

# BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

Where to go when you're looking for help

## What is borderline personality disorder and what are the symptoms?

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a disorder defined by unstable moods, behaviour and relationships. People with BPD often have problems regulating their emotions and thoughts, act impulsively and have unstable or chaotic relationships. They may have intense and unpredictable emotions (such as shame, anger or sadness), and may be coping with other mental health problems at the same time, such as depression, anxiety, substance use disorder or an eating disorder.

Common symptoms may include:

- intense but short-lived periods of anger, depression or anxiety
- loneliness and a feeling of emptiness
- intense fear of being alone or of being abandoned, even if it's short-term
- paranoid thoughts and detached states, in which the mind “shuts off” painful thoughts or feelings
- self-image that can change depending on whom the person is with
- impulsive and harmful behaviours, such as risky substance use, overeating, gambling or high-risk sexual behaviours that may offer temporary relief from emotional pain, but could have negative consequences
- non-suicidal self-injury such as cutting, burning with a cigarette or overdosing, which can bring relief from emotional pain
- suicide (about 10 per cent of people with BPD take their own lives)
- unstable relationships with others.

## Who diagnoses BPD?

A mental health professional experienced in diagnosing and treating mental disorders—such as a psychiatrist or psychologist—can diagnose BPD.

## What are the treatment options?

With treatment and support, most people with BPD can improve many problematic areas of their lives.

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If any of this information is incorrect or outdated, or if there are additional organizations or programs that would be helpful to include, please e-mail the information to us at [access.resources@camh.ca](mailto:access.resources@camh.ca).

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Therapy is the suggested treatment for people with BPD. Therapy options include dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), mentalization-based therapy, transference-focused therapy and schema therapy. Though there is no specific medication for BPD, medication may be prescribed to reduce the effects of some symptoms.

*Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)* is a treatment that can help people relieve their symptoms and develop coping skills. The goals of DBT are to help control intense emotions, reduce self-destructive behaviours and improve relationships. DBT helps people find a balance between changing and accepting their beliefs and behaviours.

DBT teaches skills in four areas:

- **Emotion regulation:** How to get more control over your emotions and how to get more positive—and less negative—emotions in your life
- **Distress tolerance:** How to survive crises and get through painful moments without making them worse
- **Interpersonal effectiveness:** How to build and maintain positive relationships with others
- **Mindfulness:** How to focus your attention on the present moment

DBT treatment usually includes one-on-one therapy, a skills training group and phone coaching with the clinician between therapy sessions to help practice skills.

*DBT-informed treatment* uses some of the approaches or structure of DBT. However, it does not use all of the methods listed above. An example may be using the DBT manual to learn skills in a DBT group, or individual therapy based on DBT goals.

*Mentalization-based therapy* involves identifying your own and other people's mental states as a way to understand or explain behaviour.

*Transference-focused therapy* uses behavioural elements in therapy and addresses the problematic behaviours of BPD.

*Schema therapy* is an approach based on cognitive-behavioural or skills-based therapy that also addresses emotions, personality and schemas—or how people organize the world.

## Community Services

### Broadview Psychology

889 Broadview Ave., Toronto, ON

[broadviewpsychology.com](http://broadviewpsychology.com)

647 348-5140

**Services offered:** DBT treatment for adults that includes individual therapy, group skills training and phone coaching; DBT treatment for adolescents and young adults that includes individual therapy, group skills training, phone coaching and a parent support group; pre-adolescent DBT program; partner support group for partners of those with BPD or BPD traits; family therapy on individual basis

**Eligibility:** Skills groups are offered for people aged nine and older, depending on the program

**Referral:** Call for assessment

**Fee:** Varies by clinician and treatment modality

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## Canadian Mental Health Association, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Service

700 Lawrence Ave. W., suite 480, Toronto, ON

[toronto.cmha.ca/programs-services/dialectical-behavioural-therapy-dbt-program](http://toronto.cmha.ca/programs-services/dialectical-behavioural-therapy-dbt-program)

416 789-7957 ext. 3631 (intake), 416 539-9449 ext. 223 (to enroll in family and friends support groups)

**Services offered:** A one-year intensive program for people with BPD that includes individual counselling, a skills group and phone coaching (DBT program); biweekly educational and support group for parents, partners or family members who are supporting a loved one with BPD or other emotional or behavioural regulation problems

