



LIVING

LIFE

WELL

A GUIDE TO BPD

Acknowledgement of country

We recognise Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which we work and live and we celebrate their culture and heritage. We acknowledge the impact colonisation has had on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people and we are committed to strengthening partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals, families and communities of South Australia to improve health outcomes.

Borderline Personality Disorder Collaborative

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Operating hours

Monday, 9am to 5pm

Tuesday, 9am to 5pm

Wednesday, 9am to 5pm

Thursday, 9am to 5pm

Friday, 9am to 5pm

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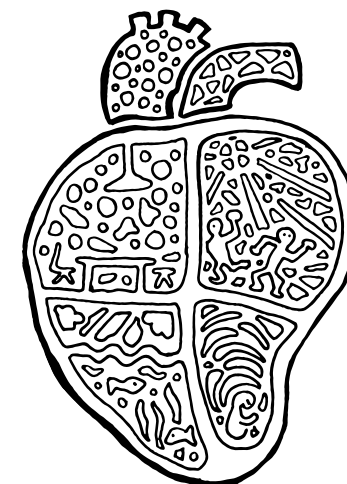
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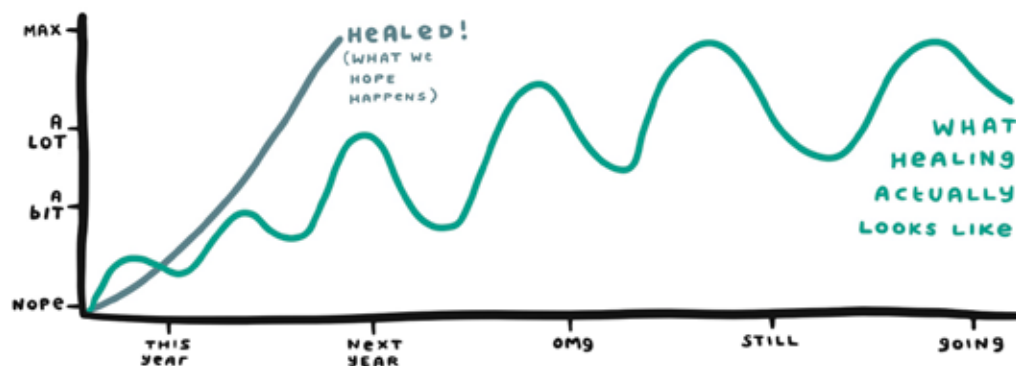
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We want you to know that you are not alone.

Below:
Healing & recovery
happen differently to
how we often expect.



Hello reader,

This zine was created by & for people who live with BPD. We want to share messages of hope and tips that have been helpful to us in our recovery experiences. Firstly, we want to thank you for picking up this zine and taking a moment for yourself; or for someone you care about who has BPD.

BPD is a common mental health diagnosis with between 1% and 4% of Australians affected by BPD at some stage in our lives. That equates to between 17,000 and 68,000 South Australians living with BPD. The symptoms of the disorder usually first appear in mid to late teens or in early adulthood.

People with BPD can and do recover, when we have access to appropriate, evidence-based treatments. Recovery looks different for everyone, just as the experience of BPD is individual.

This zine will walk you through some information and tools available to support you in improving your experience of BPD and working towards creating a life of your choosing. We hope you find this helpful and welcome any feedback you have around this resource. In solidarity,

Awareness Week Working Group
BPD Collaborative

Newly diagnosed, big feelings

If you are new to the diagnosis, you might be feeling mixed emotions. You might feel some relief at getting a diagnosis and having a frame of reference to understand your experiences. You may also be experiencing grief and other associated emotions about what this means for you. This is a common experience for people in receiving a diagnosis. We encourage you to be gentle with yourself about experiencing these emotions and to reach out for support to help you make sense of these feelings.

As you embark on your path to recovery, we acknowledge that accessing treatments and learning lots of new ways to cope and manage symptoms can feel overwhelming. Pacing yourself is key to recovery. It can feel overwhelming to hear all these different skills and approaches to recovery but the truth is that taking things a day at a time is what helps to keep us on track.

