

## The Quiet Borderline / Borderline Waif

Borderline Personality Disorder is different for everyone suffering from it. While there are a limited number of things that qualify a person for this disorder, how they display, which combinations of symptoms they display in, is all individual. Something else extremely important to keep in mind, is that BPD is only one aspect of what makes a person who they are. People's experiences, ideas, likes, dislikes, preferences, and yes, baseline personality are all unique to the individual making even those with BPD unique individuals. Borderline Personality Disorder itself is usually stereotyped as a disorder of disruption, very outwardly volatile mood swings, externally focused aggression, and low-functioning. However, like most stereotypes, this doesn't hold true for everyone.

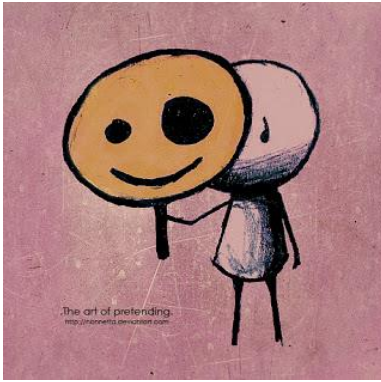
Today I want to talk about a "type" of Borderline Characteristic called the Borderline Waif, or otherwise known as The Quiet Borderline. It's potentially less common, but equally insidious, maybe more so, because it can be trickier to diagnose someone who displays characteristics of a Quiet Borderline. Why's that? Because they are much more likely to Act In, than to Act Out. They are not known for raging openly, where other people can see them, so it's more difficult to recognize that there's a problem. It's very typical for only those people that are very close, often intimately involved, with this person to know that there is a problem that needs to be helped. This is something that I identify with very well. To the outside world anyone you ask would tell you I am the pinnacle of pulled together. They don't know what goes on inside.

Which ultimately is not that different from what you would consider a classic Borderline presentation. By which I mean that all those underlying reasons for a BPD diagnosis are essentially the same in those that are "quiet" and those that are acting out. The main difference is how it presents and manifests... how a person expresses their symptoms.

Often the quiet Borderline feels stuck. Incapable of expressing themselves or moving in any direction whatsoever. It's common for therapists to urge a quiet Borderline to "get things out", connect with their feelings, and express themselves. This is something that Therapists work very hard on with me. I have an extremely difficult time remaining attached and present in my emotions which makes being able to express my needs and concerns very difficult because I don't feel like they continue to exist or belong to me. Even with provocation a quiet Borderline could sit there seemingly unaffected and unruffled... until the time comes when they are alone and are able to deal with their inner turmoil in private; in silence.

Depression is very common for the Quiet Borderline. As Dr. A.J. Mahari notes, "At the root of so much of BPD, is anger and rage because it is anger and rage that are summoned up to protect against the pain. If one is not acting out that anger and rage (classic borderline presentation) then one is more likely to have an even more severe depression since, essentially, depression is anger turned inward."

I find this to be true for me. If I can't express my inner rage I have a sense of helplessness. I feel trapped in my own skin. Which only acts to compound my anger and increase my need to rage more. The longer I repress my feelings, the harder they are to control. I begin to isolate myself so others won't see me in such a state. My loneliness increases. I sink further. And it becomes harder and harder to dig myself out of the darkness that depression is shoveling onto my head.



**Anne, a quiet borderline, writes:**

*"I do not rage or SI (self-injure). I have never been able to express anger -- my mother simply did not allow it and I have never found a manner to let it out. I am just too tightly wound to get angry.*

*For the most part, I feel utterly alone, empty and scared. I crave being alone but often end up abusing prescription meds when I am alone. However, I am terrified of people and avoid being around them. I am extremely anxious and frequently depressed.*

*I feel different--I feel like I am encapsulated. I am not like other people and do not know or understand how other people feel. Sometimes I feel like I am watching life go by, as an outsider. I don't have much hope of ever feeling normal--I don't know what it means."*

A Quiet Borderline turns it all inward where no one else can see. But whether a Borderline Acts In or Acts Out, the resulting emotional void is still the same. Often the Quiet Borderline is at arguably greater risk though, because while a Borderline that Acts Out may get a lot of negative attention, at least they're getting attention which creates an opening for intervention. With the Quiet Borderline you may never even know that there is a problem that needs healing.

For the Quiet Borderline, instead of allowing others the chance to abandon them, they often pull away from the crowd to avoid abandonment. However, that doesn't mean they aren't still suffering from abandonment. Especially if they're in the throws of self-harm. "Rather than act in a way that may lead others to abandon her, she continues to abandon herself (and her inner child) by repeatedly being self-abusive and by hating herself. She turns this fear of abandonment in on herself. Many borderlines, the acting out borderlines, project this inner conflict out onto others. This leads an "acting in" borderline to quietly, yet relentlessly "emotionally" bleed inward, deeper and deeper on and into that void where one's self needs to be known. In the absence of knowing that self, the repeated abuse, abandonment and annihilation of that self, even to the "acting in" borderline are experienced as being perpetrated upon them by a foreign persona -- a false self."

The fear of abandonment and rejection felt so acutely by those with Borderline Personality Disorder often leads to either Acting Out and taking out that pain on others, or Acting In and taking that pain out on themselves. That doesn't mean these don't co-mingle or change with time. When I was younger I Acted Out, I raged, I viciously berated and went on the offensive when I perceived a threat to my sense of self. I am almost completely the opposite now. I Act In, taking out my hurt, loneliness, disappointment, shame, and everything else on myself. That doesn't mean that I don't occasionally have an impulsive slip and release those issues to the outside world. I do occasionally, just not very often.

It's important to recognize that there are differences in how Borderline Personality Disorder presents. We can't heal what we can't recognize.

<http://www.beyondtheborderlinepersonality.com/2012/05/quiet-borderline-borderline-waif.html>