**Eligibility:** People age 18 and older with a diagnosis of BPD who have recently made repeated suicide attempts, who actively engage in self-injurious behaviour or who experience psychiatric crises that result in frequent emergency room visits; to enroll in the educational/support groups, family members/friends must be supporting someone aged 16 and over with a diagnosis of BPD or other emotional regulation problems

**Referral:** Call for self-referral; call to enroll in educational/support groups

**Note:** The DBT service only opens once per year to new patients; call monthly to check the waitlist

## Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood & Community Health Centre

1892 Davenport Rd., Toronto, ON

416 658-6812 ext. 239 or 231

**Services offered:** Surfing Tsunamis, a 20-week skills group

**Eligibility:** People over age 18 with a BPD diagnosis

**Referral:** Self-referral followed by a brief phone assessment to go on waitlist

**Fee:** Free

**Note:** Waitlist is usually about six months to a year

## Dialectical Living

Akasha Yoga Studio, 351 Danforth Ave., 2nd floor, suite 1, Toronto, ON

[www.dialecticalliving.ca](http://www.dialecticalliving.ca)

647 573-3287

**Services offered:** 12-week programs and online courses that include an introduction to DBT and advanced DBT; Tea and Conversation, a family and friends' drop in; Peer Share and Support, a drop in for people with emotional dysregulation

**Eligibility:** People with emotional dysregulation problems and/or BPD and their family and friends

**Fee:** Tea and Conversation: \$15; peer drop-in: \$10

## East Metro Youth Services

1200 Markham Rd., suite 200, Scarborough, ON

1871 Danforth Ave., Toronto, ON

[emys.on.ca](http://emys.on.ca)

416 438-3697 ext. 19055 (intake)

[emys@emys.on.ca](mailto:emys@emys.on.ca)

**Services offered:** 12-week DBT skills group therapy (offered at both locations, usually twice a year)

**Eligibility:** Youth age 14 to 18 with various mental health issues, including BPD

**Referral:** Self-referral, call intake number above

## EBT3 – Evidence-Based Therapy, Training and Testing

2 Carlton St., suite 1803, Toronto, ON

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[www.ebt3.com/dbt](http://www.ebt3.com/dbt)

416 628-4336

[info@ebt3.com](mailto:info@ebt3.com)

**Services offered:** Individual sessions with a DBT therapist, skills training group and phone coaching

**Eligibility:** People diagnosed with BPD and others who would benefit from the DBT model

**Fee:** Individual therapy is \$200 to \$250 per hour; two-hour group sessions are \$140

**Note:** Waitlist for individual therapy is about six to eight months

## The George Hull Centre for Children and Families

81 The East Mall, 3rd floor, Toronto, ON

[www.georgehullcentre.on.ca](http://www.georgehullcentre.on.ca)

416 622-8833 ext. 258 (intake)

**Services offered:** DBT group

**Eligibility:** Adolescents age 14 to 18 living in the west end

**Referral:** None, though there may be a screening process with the group leaders

## Mental Health and Addiction Services in Grey Bruce

1800 8th St. E., Owen Sound, ON

[mhagb.ca/content/dialectical-behaviour-therapy-dbt-program](http://mhagb.ca/content/dialectical-behaviour-therapy-dbt-program)

519 376-2121 ext. 2460

**Services offered:** Skills training group, weekly individual counselling and phone consultations for clients in the one-year or three-month DBT programs

**Eligibility:** People who have a diagnosis of BPD

**Referral:** Self-referral

## Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences

700 Gordon St., Whitby, ON

[www.ontarioshores.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=5902](http://www.ontarioshores.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=5902)

905 430-4055, 1 800 341-6323, 1 877 767-9642 (central intake)

**Services offered:** A one-year intensive or six-month group program that involves skills training groups, weekly individual counselling and phone consultations

**Eligibility:** People older than 25 who have been diagnosed with BPD and are having trouble managing their symptoms, who may also have a co-occurring anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder, eating disorder and/or substance use disorder

**Referral:** Referrals are accepted from health professionals, family physicians, nurse practitioners, specialists and community agencies

**Note:** Applicants will participate in an initial phone screening and if the program is deemed appropriate, they will be invited to one of their clinics to complete the assessment process

## The Sashbear Foundation

[sashbear.org/en/family-connections](http://sashbear.org/en/family-connections)

[info@sashbear.org](mailto:info@sashbear.org)

**Services offered:** Family Connection, a 12-week group and a two-week intensive group that provides education, skills training and support for people who are in a relationship with someone who has emotion dysregulation or related problems

**Fee:** Family Connection program is free although there may be a small cost for materials and food

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## Stella's Place

18 Camden St., Toronto, ON

[www.stellasplace.ca](http://www.stellasplace.ca)

