

buzz

Manchester
Health & Wellbeing
Service



Personality Disorders

A guide about
personality disorders



Produced by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service
in partnership with Manchester Primary Care Mental Health Team.
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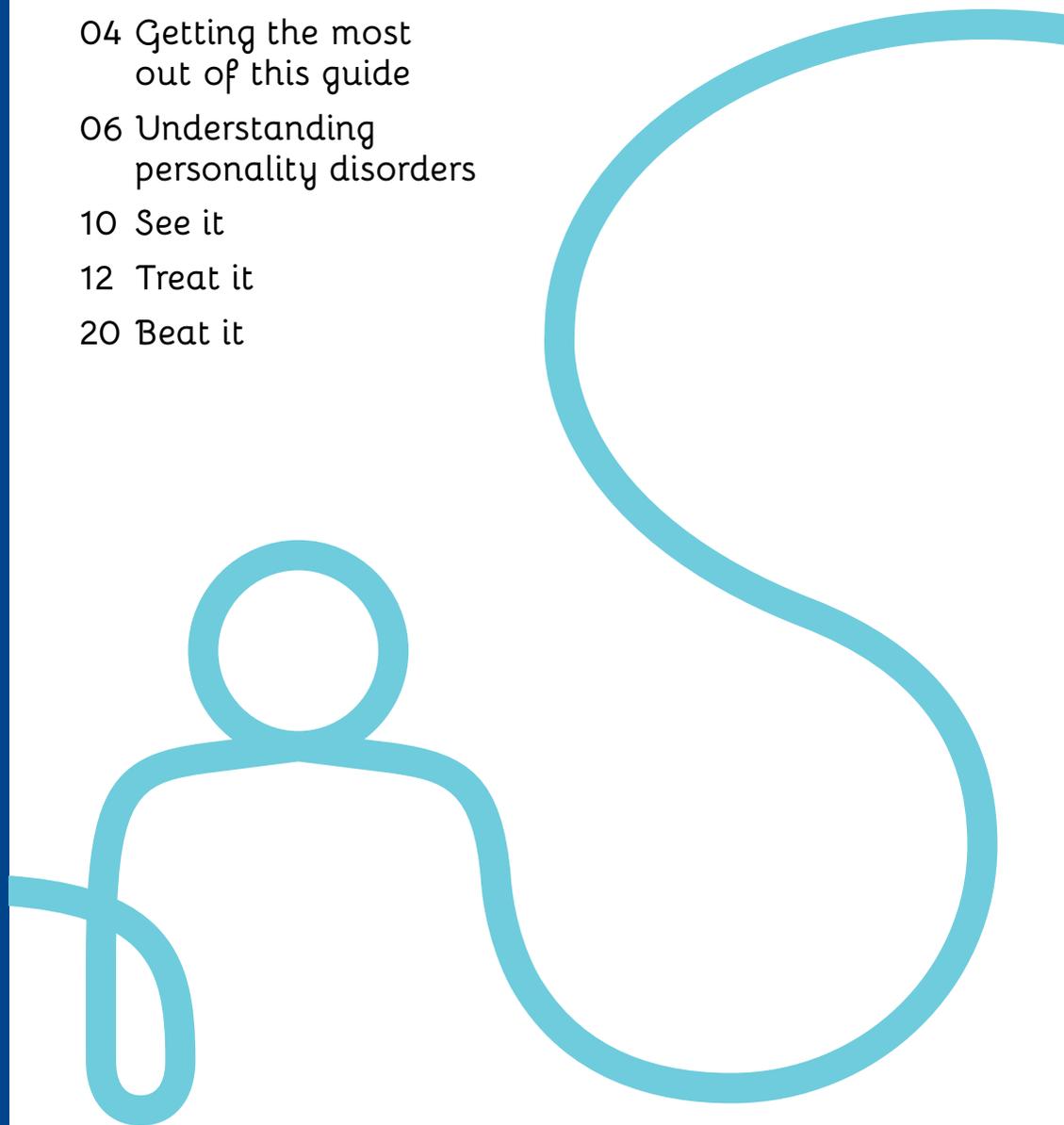
www.buzzmanchester.co.uk

This guide is one of a series about mental health and wellbeing by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service. You can find more guides at www.mhim.org.uk

'Personality Disorders' has been written by individuals who are recovering from personality disorders alongside a Clinical Psychologist.

