

How can I help myself?

As well as accessing help from services, these things may be helpful

1. Think about what lifestyle changes you would like to make, and how these will help you. This can help you to develop goals you can work on in therapy.

Try to find ways of relaxing such as meditation, breathing, listening to music or exercising.

2. If something upsets you, try to wait a while before responding. If you self-harm to deal with distress, think of other ways you could do this, like writing down how you feel, punching a pillow, or talking it through with someone you trust.

3. Look for patterns in the way that you respond to things that upset you. This may help you to problem-solve difficulties you have in relationships.

4. Work to find a balance in your life choices, e.g. notice if you are over or under eating, sleeping, or exercising, and try to balance this.

5. Give therapy a chance - it can take a while for the changes you want to happen.

Support in an emergency or crisis

You can contact the staff team between 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday on **01934 523700**.

If we are not available and outside normal opening hours, there is an answerphone. Please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Contact us

Coast Resource Centre

01934 523700

(Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm)

Intensive Support Team

01934 836497

(For crisis support overnight from 5:00pm to 9:00am)

For information on Trust Services,

Visit: www.awp.nhs.uk

PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01225 362900

Free phone: 0800 073 1778

Email: awp.pals@nhs.net

Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, audio, Braille) or in another language, please call PALS.

Lead: Clinical psychologist N. Som

Leaflet code: 381

Approval date: Feb 2016

Review due: Feb 2019

NHS

Avon and Wiltshire
Mental Health Partnership
NHS Trust

The facts about Emotional Intensity

(Borderline Personality Disorder)



North Somerset
Emotional Intensity Team

Emotions are essential

We all go through a range of emotions every day. Emotions are essential for our survival and well-being.

What is emotion intensity?

Most people struggle with their emotions from time to time. However, some people have regular and long lasting difficulties with their emotions.

They may feel emotions very intensely. Their emotions can last longer than feels comfortable, or can change very quickly.

The effects

Having emotions like this can cause a lot of distress and can be difficult to cope with.

Sometimes, people with emotional intensity look for other ways to cope, which can cause extra problems. These can include self-harm, substance abuse, suicide threats/ attempts, or impulsive acts that put our safety and well-being in danger.

Emotional intensity can also have a knock-on effect on many areas of life, such as relationships, jobs, physical health, and self-esteem.

Diagnosis

In the past, these types of difficulties have been called different names, such as borderline personality disorder (BPD).

In the UK 2-3% of the population have a diagnosis of BPD. Although men and women may be affected equally, more women are diagnosed with BPD. This may be because men are less likely to ask for help.

Facts about emotion intensity



- **People with emotion intensity are NOT “attention seeking” or “just being dramatic”.** The intensity of their emotions is severe enough to interfere with daily living and relationships.
- **BPD is NOT impossible to treat.** There are many successful treatments to help to support you. People with emotion intensity will improve over time. Recent research suggests that most people with emotion intensity have reduced symptoms over time, and about half eventually become symptom free and function well.
- **“BPD” does NOT mean that the person almost has a personality or has half a personality.**
- **People with emotion intensity are NOT always violent or dangerous to other people.** They are more likely to harm themselves than others.
- **It’s NOT all doom and gloom!** People with emotion intensity often have many other positive characteristics that they can use to help in their recovery. They can be creative, spontaneous, loyal, passionate, empathic, compassionate and lively.

Treatments for emotion intensity

Psychological therapies are the main treatment and are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE; <https://www.nice.org.uk/>). These therapies should be used along with a crisis plan for when things get difficult.

In our service, we often use **group-based** psychological treatments, as research shows they really work.

You don’t need to worry about sharing deeply personal information in the group, as we discourage this.

One to one therapy is also sometimes used.

We sometimes offer medication alongside psychological therapies to help with associated difficulties, such as low mood or anxiety.

Causes of emotion intensity

The causes are complicated and may include: a combination of life events, psychological experiences and effects, and genetic factors.

A lot of people with emotional intensity have experienced problems during their childhood.

These could include neglect, or physical, sexual or emotional abuse. However, not everyone who experiences emotional intensity has had these experiences.