

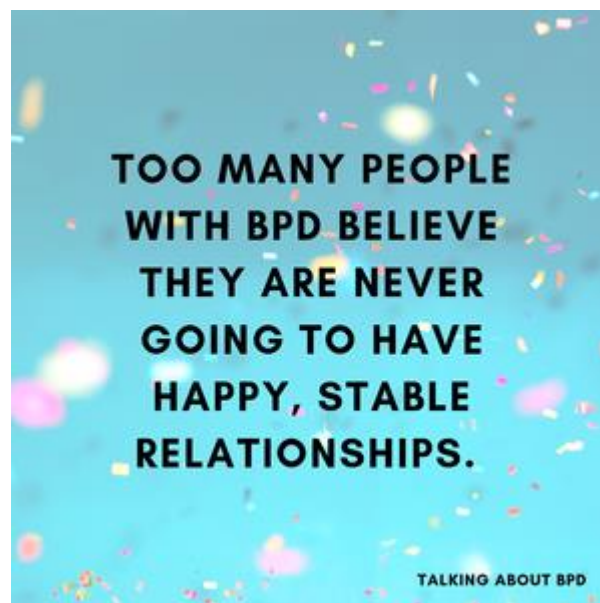
6 reasons why my relationship works (even when my BPD is giving me hell)

By Rosie @ www.talkingaboutbpd.co.uk

[TW This post talks about my history of being in emotionally and verbally abusive relationships, please take care]

It hurts me when I hear people with borderline personality disorder believing that they are unlovable because of their mental health condition.

Too many people with BPD believe that they are never going to be in a stable, happy relationship. Stigma says that people with this diagnosis are too fragile, too needy, too dramatic, too volatile and too much like hard work to be part of happy relationships.



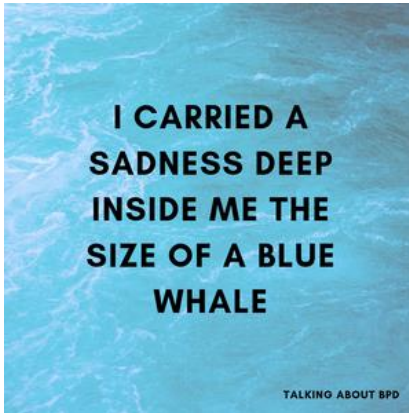
I bought into myths like these for years. I didn't tell myself 'I'm not enough', but 'I'm too much'.

I believed I cried too much, felt too much, loved too much, cared too much, hurt too much. I thought everything about me was 'too much'.

To add fuel to these flames, I was also in an abusive relationship with someone who belittled and humiliated me. I was on the receiving end of repeated verbally abuse, was called names and sworn at. My confidence in bits and at my lowest ebb I was told I was 'too messed up' to ever have a happy relationship.

It took me a long time before I was able to leave that relationship. When I finally left, I thought the only way I would ever be able to have a healthy, happy relationship was if I no longer had BPD. Essentially, I believed that because I had BPD, I was unlovable and therefore in order to be lovable I would need to be free of my mental health condition.

Because I didn't know if my BPD would ever go away, I felt locked out from having loving relationships. I carried a sadness deep inside me like a lonely blue-whale.



Around a year and a half ago, I met my boyfriend and that's when everything changed. He is the person who has had the most positive impact on my mental health than anyone else I know, or have ever known. From our first date, we both knew we wanted to spend our evenings and weekends together hanging out and getting to know one another.

I was surprised to learn that he had fallen in love me with for the person I am today, rather than the person I might become in the future.

I was even more shocked to learn that he saw the aspects of myself that I believed made me 'too much' as strengths and actually the reasons why he loved me. In the context of this relationship, crying 'too much' became a sign of my empathy. Being upset, for example, didn't mean I was 'needy', instead it made me someone struggling and needing help. Being affectionate and expressive was not 'over the top', but was evidence of my thoughtfulness, kindness and creativity.

Over a period of only a few months, this relationship started to transform the way I saw myself. I no longer saw myself as someone who needed to be different in order to be lovable: I was loved just the way I am.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, being in such a joyful, warm, caring, fun and loving relationship has enabled me to start the healing process that I so needed to embark on.

As there is so much stigma perpetuating the false idea that BPD automatically equals nightmare relationships, I thought I would share five of the reasons why my relationship works so well in spite of my condition.

1. Validation

I'm with someone who understands the value of this for calming my emotions. This means that I don't have to suppress my emotions out of fear that I will be belittled, dismissed or silenced. Instead, I know that my feelings and thoughts will be met with respect and support. Essentially, it means I feel safe.

2. Communication

Because I can talk about how I feel, I don't have to keep it all in. And if you've ever had to keep it all in, you'll know how awful that feels! I think the main reason we are able to navigate the stormy waters of my BPD together, is down to clear, open and honest communication.

3. Knowing the history

Being with someone who has the background on why I feel the way I do and the reasons behind my mental health difficulties is really important to me. This is because I strongly resist the idea that I have mental health difficulties for 'no reason': there's a story behind this diagnosis.

4. Humour

We can both see the funny side of my thought processes. On the whole, my BPD is not exactly a laugh a minute, but there are times when I assume the opposite of what's actually happening and it can be funny. It would not be unheard of for me to be given a gift and not thinking it was for me!

5. Understanding of stigma

My boyfriend understands that the mental health system is not flawless. He understands how difficult getting help and being taken seriously can be. He knows that there are inequalities and hierarchies in society which gives him a realistic view into what life with a mental health condition can be like.

6. Compatibility

The keystone of our relationship is that we are a great match for each others' personalities, values, outlook on life and goals. I think that every relationship needs to have a balance of similarities and differences between the people involved. Having lots in common is vital, but it's also helpful to have some differences so as to learn from one another and discover new things.

People with BPD are often individuals with big hearts. Much of the time, people with this diagnosis have been through an enormous amount, whether that's trauma, discrimination, abuse or invalidation. I believe that being in caring, loving, close relationships offer opportunities to reframe distressing beliefs stemming from past experiences.

I shifted from feeling unlovable to feeling lovable and that shift has sparked healing on a deep level. That blue whale of sadness is now breaching on top of the waves.

If you're reading this and are feeling as unlovable as I used to, I hope this creates a flicker of hope inside you, if only for a second.

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