



On the Edge of Your Personality

by Anna Słonina

BPD – which stands for Borderline Personality Disorder, is a mental illness which is marked by a continuing pattern of instability in moods, behaviour, identity, and interpersonal relationships.

FOT. BEN GOODE

The main character in the film “Girl, Interrupted” based on the memoir by Susanna Kaysen – asks her psychiatrist: “Borderline what? Borderline between what and what?” It’s an apt question; persons suffering from Borderline Personality Disorder are often described as being on the verge, or at the border of psychosis and neurosis.

One of the most common symptoms which can be observed in people with BPD is extreme mood swings – they may feel utterly happy and elated one minute, only to fall into the depths of despair the next.

The disease is also characterised by an unstable sense of self. BPD patients often report that their thoughts and beliefs may change depending on circumstances, e.g. they may be a party animal when this is expected of them, but turn quiet and shy in a different group of people. Their sense of identity is distorted and they often don’t know who they are.

People suffering from this mental disorder are frantically afraid of being rejected or abandoned by the people they care about. As a result they may become

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extremely possessive, or just the opposite – emotionally withdrawn and avoiding close relations so as not to get hurt.

Another symptom of this illness is a sense of all-encompassing emptiness; life seems meaningless and devoid of purpose. To fill the void, people with BPD often engage in a number of impulsive, risky behaviours such as casual sex, abusing alcohol, taking drugs, binge eating or going on shopping sprees.

Bouts of anger and episodes of aggressive behaviour are also characteristic of this disorder. Uncontrollable expressions

of anger such as yelling or physical violence can be a reaction to a situation that would probably seem unimportant to others, e.g. a friend being late.

Violence is not only aimed at others, as persons afflicted with BPD often hurt themselves physically. Self-harm, self-loathing, suicidal thoughts and attempts to commit suicide are common among people afflicted with this disorder.

At times of extreme stress, people with borderline personality disorder may experience paranoid thoughts and become delusional – start believing in things that are not real or true; sometimes also hallucinations may occur.

Such instability of self-image, moods, and behaviour in most cases has a detrimental effect on the sufferer’s career, work, family life, and interpersonal relationships. People who feel emotionally unstable and notice alarming symptoms often seek professional help. Treatment for BPD usually involves individual or group psychotherapy, but joining therapeutic communities, and arts or creative therapies can also prove beneficial. ■

o **on the edge of sth** | na krawędzi czegoś
borderline personality disorder | zaburzenie osobowości typu borderline (chwiejność emocjonalna)

mental illness | choroba umysłowa
instability | niestabilność, chwiejność
moods | nastroje
behaviour | zachowanie
identity | tożsamość

1 **memoir** 'memwa:(r) | pamiętnik, życiorys
psychiatrist saɪ'kaɪətrɪst | psychiatra
apt | trafny
to suffer from sth | cierpieć na coś
on the verge | na krawędzi
common | powszechny
mood swings | wahania nastroju
utterly | całkowicie
elated | uszczęśliwiony, przeszczęśliwy, w euforycznym nastroju
depth | głębia, otchłań
despair | rozpacz
disease | choroba
unstable ʌn'steɪbl | niestabilny

sense of self | poczucie własnego ja, poczucie swojej tożsamości

depending on sth | w zależności od czegoś
circumstances | okoliczności
party animal | imprezowicz
distorted | zniekształcony
frantically | szaleńczo
rejected | odrzucony
to care about sb | dbać o kogoś

2 **extremely** | wyjątkowo
possessive | zaborczy, zazdrosny
withdrawn | wycofany
to avoid sth | unikać czegoś
all-encompassing | wszechogarniający
to seem | wydawać się
meaningless | pozbawiony sensu
devoid of sth | pozbawiony czegoś
void | pustka
casual | tu: przypadkowy
to abuse sth | nadużywać czegoś
drug | narkotyk
binge eating bɪndʒ 'li:tɪŋ | kompulsywne objadanie się, zaburzenia z napadami objadania się

shopping spree | szal zakupów
bout baʊt | napad, atak
uncontrollable ʌn'kɒn'trəʊləbl / ʌn'kɒn'trəʊləbl | niekontrolowany

3 **yelling** | krzyczenie
physical violence | przemoc fizyczna
afflicted with sth | dotknięty czymś
self-harm | samookaleczanie się
self-loathing | nienawiść do samego siebie
suicidal thoughts ˌsu:ɪ'saɪdl / ˌsju:ɪ'saɪdl θɔ:ts | myśli samobójcze
attempt | próba, usiłowanie
to commit suicide | popełnić samobójstwo
to experience sth | doświadczać czegoś
delusional | urojeniowy, cierpiący na urojenia
to occur tu ə'kɜ:(r) | występować
detrimental | szkodliwy
to seek sth | szukać czegoś
treatment | leczenie
to involve sth | obejmować coś
community | społeczność
to prove beneficial | okazywać się korzystnym