

# Borderline Personality Disorder and Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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# Introduction

- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) – DSM-5
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – DSM-5
- Complex PTSD (C-PTSD)
- Treatment Approaches and Considerations

# What is BPD?

## DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for BPD

Pattern of instability in relationships, self-image, affects, and marked impulsivity beginning in early adulthood with 5+ of the following:

- A. Frantic efforts to avoid real or imagined abandonment
- B. Pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships
- C. Identity disturbance
- D. Impulsivity in at least 2 areas that are potentially self-damaging
- E. Recurrent suicidal behavior or self-mutilating behavior
- F. Affective instability due to a marked reactivity of mood
- G. Chronic feelings of emptiness
- H. Inappropriate, intense anger
- I. Transient, stress-related paranoid ideation or severe dissociative symptoms

# What is PTSD?

## DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for PTSD

- A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence
- B. Re-experiencing symptoms
- C. Avoidance symptoms
- D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood
- E. Hyperarousal symptoms

- Duration of the disturbance (Criteria B, C, D, and E) is more than 1 month and causes distress or impairment.
- Dissociative subtype includes depersonalization and derealization.

# What is Complex PTSD?

## Difference between PTSD and Complex PTSD

- Complex PTSD associated with long-term child physical, sexual abuse & exploitation, long-term interpersonal violence/domestic violence (high betrayal trauma)
- Complex PTSD = PTSD symptoms + chronic, repeated trauma
- Resulting difficulties with emotion regulation, negative self-concept, interpersonal problems



# BPD versus Complex PTSD

- Complex PTSD is commonly misdiagnosed as BPD due to overlap in the following symptom categories
  - Emotion regulation
  - Self-image
  - Interpersonal problems



# BPD versus Complex PTSD

## Emotion Regulation

- BPD
  - Frequent impulsivity
    - Suicide attempts/gestures, self-harm behaviors
  - Mood lability
- Complex PTSD
  - Ineffective coping choices
  - Reactive anger



# BPD versus Complex PTSD

## Self-Image

- BPD
  - Unstable sense of self
  - Shifting self-image
- Complex PTSD
  - Persistent negative self-image



# BPD versus Complex PTSD

## Interpersonal Problems

- BPD
  - Fear of abandonment
  - Unstable relationships that alternate between idealizing and devaluing the other person
- Complex PTSD
  - Chronic avoidance of relationships
  - Sense of alienation from others

## Treatment Approaches for BPD

- There are a variety of evidence-based modalities, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Mentalization Based Treatment (MBT), and General Psychiatric Management (GPM)
- DBT merges CBT change principles with Eastern acceptance practices
- Teaches skills in the areas of mindfulness, emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness
- Initially developed for treating BPD, but can be helpful for a variety of diagnostic conditions, including PTSD

## Principles of PTSD Treatment

- Stage One
  - safety, stabilization, structure, skills, self-care
- Stage Two
  - grieving, remembrance, processing, meaning-making
- Stage Three
  - reconnection, integration

## Important Treatment Considerations

- Natural overlap between
  - Principles of DBT and Stage 1 trauma treatment
  - Principles of various evidence-based treatment modalities for PTSD (e.g., CPT, PE, DBT PE) and Stage 2 trauma treatment

## Important Treatment Considerations

- Different aims of treatment
  - BPD
    - Reduce suicidality and self-harm; maintain safety
    - Reduce dependence on others
    - Develop a stable sense of self
  - Complex PTSD
    - Reduce interpersonal avoidance, increase social connection
    - Build a positive self image
    - If appropriate, eventually work with the content and meaning of traumatic memories

# Treatment Approaches

## Important Treatment Considerations

- Importance of trusting relationship and rapport
- Pacing and grounding
- Addressing interpersonal difficulties

# Thank You!

# Questions?



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