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Getting the most out of this guide

This guide aims to:

- Help you understand personality disorders
- Give you ideas about how you can manage living with a personality disorder

Throughout this guide there will be a number of tips for you to try, some aim to help you figure out how personality disorders might affect your life and others will help you find out what works best for you to cope.

If you find it hard to work through the guide, you might find it useful to talk to someone. This could be a health worker such as your doctor or practice nurse. At the end of the guide there are details about where to get more information, help and treatment.

Understanding personality disorders

This section explores what personality disorders are. It explores how a personality disorder can affect your life.

See it

This section will help you to see what the behaviours of different personality disorders are.

Treat it

This section has a range of tips to help you manage the problems that are linked with personality disorders.

Beat it

This section gives you more ideas on how to make progress. It also lists where you can get further support.

As you read this guide, it will ask you to think about what is going on in your life and how you are feeling. There are spaces in the guide for you to write things down. You may find that this helps you think more clearly about how you feel.

What you'll need:

- A pen and maybe a notebook for extra notes
- Time for reading and thinking about how you can help yourself
- Somewhere quiet to read and think
- To keep going and pace yourself by taking one step at a time
- Support from a family member, friend or health professional if needed

Understanding personality disorders

Personality disorders are common mental health problems. A UK study from 2006, found that one in 20 people might have a personality disorder.

Each of us has our own set of patterns in the way we think, feel and what we do. This is your personality. It is partly shaped by your biology, like your genes and health. It is also influenced by what happens in your life.

Some people develop patterns of behaviour that lead to long-term problems in the way they think, feel and how they cope in personal relationships with other people.

If you think you or someone you know may have a personality disorder. Look out for the following patterns of behaviour:

- Odd beliefs/behaviours: such as paranoid thoughts
- Find it hard to manage their emotions: including being very emotional or lacking emotions
- Problems in relationships: including intense reactions to relationships. Another example is being uninterested in and avoiding relationships with other people
- Self-harm and suicidal thoughts: this includes thinking about and/or actual self-harm or suicidal acts

There are many factors that play a part in why people develop personality disorders. The two main reasons are:

- Our genes
- Our experiences in life

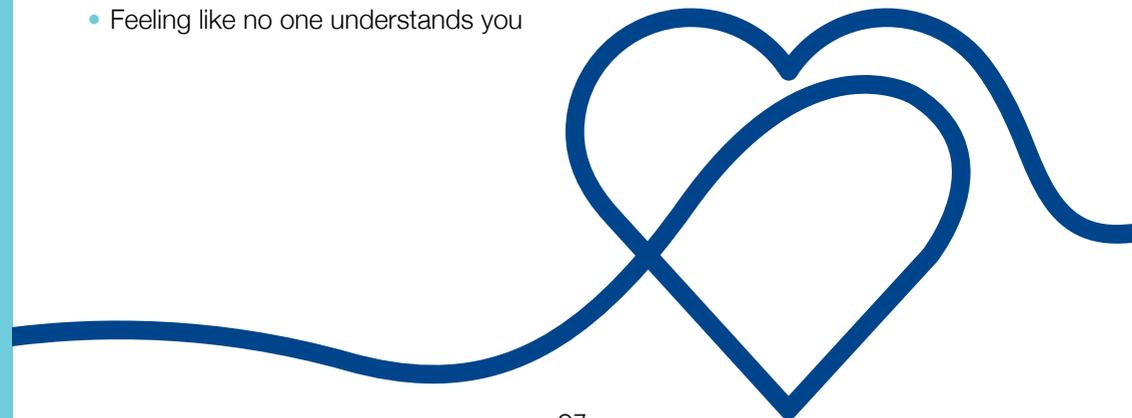
Problems with personality typically become apparent in the teen years and continue into adulthood, often stemming from a tough upbringing in childhood.

This could include growing up with:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Bullying
- Feeling unloved
- Feeling uncared for
- Feeling like no one understands you

The severity of the personality disorder can vary from person to person ranging from mild, moderate or severe. Some people may go through periods of 'remission' where they function well.

Many people with personality disorders lead full and successful lives. The amount that a personality disorder can affect someone's life varies over time. People who have a mild form of personality disorder usually cope well on a day to day basis and may only experience problems during stressful times in their life such as losing a job, money issues or the end of a relationship.



Can you recover from a personality disorder?

For some people personality disorders can lead to problems throughout their lifetime. However, there is evidence that some people recover from personality disorders over time. One example of this is Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) it is the most commonly recognised personality disorder.

Recent research has also found that some mild to moderate personality disorders can be improved with talking therapies. However, treatment should always be tailored to the individual as there is no single approach that will suit everyone.