On harder days, you might need to shift your expectations to thinking about what you can do to improve just the current moment. Recovery can tend to happen in stages i.e. you might focus on one or 2 group of strategies you are working to incorporate or a symptom you are trying to alleviate, while continuing to seek information and build your self-awareness until you are ready to tackle the 'next thing'. On better days, you can take it up a notch, try a few different tools.

Tip: Coping right now

Ask yourself: what is one small thing I can do in this moment to improve things?

Tip: Information helps

Increase your understanding of symptoms, treatment options, recovery, and services that can help.

Good information sources:

- written information
 - videos
 - websites
 - meetings
 - talking with your doctor or a mental health worker
 - talking with supportive family, partner or friends.
- See specific sources we recommend at the back of this zine.



All about BPD

What is Borderline Personality Disorder?

BPD is a common mental illness that can make it difficult for people to feel safe in their relationships with other people, to have healthy thoughts and beliefs about themselves, and to control or express their emotions and impulses.

Signs and Symptoms

Someone with BPD may experience:

- Being prone to fear that other people might leave them, & make frantic efforts to avoid abandonment.
- Relationships that are intense and unstable
e.g. idealising person and then intensely disliking them.
- Being very unsure about themselves, low self-esteem & low self-worth.
- Self destructive and impulsive behaviours
e.g. over-spending, risky driving, substance use etc.
- Persistent self harm and/or suicidal thoughts.
- Changeable moods, feeling like being on an emotional roller coaster.
- Experiencing a persistent feeling of being 'empty' inside.
- Difficulty feeling and expressing anger.
- When stressed, becoming highly suspicious of others or experiencing unusual feelings of being detached from their own emotions, body or surroundings.

These signs and symptoms are adapted from the DSM-V criteria for BPD. A person can be diagnosed with BPD if they meet at least 5 out of the 9 criteria.

This means that people with BPD can experience many variations of these symptoms and that it can look and feel very different from person to person.

What causes BPD?

The general consensus is that BPD is developed through complex interactions between biological, social and/or environmental factors. The genetic component is believed to account for approximately 40-60%. While many people with BPD may have experienced trauma, some people develop BPD without trauma.*

How is BPD treated?

There are a number of treatments (talking therapies) that have been shown to be effective in treating BPD. They involve either talking with a trained mental health professional or attending a group. Medication is not recommended as a main treatment for BPD, however it may be helpful to manage particular symptoms.

Psychological treatment can be provided by trained mental health clinicians including psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, social workers and occupational therapists.

Tip: GP referrals

If you have a good relationship with a GP, start there. Talk to them about your mental health and options for support and referrals.

Tip: Trusted health worker

Sometimes finding a supportive GP isn't feasible. For example, in many rural areas, and/or for very marginalised people. If you can't access a supportive GP, look for another health worker who might support you in a similar way.

Tip: Persevere

There are often challenges when navigating the system. These can be hard to deal with. Before you get the right help, long waitlists, costs for some services, and trying options that don't work for you are common.

* Project Air Biopsychosocial Model of Personality Disorder (2018)

**You are worth
the effort to
keep trying.
Living well
more often
is possible
for you.**

Top tips

How to work towards living well more often

- **Stay informed**

Ask questions and work with your treatment provider (and partner or family, if appropriate) to make a support plan.

- **Prioritise gentle self-care**

Caring for yourself is crucial to healing and recovery. It can be a challenge, and it might feel uncomfortable at first. Start small.

- **Cultivate a mindfulness practise**

Using mindfulness to regulate, ground, centre and steady yourself is often the basis of many tools/strategies. It will be beneficial to have a good understanding of what mindfulness is and try different ways to practice mindfulness in a way that works for you.

- **Notice yourself**

Taking time to try to understand your thoughts, feelings and behaviours during challenging times can help you gain a sense of who you are.

- **Give yourself a break**

In some situations, change is not immediately possible. In those situations, we can try not to add to our own suffering. We can acknowledge that the overall situation may be unchangeable right now. We can focus on small steps that will eventually lead toward change.