416 461-2345

**Services offered:** A group DBT skills program

**Eligibility:** Young adults between the ages of 16 to 29 with complex mood and anxiety disorders and other mental health needs who do not require crisis or acute inpatient services

**Note:** Participants are expected to commit to the two group sessions each week

## Toronto Borderliners Family and Friends

[www.meetup.com/Toronto-Borderliners-Family-and-Friends](http://www.meetup.com/Toronto-Borderliners-Family-and-Friends)

**Services offered:** A meet-up group in Toronto designed to provide a safe and private place for people who have loved ones with BPD or BPD traits

**Eligibility:** Family and friends of people with BPD or its traits

## Toronto Borderliners, With Love

[www.meetup.com/toronto-borderliners-with-love](http://www.meetup.com/toronto-borderliners-with-love)

**Services offered:** Community group offering a safe place for people with BPD or with its traits

**Eligibility:** People with BPD or its traits who are at any stage of their recovery

**Referral:** Go to their website and click on “request to join”

**Note:** See their listing for Peer Share and Support groups

## Toronto DBT Centre

28 Madison Ave., main floor, Toronto, ON

[www.dbtcentre.com](http://www.dbtcentre.com)

416 848-1739

**Services offered:** Individual therapy for adolescents and adults that includes phone coaching and DBT skills training groups

**Fee:** Groups are \$140 per session for 24 weeks; individual therapy is \$200 to \$250 per hour

**Note:** Not currently accepting new clients for their adolescent and adult programs; check their website for updates about when their waitlist reopens.

## York Support Services Network

240 Edward St., Unit 3, Aurora, ON

50 McIntosh Dr., suite 239, Markham, ON

[www.yssn.ca](http://www.yssn.ca)

905 305-7440 ext. 4221, 1 800 887-3679 ext. 4221

**Services offered:** A 16-week dialectical behaviour skills group (2 hours per meeting), addressing core mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness; individual skills training if needed

**Eligibility:** People with behaviours that are negatively impacting their lives who are receiving case management from YSSN, CMHA, LOFT/Crosslinks or have met the criteria through the Access department and are actively on a waitlist for case management services

**Referral:** Self referral or referral from a case manager, social worker, family doctor, psychiatrist or other mental health professional: complete their referral form and consent form and fax to Cordula Marshall at 905 305-7442

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or e-mail her at [cmarshall@yssn.ca](mailto:cmarshall@yssn.ca): once this is received and your eligibility confirmed, you will then be put on a waitlist.

## Hospital-Based Services

### CAMH Borderline Personality Disorder Clinic

1001 Queen St. W., Toronto, ON

[www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/borderline-personality-disorder-clinic](http://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/borderline-personality-disorder-clinic)

416 535-8501 ext. 32437 press 5 (intake co-ordinator)

**Services offered:** Six- or 12-month DBT programs, which include weekly two-hour skills groups, weekly individual therapy sessions and phone coaching; a six-month DBT skills-only group, which includes a two-hour weekly skills group; a 12-week psychoeducational support group for family and friends of people with BPD (no diagnosis required)

**Eligibility:** People with BPD for the BPD program; family and friends of people with BPD for the psychoeducational support group

**Referral:** Self-referrals are accepted through the BPD intake and information line (416 535-8501 ext. 32437) on an intake day: check the website at the beginning of each month for any information about their next intake dates (there may be a lot of calls on intake day, so it may take time to get through)

### St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton

St. Joseph's West 5th Campus, 100 West 5th St., level 0, block D, Hamilton, ON

[www.stjoes.ca/hospital-services/mental-health-addiction-services/mental-health-services/bridge-to-recovery-program](http://www.stjoes.ca/hospital-services/mental-health-addiction-services/mental-health-services/bridge-to-recovery-program)

905 522-1155 ext. 33500

**Services offered:** Bridge to Recovery program, a seven-week DBT skills-based intensive group therapy for managing emotions; a community psychiatry clinic for groups and individuals; and Family Connections, a 12-week course for family members with a loved one with BPD. The groups run two days a week for seven weeks and address coping skills, regulating and managing emotions and strengthening interpersonal relationships; clients also meet with a clinician once a week and with a psychiatrist once or twice while in the program for assessment and medication review.