There are many different ways to treat personality disorders:

- Psychological therapies
- Psychodynamic (reflective) psychotherapy
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Interpersonal therapy
- Therapeutic communities
- Medication

The 'Treat it' section of this guide on pages 12 and 13 explains some of these treatments in more detail. You can also find more information on organisations that can help with treatments, support and therapies on page 26.

“1 in 20 people might have a personality disorder.”

See it

Types of personality disorder

There are many different types of personality disorder. Each has their own symptoms or behaviours. However, there are three main clusters: A, B and C.

It is very hard to decide which personality disorder a person may have. Doctors should do this with great care. Some people don't always fit neatly into the clusters which makes them even harder to recognise.



This table shows the differences in symptoms of each personality cluster:

Cluster A	Cluster B	Cluster C
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have odd or eccentric beliefs• Find it hard to relate to others• Are suspicious or paranoid• Behave in ways most people would see as odd• Other people may describe them as living in a fantasy world of their own	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have chaotic lives• Find it hard to manage their emotions• Behave in ways most people would see as odd• Swing between being very positive and being very upset and angry with other people• Other people may see them as being dramatic and unpredictable. This can distress them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Struggle with lots of feelings of anxiety and fear• Find it hard to cope with day to day life because of their anxiety• Find it hard to do things for themselves without support from other people• Other people may see them as worrying a lot and needy
<p>Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paranoid Personality Disorder• Schizoid Personality Disorder• Schizotypal Personality Disorder	<p>Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Borderline Personality Disorder• Anti-social Personality Disorder• Narcissistic Personality Disorder• Histrionic Personality Disorder	<p>Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoidant Personality Disorder• Dependent Personality Disorder• Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder

Treat it

Managing life with a personality disorder

This section of the guide covers a range of tips to help you manage your day to day life.

In the past, it was thought that there was very little or nothing that could be done to help people cope with personality disorders. That has now changed. We now know that a number of things can help for some people.

Don't feel like you have to try everything at once. Instead choose one or two things to try first and then move on to try other activities or solutions at a later date.

Self-help

Learning about your condition can help you find better ways to cope. It can help you to recover. There are lots of leaflets and books about personality disorders. A good place to start is to look in the 'Other sources of help' section at the end of this guide. Make sure the information you obtain is from a reliable source such as your doctor or health professional.

Support groups

Joining a support group can be helpful. People in the group may have similar problems to you and it can help to find out what other people do to cope. You can talk to other people who are recovering or who have recovered from a personality disorder. This can help you feel more positive about recovery.

Talking therapies

Talking therapies can be helpful for some personality disorders. They are useful for people who know how their disorder makes things hard for them. You can learn new ways of coping with your emotions. You can also find out how to cope with relationships.

Talk to your GP about access to the following therapies in Manchester:

- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)
- Schema Therapy
- Cognitive Analytical Therapy (CAT)
- Mentalisation Based Therapy (MBT)
- Therapeutic Communities

Medication

Certain drugs can help people manage some symptoms of personality disorders, although they cannot fully treat the condition. Other drugs can treat problems like anxiety and low mood.

Admission to hospital

A stay in hospital is often not helpful for people with personality disorders. We see it as a last resort. It should only happen when a person is at risk of harm.

Tips to help you cope with a personality disorder

1. Educate yourself and others

Learn as much as you can about your condition. Teach your family, friends and care team about what you have found out. It can help you be more aware of how things are for you. It will also help others to support you. The books and websites listed at the back of this guide are a good place to start.

2. Mindfulness

Learn skills in and practice mindfulness. This is a skill for focusing the mind. It can be very useful for managing worry and emotions. You can use it to help you deal with thoughts about things that upset you.

3. Relaxation/stress management

We know that stress can make problems with personality disorders worse. It helps to learn to manage stress in your life.

It is important to learn how you can relax. You can do this in many ways. Some people read; others paint and draw; some people knit and others spend time with animals. Try to find something that works for you. Breathing skills can reduce the effect of stress on the body. Read the guide 'From Distress to De-stress' for more information. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

4. Sleep

Good quality sleep is vital for good mental health. Make sure you have a good sleep routine. Read the guide 'Sleep Well' for more information. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

5. Manage relationships

Keep in contact with your family and friends. Also, try to keep a balance in your relationships. It is good to help/do things for others. It is also vital that you take care of your own needs.

6. Drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol can negatively affect how you cope with your emotions. It is best to avoid drugs and limit alcohol intake by sticking to the advised guidelines. The guide 'Food and Mood' has information on alcohol guidelines. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

7. Organise activities

Taking part in activities is good for your mental health but sometimes having lots of things to do can make you anxious and worried so make time to organise your week. You need to plan time to be active and time to relax. The guide 'Improve Your Mood' has a tool to help you do this. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

8. Coping strategies

Create a list of useful things to do to help you cope at difficult times. The guide 'Unwind Your Mind' has many tools on how to manage unhelpful thoughts. You can download it free from www.mhim.org.uk

9. Seek help

If you are not coping, seek help from family and friends. It may help to talk with your GP about how you deal with your condition.

10. Safety plan

Write a plan to keep yourself safe when you are not coping well. As part of this, make a list of people to contact if you feel unsafe. You can start by filling in the spaces on the next page. If you have a crisis, you can use it.

If you are in crisis now, and/or feeling suicidal, you should see your GP or go to your local A&E.

Safety plan

Your GP

Write down your doctor's name, address and contact number here:

Accident and emergency

You can go to A&E if your mental health worsens to crisis point.

Write down the address of your nearest A&E here:

Other people who can help

Other people may be able to help you including your family and friends.

Write their names and numbers here:

Look after yourself

The skill of 'looking after you' and being aware of your needs is important.

Some people feel guilty when they take care of their own needs but taking care of yourself is a good thing. You will be better able to deal with the ups and downs that life will throw at you and when you feel strong and well rested you will also be more able to support others.

Treat yourself

Take time out. Enjoy being yourself and do something just for you. It might be having a bubble bath or going to watch a film.

Connect

Build bonds with people. It can help you feel supported. It can also allow you to feel closer to others. People have always lived in groups. Having a good set of friends and family can improve your wellbeing.

Eat well

Your brain uses up more than 50% of the energy in the food you eat. That is why it is important to eat starchy food like rice, pasta, bread and potatoes. When you do not eat well, your brain cannot work properly. Eating your five-a-day helps improve physical and mental health. It includes fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit and vegetables. It is also important to eat protein such as meat, fish, beans, tofu and Quorn. Omega 3 oils found in oily fish and dark green vegetables are vital for a healthy brain. So is drinking enough liquid each day. The guide 'Food and Mood' has more information. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Vitamin D

There is very little Vitamin D in the food we eat. Our skin makes Vitamin D from sunlight. However, this only happens between the months of March and October. You only need to spend 20 minutes in the sun each day, if you have pale skin. If you have a darker skin tone you may need to spend longer in the sun. Many breakfast cereals and all margarines (but not low fat spreads) have Vitamin D added to them. Just check out the label. You can also buy Vitamin D tablets to take once a day.

Sleep well

Sleep lets the body and mind recuperate and rest. When you don't sleep well, your brain doesn't work properly. You can use relaxation and breathing techniques in bed to help you to fall asleep. Read the guide 'Sleep Well' for more information. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Talk to someone you really trust

Just talking about what is stressing you out can make you feel better.

Be active

Being active can make you feel fitter and more confident. It is also good for reducing stress. Choose something that you enjoy and can fit into your lifestyle. Aim to do 30 minutes of activity at least five times a week. Walking, gardening and doing the housework are all examples of physical activity. The guide 'Physical Activity and Mood' has even more tips about getting started. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Do one thing at a time

Having lots of things to do can sometimes feel overwhelming. Decide what is most important, then tackle the most essential job first.

Give

This is about doing something nice for others. Helping someone else can make you feel good about yourself. It will make other people feel good too. It could be as simple as smiling at a stranger or holding a door open for someone. You could help a neighbour or friend. You could even do random acts of kindness. It can feel great to volunteer at a local community group or charity. You could meet new people, learn new skills and gain valuable experience.

Distract yourself

Having something else to focus on helps to lessen stress. So, you could try out a new hobby!

Keep learning

Your brain needs exercise too, so you can keep it busy by learning or rediscovering skills. Learning new skills can help to build self-confidence and self-esteem enabling you to feel more able to cope with life.