- **Celebrate small wins**

Recovery can be a long journey. Acknowledge all of your changes and progress, and continue to practice what you learn.

- **Seek cultural safety**

Engaging with communities of people with similar backgrounds, interests or experiences can support you to feel a sense of belonging.

How to stay safe

- **Notice your struggle signs**

Identify warning signs that indicate you may be struggling or in crisis. Journal or draw what you notice. Keep your notes with you. Over time you'll see patterns of what happens before and in crisis.

- **Make comfortable habits**

Identify things that soothe you, and things you can do to make your environment feel safer and more cozy. Put effort into doing these things regularly. Things that you enjoy, that distract you, that lift your mood, and that calm you are important for your long-term safety and living well.

- **Make a crisis plan**

You can use the template in this zine to get you started, or make your own. Include contact details of helpful people. Some people find it helpful to include things that they have tried before that did not work, or things that make the situation worse.

- **Do not feed the fears**

Avoid surfing the internet alone when in distress, it can be full of stigmatising or unhelpful messages. Limiting screen time when you're struggling can help get back to a less afraid place.

How to navigate services skillfully

- **Find a GP who gets you**

A good GP will prioritise making referrals to private psychologists, group programs, & public community mental health services as needed.

- **Invest in building trust**

Visit regularly. This helps your GP or health worker learn what your needs are. Hopefully they will show you they are honest and kind. This builds trust.

- **Plan for appointments**

Before each visit, plan for a successful appointment. Write a list of symptoms, what you need to ask for, and leave with. You can bring a support person.

- **Book double appointments**

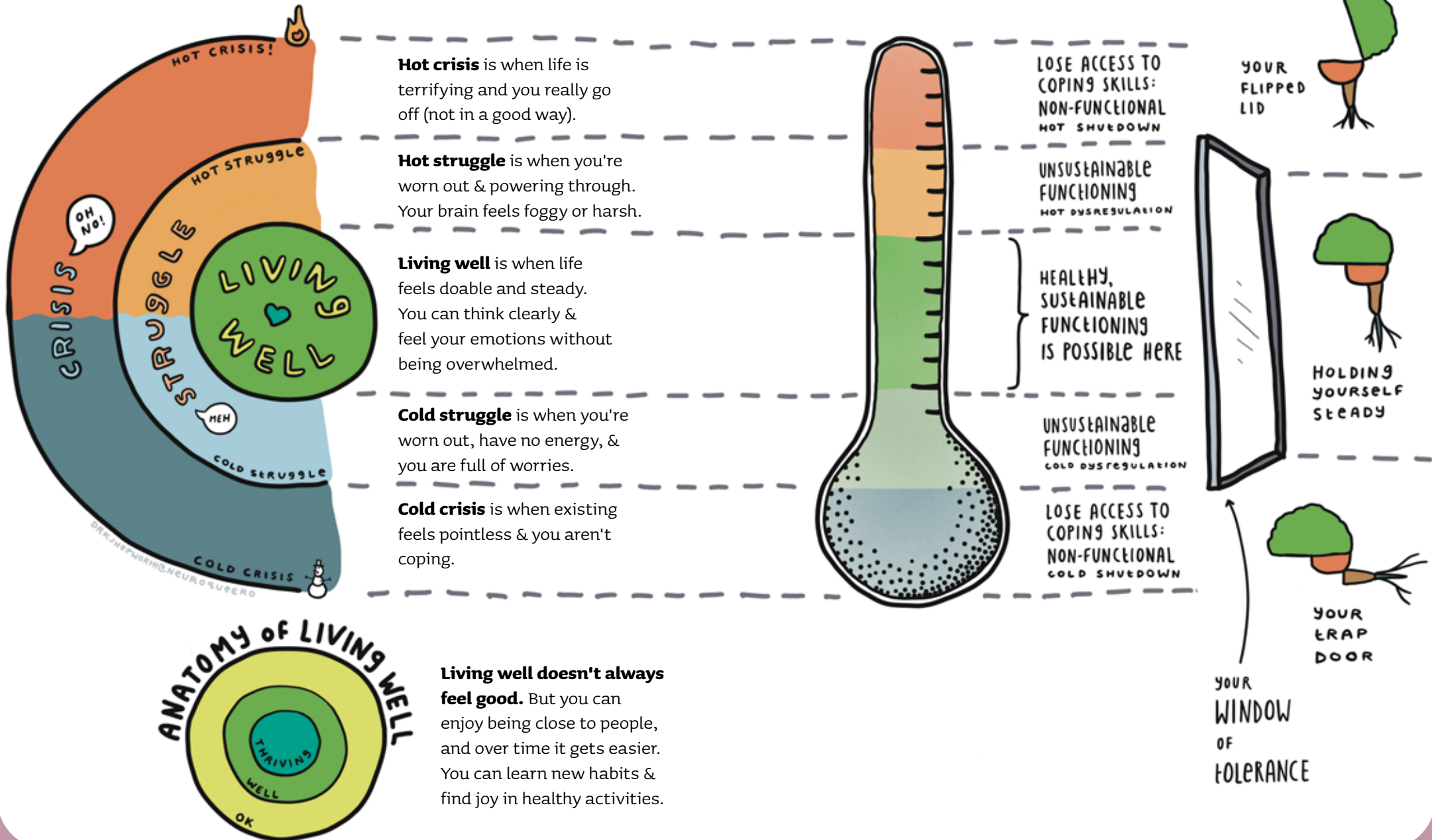
When you have complex questions, you can ask for extra time during the booking process. This is called a 'double appointment.'

