

School and classroom strategies: Borderline personality disorder

This quick fact sheet contains strategies designed to address potential symptoms of borderline personality disorder (BPD). It is important to know and accept that people with BPD often have a heightened sensitivity to what is said, to body language, facial expressions and to situations. This may result in their reactions appearing impulsive or volatile. People with BPD can often appear highly sensitive and can have sudden emotional responses.

This only contains a portion of many possible strategies available. Consider using CMS, PBS and trauma informed practice to assist with behaviour support. Strategies should always be individualized and implemented with careful consideration of the differences of each child and the context of their individual circumstances.

Strategies for when the student is upset or in a crisis

- Remain calm
- Keep your body language open and supportive
- Acknowledge the person's distress and that they are trying to manage their emotions to the best of their ability at that moment
- Don't cut them off
- Validate the way they feel
- Show empathy
- Reflect speech and actively listen
- Listen to what the person is trying to tell you
- Be aware the student will be feeling vulnerable distressed
- Be clear about your own limits of acceptable behaviour
- Avoid using blame, shame, or putting someone down
- Use distraction
- Transition them to an activity or area that will reduce distress

Strategies for understanding what the student is trying to tell you

- Separate the person's thoughts and feelings from their behaviours. This makes it easier to really hear the emotional distress and to not respond to just their actions
- Listening to what the person is really saying to you or trying to tell you. Focus on the emotions not the words

Strategies for strengthening and maintaining a positive relationship with the student

- Reinforce you genuinely value and care about them
- Identify your own triggers to keep yourself calm
- Be consistent and honest
- Set limits ahead of time
- Follow a written safety or behaviour plan
- Follow up with actions you agree to do
- If you do not have time to speak with them, offer an alternative time and keep to the agreement

Strategies for setting boundaries and acceptable behaviour

- Plan when both parties are calm
- Be clear about open dialogue
- Identify self-calming strategies and emotional triggers
- Set healthy boundaries and should be consistent across all parties. Including what behaviours are acceptable
- Gradually introduce boundaries and limits

Strategies for discussions around behaviour

- Focus on the person, not the behaviour
- Demonstrate understanding and forgiveness
- Demonstrate that you haven't given up on them
- Highlight positive behaviours or qualities
- Note positive attempts to cope and change behaviour

External Links:

Videos:

What it's like with BPD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsbZ6d6ENco>

[Fact sheet about BPD](#)