Take notice

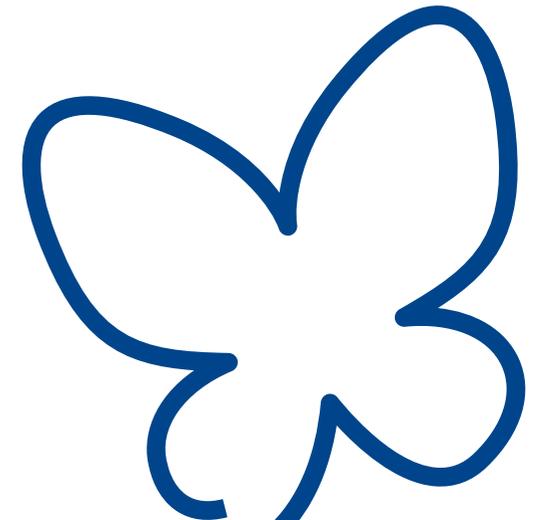
Notice the world around you. It can put things in perspective and brighten your day. Often we can go around in autopilot and miss the little things that could improve our mood. Keep an eye out for rainbows, architecture and nature!

Be creative

Express yourself in some way. You could try painting, writing or dancing.

Take time out to play

Having fun is a great way to reduce stress. Enjoying time with your friends helps you feel good. You could play on a games console or go on the swings at the park.



Beat it

How your family and friends can help

Receiving support from loved ones is vital and can play a crucial role in helping to manage personality disorders.

If you have a loved one with a personality disorder, here are some tips for you.

1. Find out about personality disorders

It is important to learn as much as you can about the personality disorder. Learn what is helpful for your loved one who has the disorder. Also, find out what is helpful for you too.

2. Be compassionate and understanding

Try to be compassionate towards your loved one. They are suffering and doing the best they can. They do not mean to make you suffer.

3. Be clear about what is unacceptable behaviour

You do not need to give in to all the demands of your loved one. You do not need to accept unfair or abusive treatment. This will not help your loved one to start to change their behaviour. It will not help them recover. Be clear about what behaviour you will accept. Let them know what conduct you will not accept. This includes how they behave towards you and others.

4. Do not try to 'fix' everything

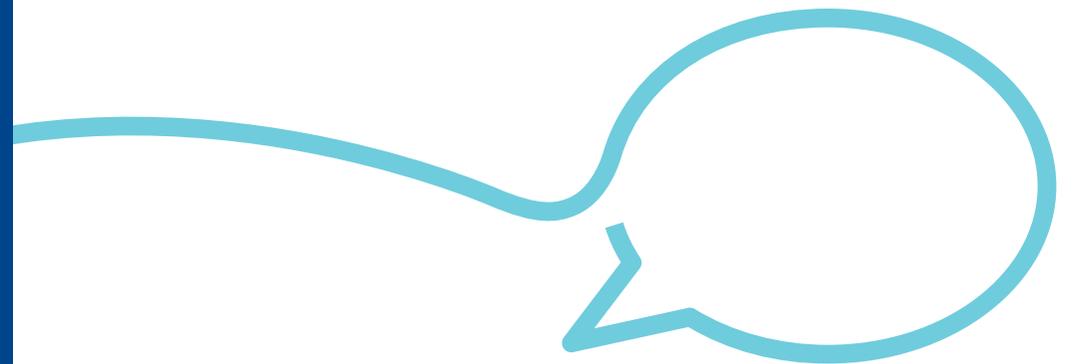
You shouldn't try to fix everything or take responsibility for someone living with a personality disorder. Instead help and support them to do as much as they can on their own, this will help them to become more confident and self-sufficient in the long run. This is even more important if your loved one has a history of needing help from others.

5. Recognise your own emotions and need for wellbeing

Do not ignore your own personal wellbeing. The way people behave when they have a personality disorder can create a lot of strain on relationships. Make sure you take time out for yourself. Look after yourself by eating and sleeping well. Try to take time to relax and do in activities you enjoy.

6. Support your loved one to get treatment

Help your loved one to seek help and treatment. It is not your job to make them well.



Practice, practice, practice...

Things are not going to change overnight. It can be a challenge to make changes to the way you have been doing things for so long. But, with practice it will become easier and easier. In the end, the changes will feel like second nature as you get used to them.

There is a lot of information in this guide. It might be useful to read it more than once. Try each idea a few times and keep practising the ones that you find useful.

Do not expect too much too soon. It may take some time for you to change the way you think and feel. It is a bit like learning to walk as a toddler. We all fall over at first. You might even bang your head or graze your knee. Luckily, despite these setbacks, you kept going and eventually learnt to walk. It didn't happen overnight. It took time and practice. It is the same managing personality disorders. It is not going to happen straight away but it will be worth it in the end.