Tip: Community mental health services

Community Mental Health teams are a free government health service that provides extra support for some people. There are Community Mental Health teams across South Australia, each team offers different services. Some offer BPD treatment programs, like DBT groups. Sometimes a GP can refer you to a Community Mental Health team, if you meet specific criteria. You can ask your GP about being referred to a team.






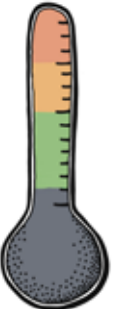
Living well inside our window of tolerance

How emotional and physical temperature can help us live well








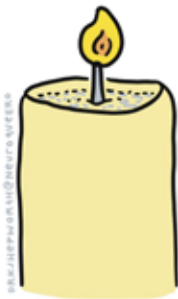
Why we ‘lose it’

Understanding the purpose, costs, and benefits of each state

	PURPOSE	LOSE ACCESS TO...	GAIN ACCESS TO...	
 <div> <div>HOT CRISIS</div> <div>HOT STRUGGLE</div> </div>	<p>Chanelling survival energy</p> <p>We draw on unsustainable energy sources to urgently fight for what we need.</p>	<p>Costs</p> <p><i>Harmony</i></p> <p><i>Best self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Problem solving » Sustainable effort » Joy & humour » Wise, kind speech » Relational safety » Physical safety » Healing habits » Sustainable relating 	<p>Benefits</p> <p><i>Protection</i></p> <p><i>The path to healing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Protective energy » Being noticed » Exhilaration » Ancestral pain » Cycle completion » Resolution » Release 	
	<p>Being present for ourselves, our lives, and our people</p> <p>Responding proportionately to external & internal pleasures and concerns.</p>	<p>Costs</p> <p><i>Simple answers</i></p> <p><i>Stable ground</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Certainty » Delusions » Comfort of social acceptance » Sense of superiority » Complicity with status quo » Collective complacency » Blaming 	<p>Benefits</p> <p><i>Best self</i></p> <p><i>Sustainable life</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Wholeness » Wisdom » Gut instinct » Good habits » Curiosity » Perspective » Safe intimacy » Healing habits » Conflict repair » Sustainable effort 	
 <div> <div>COLD STRUGGLE</div> <div>COLD CRISIS</div> </div>	<p>Conserving energy for survival</p> <p>Body sensations are shut off for urgent physical or mental escape/coping.</p>	<p>Costs</p> <p><i>Perspective</i></p> <p><i>Best self</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » OKness » Joy » Rhythm » Intuition » Balance » Safe intimacy » Relational safety » Healing habits » Sustainable relating 	<p>Benefits</p> <p><i>Acceptance</i></p> <p><i>Relief</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Collective approval » Fitting in » Hyperfocus » Tools & strategies » Understanding » Collective unconscious » Old, stuck emotions » Ancestral wisdom 	

