from caregivers (Paola et al., 2021, p.2). Many individuals with borderline personality disorder also have increased anger and may lash out causing conflict between other individuals.

People with borderline personality disorder experiences rapid mood changes, fear of abandonment, emptiness, unstable sense of self, suicidal ideation and sometimes psychotic episodes (Fagan et al., 2022, p.1327). The psychological part of borderline personality disorder is assumed to come from loneliness, negative view of others, difficult time remembering good memories of relationships, and unstable attachments to others (Paola et al., 2021, p.2). Individuals with borderline personality disorder might struggle with their identity which may affect their spirituality. Their view of self may make them feel as if they don't have a purpose or feel like they know anything about themselves (APA, 2014, p.753).

There is no cure for borderline personality disorder. Borderline personality disorder is typically managed and treated through therapy. Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Mentalization-based therapy (MBT) are proven to be effective treatments for individuals with borderline personality disorder (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022, p.3179). Individuals with borderline personality disorder have shown to have a better experience with therapy when it is person-centered. (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022, p.3180). This also includes prioritizing the relationship between the therapist and the client to maintain a safe and open environment.

DBT and MBT have similarities, such as using both individual and group sessions, and implementing firm goals for the treatment (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022). This method is used to ensure progress and allow for the client to be a part of their treatment. DBT and MBT are both used as treatment for borderline personality disorder however DBT typically occurs first.

DBT helps individuals gain skills to help self-regulate and cope through their symptoms. DBT utilizes the biosocial theory to explain the biological and environmental factors that could contribute to the development of borderline personality disorder (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022). Individuals with borderline also may benefit from being involved in their treatment plan, this allows for them to create goals and create a structure that works for them. DBT provides skills to regulate emotions and provide the ability to acknowledge and feel emotions in a functional manner (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022). DBT treatment usually lasts around twelve months (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022).

MBT utilizes the relationship between the client and the therapist to learn how to implement mentalization when in difficult situations (Stoffers-Winterling et al., 2022). MBT's efficacy for adults with borderline personality disorder has been examined many times, however there is very limited research for adolescents with BPD (Beck et al., 2020). Mentalization based therapy is meant to help individuals understand others and their own feelings and thoughts. (Beck et al., 2020). MBT is closely associated with the psychodynamic and attachment theory (Beck et al., 2020, p.595).

Children who are abused, neglected, or exploited are at a high risk for borderline personality disorder. Children who go through this may be unable to regulate their emotions and fluctuate "between extreme emotional lability and emotional inhibition" (Paola et al., 2021, p.2). A majority of cases regarding BPD were associated with abuse and neglect as children. The most common sign of BPD in children is extreme emotions, specifically aggression. A study states that children with BPD internalize their daily experience and it harms their view of themselves and others from a very young age.

Borderline personality disorder may be difficult to understand since it can present and be caused by various different reasons. Borderline personality disorder is known to be a result of extreme childhood trauma and is a sensitive subject for many. Individuals with borderline personality disorder often feel shame and guilt about their disorder and it may be uncomfortable. It is an important part of treatment that the individual feels comfortable with the person treating them. DBT and MBT allow many individuals to manage the symptoms of their disorders, however it is important to understand not everyone will have the same experience. Therapy is expensive, and if individuals don't have insurance or enough finances they won't be able to receive the services. Individuals with borderline personality disorder may have complications with their service provider due to missed appointments, or the provider's lack of knowledge of BPD (Moltu et al., 2023). DBT provides coping mechanisms for the individuals to put into place and MBT further explores their understanding of themselves and others.

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