Coping with setbacks

Everyone has setbacks. Life is like that! The trick is to find ways to cope with them. When they do occur, remember that it happens to everyone. It does not mean that you have failed, so it is important not to give yourself a hard time.

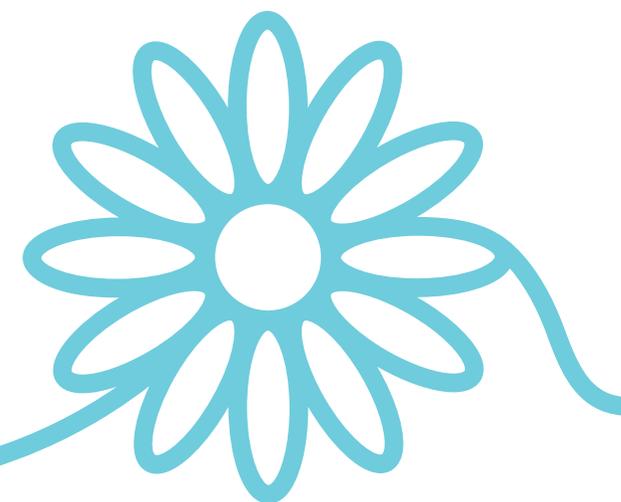
When you have a setback, try to remember that you are not back to square one. It can be easy to forget about all the progress you have already made. Try to use it as a learning experience. We often learn more from things when they don't go quite right compared to when they go smoothly. Take some time to reflect on what has happened. Try to understand why it has happened and what you can learn from it. You may be able to find a pattern to what is going on. You can learn to be aware of the warning signs that a setback is more likely.

Warning signs might include:

- Lots of things going on in your life
- Changes in your mood: feeling low, angry, upset, wound up etc
- Changes in your thinking: negative thinking; unhelpful thinking styles; giving yourself a hard time
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Becoming more irritable and argumentative
- Changes in your body: feeling more tired, headaches, aching muscles
- Changes in what you do: doing fewer enjoyable things, avoiding people and places; being less active

Once you can recognise your warning signs, you can do something to deal with them so things don't get worse. You could even come up with your own survival guide with a plan to deal with each warning sign. Use the 'Your ideas' section of this guide on page 24.

Finally – don't give up! Managing life with a personality disorder, can take time and practice. It may take a while to notice an improvement. Remember to take some time each month to look at the progress you have made.



Other sources of help

Books

- **The Borderline Personality Disorder Survival Guide: Everything You Need to Know About Living with Borderline Personality Disorder**
by A L Chapman and K L Gratz
- **Get Me Out of Here: My Recovery from Borderline Personality Disorder**
by R Reiland
- **Overcoming Borderline Personality Disorder: A Family Guide for Healing and Change**
by V Porr
- **The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook**
by M McKay, J Wood and J Brantley
- **The Expanded Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training Manual**
by L Pederson
- **Free Yourself from Anxiety: A Self-Help Guide for Overcoming Anxiety Disorders**
by E Fletcher and M Langley
- **Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World**
by M Williams and D Penman
- **Reinventing Your Life**
by J E Young and J S Klosko

You can borrow books about personality disorders from your local library.

Organisations

- **Mind**
This national mental health charity provides support, information and advice for those affected by mental health difficulties.
www.mind.org.uk
Helpline: 0300 123 3393
- **NICE National Institute for Health and Care Excellence**
They provide information and guidance on the treatment of various disorders and conditions, including some personality disorders.
www.nice.org.uk
- **The Samaritans**
They provide emotional support and help in a crisis 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
www.samaritans.org.uk
Helpline: 116 123

Websites

www.getselfhelp.co.uk

This website offers free Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) self-help information, resources and includes therapy worksheets.

www.llttf.com

The 'Living Life to the Full' website is a free, online life skills course. It covers a range of skills to help deal with everyday stresses.

www.mhim.org.uk

This is the 'Mental Health in Manchester' website. It has information about mental health issues and there are details of local services. It also includes information in a range of languages, and you can download the full range of self-help guides from this website.

buzzmanchester.co.uk

buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service are experts in health improvement and self-care offering one to one support and training for a range of health and wellbeing issues.

www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

This website features free online self-help modules and resources.

ecouch.anu.edu.au

E-couch is a free interactive self-help program. It covers a range of topics. These include modules for depression, anxiety and worry.

moodgym.anu.edu.au

Moodgym is a free online self-help program. It covers a range of skills to help prevent and deal with depression.

www.rcpsych.ac.uk

This is the 'Royal College of Psychiatrists' website. It is an online mental health resource.