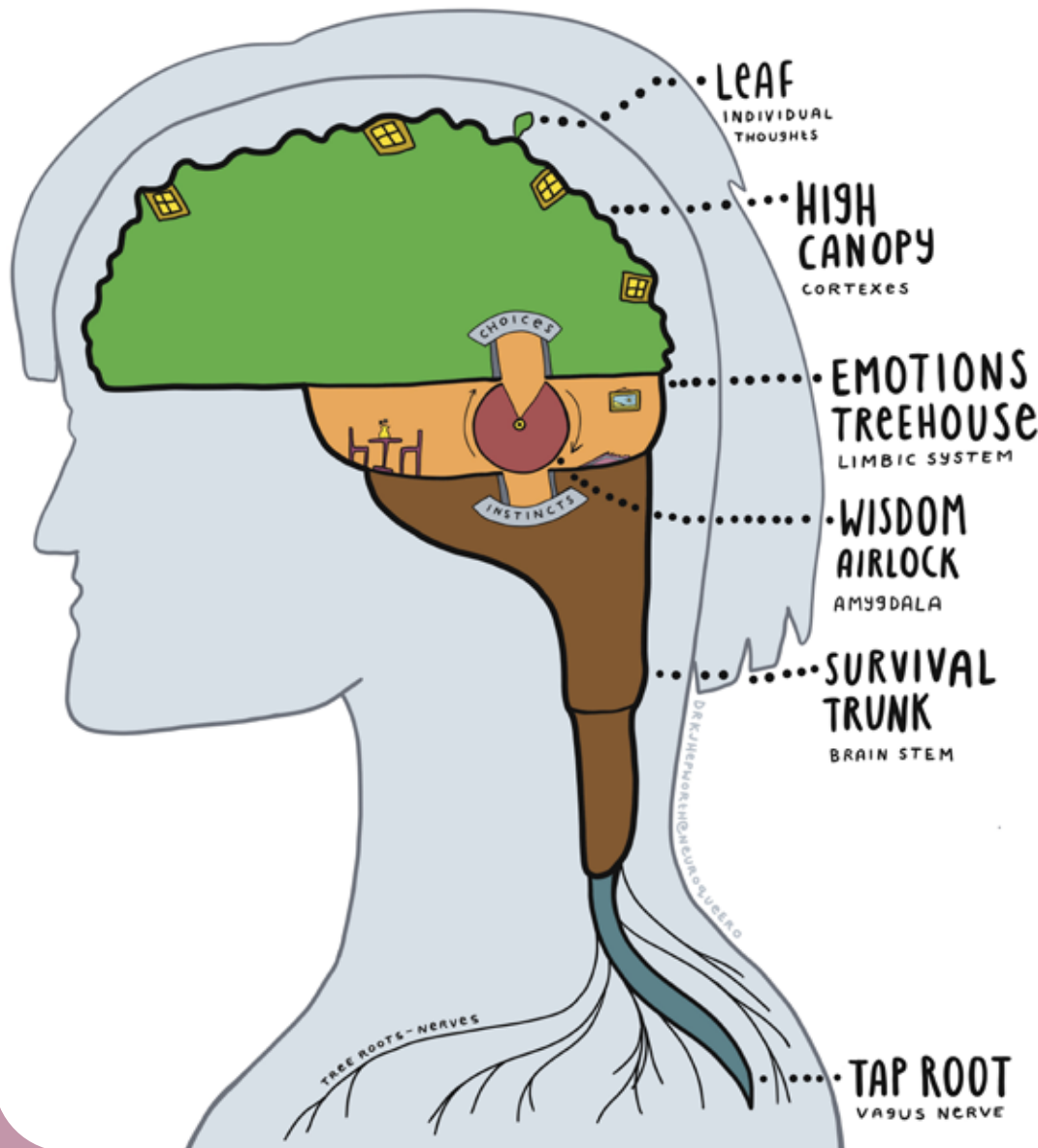
Energy affects connection

How and when our energy fuels connection or disconnection

			FEELS LIKE TO OURSELVES	FEELS LIKE TO OTHERS	WORLD VIEW
 TOO HOT	<div>HOT CRISIS</div> <div>HOT STRUGGLE</div>	 Candle burns too bright, too fast, & erratically.	<p>When we are too hot or overwhelmed, our energy gets big.</p> <p>This is intimidating and can be hard to be around.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Fast heart rate» Shallow breaths» Restlessness» More sweating» Rush of adrenaline» Anxiety» Holding grudges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Pushy» Flirting» Tiring» Unpredictable» Dangerous <p><i>Danger!</i> <i>Chaos!</i> <i>Unfriendly</i> <i>Overwhelming</i></p>
 LIVING WELL		 Candle burns constantly & predictably, moves with the weather.	<p>When we have what we need, our energy is steady.</p> <p>Our energy is enjoyable and feels safe to be around.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Take deep breaths easily» Good heart rate variability (rises & returns to normal rapidly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Attracting» Loving» Inspiring» Energising <p><i>Balanced perspective</i> <i>Feel connected</i> <i>Accepting</i></p>
 TOO COLD	<div>COLD STRUGGLE</div> <div>COLD CRISIS</div>	 Candle burns very low & flickery, risks going out.	<p>When we are too cold, depleted or under-resourced, our energy gets tiny.</p> <p>This is scary. It can feel like we are a ghost of ourselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Slow heart rate» Slow breathing» Disassociation» Loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Absent» Lost» Abandonment» Tormented» Repelling» Scary <p><i>Cold</i> <i>Empty</i> <i>Uninhabitable</i> <i>Underwhelming</i></p>

The wisdom tree inside us

How our bodies make us feel safe and when we can live well



The wisdom tree

