

Insight into personality disorder

May 2018



Pride in our care

What is a personality disorder?

Our personality is what makes us who we are. Therefore you have probably felt the way you do for a long time. We are born with a set of genes that go some way to determining our characteristics but our personalities continue to develop in our childhoods and adolescence and our experiences help to shape us into the people we become. People are very varied and you will have encountered all sorts of personalities but some types of personalities cause people considerable stress.

If you have a Personality Disorder you probably feel that you are different from other people. The way you experience the world is not the same as others. You might notice that you react to situations or people unlike the way others do. If you have thought carefully about yourself you might have noticed that you think, feel and behave differently to others around you.

Personality disorders can cause people a great deal of distress. You may have had problems in relationships, problems getting on in your daily life and you may have difficult emotions to understand and to cope with.

What sort of problems do you have??

The following is a list of some of the difficulties that you might recognise in yourself. You may experience problems in one area or you may be affected by a number of problems.

Extreme feelings

You may notice that your feelings are often very strong, all-consuming and cause you a lot of pain. You may experience fear, anger, anxiety or agitation that you find hard to shake off or cope with. You may also find yourself so anxious that you avoid situations or you might feel weak and unable to do things without depending on someone else to go with you or do things for you.

Feeling bad

You may feel bad about yourself. Perhaps others have said hurtful things to you in the past; perhaps you have horrible thoughts or you believe bad things about yourself which others say are not true. Sometimes you might hurt yourself to try to get rid of these feelings. You may also have tried taking drugs, drinking too much alcohol, starving yourself or trying to take your own life.

Strange experiences

You may have strange experiences like hearing voices or sensing people around you that others cannot see. Sometimes it feels like you experience things outside of yourself.

Trouble with the law

You many have been in trouble with the law; you may get very angry with people and lose your temper. Maybe you have broken property or got into a fight. You might be impulsive, get bored quickly and end up hurting others as you try to get what you want.

Problems trusting

You may mistrust others and their motivation and watch others closely seeing threats where others don't.

Relationships

You may avoid people feeling that others get in the way or you may feel desperate when you are not in a relationship and feeling close to someone. You may fear being abandend; feeling this so strongly that you cling to someone even if the relationship is unhealthy or damaging. You may need to feel centre stage, if you do not have people's attention on you you feel uncomfortable. You might do anything to get their attention and perhaps are seen as being provocative.

Feeling special

You may feel that you are not just different to others but special. Sometimes it is hard for you to say how you are special. Despite your feelings others don't see you this way which causes you to resent them and feel bad about yourself. Having these problems is not your fault and it is not fair. NHS staff will work with you to help you understand and overcome these difficulties. However you will have to work hard to change parts of yourself. This is demanding work and it takes time and courage.

Treatment options

The treatment offered to you will depend on you and your team deciding upon what is the most appropriate treatment plan for you. Personality disorder diagnoses vary greatly so your plan will be individual. However, there are some general treatment themes which may be offered to you:

Understanding yourself - you will be given the opportunity to talk about your experiences and problems and to feel heard. You may be able to begin to understand how your problems arose.

Looking after yourself - you will be encouraged to take care of yourself. If you self-harm you will be able to discuss making the decision to stop hurting yourself. You will also be able to consider changing your lifestyle so that you can start eating, sleeping and exercising as normally as you can. You will be helped to learn to care for yourself emotionally.

Respect - you will be encouraged to be strong and be kind to yourself and others. Your treatment may involve contact with your GP, your Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) or may involve seeing a psychologist, counsellor or psychotherapist. Whoever you see will be there to understand you and support you as you make changes to your life.

Medication

There is no medication designed to treat or cure a personality disorder. You may occasionally be given a brief course of treatment for a specific difficulty or a problem that goes with having a personality disorder such as low mood or hearing voices. Although you may find it hard to cope learning how to manage your difficult feelings, gaining the knowledge that you can cope with the feelings whilst they last will enable you to feel stronger as a person and start to feel better without medication.

Patient perspective

“My diagnosis is 'Borderline Personality Disorder'. When I came into hospital my main problem was that I felt unstable. I struggled to express very strong feelings appropriately which usually ended up with me shouting and becoming aggressive.

In hospital I have learned a lot about myself and that I have a lot of good traits. My ward is very structured so I have a lot to fill my time with. The nurses help me by talking to me when I need help. They have also been very supportive during difficult times. My therapy has helped me rebuild myself and discover why I do the things I do.

I have changed a lot since I came into hospital. I am more honest and open and I have more control of my emotions and actions. I am looking forward to the future and moving into my own place. I want to study hair and beauty at college and eventually find full-time employment, hopefully as a Peer Support Worker.”

(Anonymous)

Further help

First Response Service

If you or a loved one is in mental health crisis, you can call our 24-hour First Response Service on **111 (option 2)**. This service is for anyone, of any age, living in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Specially-trained mental health staff will speak to you and discuss with you your mental health care needs

The Samaritans

Dial 116 123 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week - free from any phone)

Urgent Care Cambridgeshire

Dial 111

SANE

0300 304 7000 (lines open 6pm – 11pm, 365 days a year)

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Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns about any of CPFT's services, or would like more information please contact: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on freephone 0800 376 0775 or e-mail pals@cpft.nhs.uk

Out-of-hours' service for CPFT service users

Please call **NHS 111** for health advice and support.

If you require this information in another format such as braille, large print or another language, please let us know.



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