**Eligibility:** People 18 years and older living in the Hamilton area

**Referral:** For the Bridge to Recovery program, referrals are accepted from acute and specialized inpatient units and the psychiatric emergency services; for the community psychiatry clinic, referrals are accepted from inpatient programs, family physicians, COAST and other community services

**Note:** There is a waitlist for services, call for updates; minimum time commitment expected

### Stratford General Hospital

Special Services Unit, 90 John St. S., Stratford, ON

[www.hpha.ca/Default.aspx?cid=118&lang=1](http://www.hpha.ca/Default.aspx?cid=118&lang=1)

519 272-8210 ext. 2570

**Services offered:** A DBT skills group

**Eligibility:** People age 16 and older with a mental health problem, including BPD; must be registered with the hospital's outpatient services, which can be done by contacting central intake

**Referral:** Self-referral, family doctor, inpatient units, clinicians or central intake

**Note:** Two groups offered once per year, call for information

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## Trillium Health Partners - Credit Valley Hospital, Transitional Age Youth Program

2200 Eglinton Ave. W., Mississauga, ON

[trilliumhealthpartners.ca/patientservices/mentalhealth/childandadolescentservices/Pages/Transitional-Age-Youth-Program.aspx](http://trilliumhealthpartners.ca/patientservices/mentalhealth/childandadolescentservices/Pages/Transitional-Age-Youth-Program.aspx)

905 813-4421

**Services offered:** Stabilization and treatment to ensure a successful transition from child and adolescent services to adult mental health services

**Eligibility:** Emerging adults aged 16 to 24 who have symptoms of dysregulated mood, anxiety, psychosis or BPD and their families or caregivers

**Referral:** Doctor's referral is required through centralized intake at one-Link: [www.one-link.ca](http://www.one-link.ca)

## West Niagara Mental Health Team, Lincoln Memorial Hospital, Hamilton Health Sciences

167A Main St. E., Grimsby, ON

905 309-3336

**Services offered:** Two six-month DBT groups that run weekly: one for youth 16 to 25 years (accompanied by a family member) and the other for adults

**Eligibility:** People with BPD and others who would benefit from this treatment; assessment is done at the clinic, and if appropriate, the applicant is put on their waitlist

**Referral:** Through family doctor

**Note:** Call to find out how long the waitlist is

## Resources

### Books

Brokian, N.R. (2002). *New Hope for People with Borderline Personality Disorder: Your Friendly, Authoritative Guide to the Latest in Traditional and Complementary Solutions*. New York, NY: Prima Publishing.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). (2009). *Borderline Personality Disorder: An Information Guide for Families*. Toronto, ON: CAMH.

Chapman, A. & Gratz, K. (2007). *The Borderline Personality Disorder Survival Guide: Everything You Need to Know About Living with BPD*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Friedel, R. (2018). *Borderline Personality Disorder Demystified, Revised Edition: An Essential Guide to Understanding and Living with BPD*. New York, NY: Avalon Publishing Group.

Gratz, K.L. & Chapman, A.L. (2009). *Freedom from Self-Harm: Overcoming Self-Injury with Skills from DBT and Other Treatments*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Gunderson, J. G. & Hoffman, P.D. (Eds.) (2005). *Understanding and Treating Borderline Personality Disorder: A Guide for Professionals and Families*. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

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Marra, T. (2004). *Depressed & Anxious: The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Workbook for Overcoming Depression and Anxiety*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Porr, V. (2010). *Overcoming Borderline Personality Disorder: A Family Guide for Healing and Change*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Spradlin, S.E. (2003). *Don't Let Your Emotions Run Your Life: How Dialectical Behavior Therapy Can Put You in Control*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Van Gelder, K. (2010). *The Buddha and the Borderline: My Recovery From Borderline Personality Disorder through Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Buddhism, and Online Dating*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

## Online Resources

### **Behavioral Tech**

[www.behavioraltech.com](http://www.behavioraltech.com)

This is the website of Marsha Linehan, the American psychologist who developed DBT. The site includes online training, books, videos and other materials.

### **Borderline Personality Disorder: From the Inside Out**

[www.borderlinepersonality.ca](http://www.borderlinepersonality.ca)

The site provides extensive information on BPD and DBT, including e-books, audio, video, articles and A.J. Mahari's free BPD Inside Out podcast.

### **BPD Family**

[www.bpdfamily.com](http://www.bpdfamily.com)

The site provides extensive information on BPD, including short videos and the option to post about your own experiences.

### **TARA4BD**

[www.tara4bpd.org](http://www.tara4bpd.org)

TARA4BPD is the website for TARA, the first non-profit organization devoted to advocacy, research and education for people with BPD.

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