We have a wisdom tree inside us. This tree is made up of our brain and nervous system. Science calls this 'our neurobiology', but 'wisdom tree' is easier to remember.

The wisdom tree helps us to act wisely when we can. To live well and access wisdom, we need good enough resources to handle the life events we face.

The emotions tree house is where we learn how safe we are. Messages get delivered there from up and down the tree, then get passed on.

Polyvagal theory & the wisdom tree

When we're struggling, the tree house gets unreliable at delivering messages. When we're in crisis, is when we 'flip our lids' or fall into a 'trap door.'

Polyvagal theory describes ways our wisdom tree can be activated. When our bodies are used to living well, they can pass smoothly between each of the states, and mostly be in the 'holding steady' position.

Trauma interrupts wisdom & living well

When we have experienced trauma, our nervous systems can get stuck in crisis for years. Sometimes struggle and crisis states are all we know.

A traumatised, struggling wisdom tree (Hot Struggle or Cold Struggle) can jump jaggedly between crisis states and living well rapidly. This is called a functional trauma response. They are unsustainable.

With the right resources, support, and effort, our bodies can be reminded we are safe enough right now, and so we can start to live well more often.

POLYVAGAL STATES



Mobilise/sympathetic



Social/ventral vagal



Immobilise/dorsal vagal

Emotions-Sensations Wheel

Emotions-Sensations Wheel

WHAT EMOTION IS THIS?

HOT EMOTIONS

- ANGRY: RAGE, FURIOUS, ANNOYED, SHOCKED, RAGE, FURIOUS, ANNOYED, SHOCKED
- HAPPY: JOY, LAUGH, GIGGLE, SMILE, LAUGH, GIGGLE, SMILE, LAUGH, GIGGLE, SMILE
- DISGUST: EWE, GROSS, NAUSEA, DISGUST, EWE, GROSS, NAUSEA, DISGUST
- FEAR: SCARED, FRIGHTENED, ANXIOUS, FEAR, SCARED, FRIGHTENED, ANXIOUS, FEAR

