

Borderline Personality Disorder and Your Sex Life

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Borderline personality disorder (BPD) symptoms can affect your emotional state, your relationships, and your ability to control your behavior. So it's not surprising that BPD can also have a major impact on your sex life. While very few researchers have studied BPD and its effects on sexuality, more and more work is suggesting that people with BPD can experience several key difficulties with sex.

Attitudes About Sex

Research has demonstrated that women with BPD tend to have more negative attitudes about sex. For example, women with BPD report having a greater number of mixed feelings about sexual relations, and are also more likely to feel pressured to have sex with their sexual partners. In addition, women with BPD report more general sexual dissatisfaction. Much less is known about how BPD affects men's attitudes about sex.

There may be a number of reasons for these more negative attitudes toward sex. First, many women with BPD are survivors of child abuse, which may contribute to overall negative reactions to adult sexual experiences. Also, women with BPD are more likely to experience a great deal of conflict in their relationships, so they may feel less positive about sex.

Reckless Sex

Impulsive behavior is one of the symptoms of BPD listed in the DSM-IV. In the case of sexuality, a trend toward impulsive behavior may lead to reckless sexual behavior as well.

People with BPD are most at risk of engaging in impulsive acts when they are experiencing intense emotional responses, or when they are disinhibited by alcohol or other substances. Intense sadness, fear, jealousy or positive emotions may also lead to impulsive sexuality.

Promiscuity

In addition to engaging in reckless or impulsive sex, there is evidence that people with BPD are more prone to sexually promiscuity. This differs from impulsive sex in that promiscuity is the act of intentionally having multiple sexual partners (rather than having casual sex on a whim).

Why might people with BPD be more promiscuous? One possibility is that they use sex to combat feelings of emptiness that are associated with the disorder. When feeling empty, numb, lonely, or bored, sex may generate positive emotional responses.

Avoidance of Sex

While some studies have shown an increase in sexual behavior in people with BPD, there is also evidence that some actually avoid sex. For example, in a 2003 study, Dr. Mary Zanarini and colleagues found that people with BPD reported avoidance of sex for fear of experiencing an exacerbation of their symptoms.

Your Sex Life

While the research is far from conclusive (and is particularly sparse with regard to men with BPD), there is evidence to suggest that people with BPD can experience a variety of sexual difficulties. It is likely that the impact of BPD symptoms on sex can vary substantially from person to person, and can take very different forms. How your symptoms impact your sex life may warrant some reflection or even a discussion with your therapist or partner.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/borderline-personality-disorder-and-sex-425370>