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Sex, Promiscuity and Borderline Personality Disorder: A Male's Perspective

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Ah promiscuity. One of the behaviors commonly associated with borderline personality disorder (BPD). And unfortunately because of double standards, this translates to the women who sleep around being called “sluts” and the males who do it becoming revered. Unless you’ve been diagnosed with BPD of course... in which case the males are automatically dangerous, callous, manipulative, out for one thing only and who — without conscience — will toss you into the world of rejection once you’re no longer of use to them. But is that really how a male BPD mind works? Certainly not in my case...

There are times when I abhor sex. I am literally disgusted by the central role it seems to play in the masculine identity others attempt to place on me. I have male friends for whom quantity and frequency of sexual partners is a barometer of fulfillment/success. Because of this, when I’m single and we’re all bantering — and I know it’s just banter — all I feel is rejected. Not only from them but from every other female I see, without respect to whether I’ve even said hello to them or not! How irrational is that? This feeds into the self-loathing which feeds into the self-isolation which feeds into the lack of connection which feeds into the remaining self-destructive behaviors which characterize BPD. Why do I exist in a world where we’re forever told that beauty isn’t skin deep and that a person’s traits are what we become attracted to, when it feels like it all boils down to who — and how many — people you’ve slept with?

Of course it wasn’t always like this. Pre-diagnosis in my teens and early 20s, I vigorously ticked the promiscuity box. It was fun. It was a rush. It was a clear sign that I was attractive and *acceptable* to young women. I was *good enough* for them to want to be in a relationship with me. So I slept around, intentionally. For me, the entire point of the ritual of meeting a woman was to get to the end game which was, of course, sex. It’s not that I didn’t want a relationship you see, more that I didn’t have any understanding of what a positive relationship could be like. I also didn’t have any understanding of my BPD — hell, I didn’t even know BPD existed! All I knew was when I flirted, it felt good to get a similar response, so I did more of it. When I dated, it felt good to know someone wanted to spend time with me, so I wanted to know how many other people would want to as well — because, frankly, I couldn’t understand why someone would want to spend time with me at all! And when I had sex, the rush was incredible. The most intensely intimate thing two people could do together and I voraciously wanted more of it with as many different people as I could find.

Now this is a difficult paragraph, so please bear with me. Sex is to be enjoyed. People have different tastes, different “turn ons” and different “no go” zones. As long as it’s all consensual, then I believe live and let live. What I found however, was that sex was a way to channel the “other me.” Since diagnosis, I’ve seen my BPD side as a co-existing part of me who needs to be managed. I fully appreciate some people prefer to receive diagnosis, enter treatment and reach a point of remission, so I can’t stress enough that I’m just talking for myself here. I found that being dominant in sex with naturally sexually submissive women as partners allowed me to receive an intensity of pleasure I hadn’t found before. It allows the BPD element of me who craves the certainty, consistency and responsibility of total control to become immersed in scenarios where everything is up to me. That gives me respite from keeping the “other me” caged via mental thought processes involving understanding social norms. It’s not that I don’t enjoy more intimate, softer sex (because I do), but it’s a different type of pleasure. It’s the difference between making love and fucking. Between spiritually intimate connection and a more physical release. But as much as the latter can allow the “darker me” some playtime, there is a requirement for constant reflection and assurance. This isn’t about force but it is about control and enjoyment of that control — ironically in a controlled environment. Consensual enjoyment is what I’m speaking of, let’s not forget that! But please don’t think that a need to control can spill into my everyday life.

If that ever starts to creep in or if I start to feel agitated because I don’t have control, that’s a sign that all is not well in my head and I’m aware of that. I have to be reflective in order to manage myself. When my mind is unravelling in everyday life, I have certain warning signs: inconsistent thinking of opinions, rapid splitting, less sleep, increasing my workload in order to seek more external validation from those I respect, short temper, becoming overly emotional, perhaps reverting to my more primal pre-diagnosis *mindset* — not behavior — of seeking promiscuity.

I have no understanding of how my identity is “meant” to be and fluctuating identity is another BPD trait, so when I see attractive traits in women, I feel the typical intensely positive rush. If I’m feeling mentally well, this may just lead me to spend more time around them or speak to them to absorb this rush until they, unknowingly, do something to knock themselves off the pedestal my fantasy-fueled brain has put them on. Maybe that’s what a favorite person is? I don’t know, that’s a term I’ve only just come across myself. It’s knowing that I have this immediate intensity when I meet people which makes me hesitate and hold back from dating. I don’t know if it’s real or not and I don’t want to mess people around. I mean, I didn’t *want* to mess people around pre-diagnosis but to continue those behaviors now I’m aware would be simply living up to the stereotypes of BPD males I fight against. And cheating on partners is a big no no. That would be unacceptable and irresponsible of me no matter how great the urge may be — although I am only human and at times I have made mistakes. Now If I’m unwell or declining, then my brain creates the fantasy of attachment, closeness, intimacy and of being *good enough* for the opposite sex and the fastest way it knows how — sex. It’s looking for immediate reward, the connection quick fix to satisfy the human needs I may be feeling like I’m lacking in those moments.

So either way, my sexual thoughts and behaviors are born of seeing something in another that I find desirable. They aren’t in any way, shape or form born from a need to manipulate, abuse, hurt or punish women. It’s always about achieving intimacy, connection and acceptance because there is a big part of me that is constantly telling me I don’t deserve any of those things. However, managing this part of me is my exhausting daily battle.

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