COLD EMOTIONS

- SAD: GRIEVE, MOURN, DESPAIR, SAD, GRIEVE, MOURN, DESPAIR, SAD
- SHOCK: SURPRISE, AMAZE, SHOCK, SURPRISE, AMAZE, SHOCK, SURPRISE
- DISAPPOINTED: DISAPPOINTED, DISAPPOINTED, DISAPPOINTED, DISAPPOINTED
- AWFUL: AWFUL, AWFUL, AWFUL, AWFUL

LEGEND

- YELLOW: HOT SENSATIONS
- PINK: COLD SENSATIONS

TOP-DOWN EMOTIONS

- thought
- emotion
- body sensation

BOTTOM UP EMOTIONS

- body sensation
- emotion
- thought

WHERE IS THIS EMOTION COMING FROM?

My CRISIS PLAN

— ABOUT ME —

MY NAME IS



MY PRONOUNS ARE

MY CONTACT
DETAILS



MY MEDICATIONS
YOU MIGHT NEED
TO KNOW ABOUT

THINGS I LIKE

— MY CARE TEAM —

MY GP (DOCTOR) ☆

MY EMERGENCY
CONTACT PERSON ○

THEIR NAME IS

THEY WORK AT

THEIR
PHONE NUMBER

THEIR
EMAIL ADDRESS



— OTHER IMPORTANT PEOPLE —

Add carers, family
doctors, partners



NAME

RELATIONSHIP TO ME

CONTACT DETAILS

THINGS I DON'T LIKE

HOW THEY HELP
WHEN I'M IN CRISIS

Drawn for BPDCo by Dr KJ Hepworth @neuroqueero



MY CRISIS FEELS LIKE...

MINDSET + THOUGHTS

BODY SENSATIONS



Write your crisis thoughts



Relevant song

Draw your crisis feelings

HOW I HELP MYSELF

THOUGHTS

MOVEMENT



Internal reminder
TEMPERATURE

Releasing activity
COMFORT

Warming up / cooling down

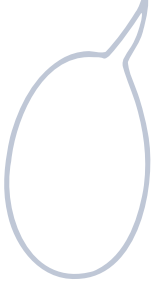
Soothing senses



MY CRISIS LOOKS LIKE...

ACTION GIVEAWAYS

SPEECH GIVEAWAYS



Your crisis movements and actions

Crisis words / tone / volume
of voice in crisis



HOW YOU CAN HELP ME

ACTION

CONNECTION

COMMUNICATION

Safe-feeling contact
VALIDATION

Helpful acts

Affirming acts/words

Helpful ways of relating











DON'T

WILL MAKE THINGS WORSE

Ways of relating that feel scary or bad

NOTICING MY

	MINDSET + THOUGHTS	BODY SENSATIONS
 <p>MY FLIPPED LID</p> <p>MY HOT CRISIS FEELS LIKE...</p>		
 <p>HOLDING MYSELF</p>	<p>MY HOT STRUGGLE FEELS LIKE...</p>	
	<p>MY LIVING WELL FEELS LIKE</p>	
 <p>HOLDING MYSELF</p>	<p>MY COLD STRUGGLE FEELS LIKE...</p>	
	<p>MY COLD CRISIS FEELS LIKE...</p>	
 <p>MY WRAP DOOR</p>		

Emotional messages

Emotions come from sensations in our bodies, or from our thoughts

Why we have emotions

As humans, we feel a whole range of emotions. Emotions are essential to our survival as they tell us important information. All emotions can increase and decrease in intensity. We can feel more than one emotion at the same time.

Emotions have three functions:

- *To motivate you*
For example, anxiety about a test coming up can motivate you to study.
- *To communicate to other people*
For example, guilt about not helping a friend in need can show you that you value the friendship.
- *To communicate to yourself*
For example, pride in your work tells you that it is important to you.

Getting comfortable with emotions

Different people have different comfort levels with emotions. If we are not comfortable with an emotion, then we are more likely to want to avoid the emotion, suppress it or get rid of it. Our level of comfort has a lot to do with how we grew up with emotions, and our cultural expectations of emotions.

Our cultures and life experiences have often rewarded acting as if we don't have emotions, or that some emotions are wrong. This discourages building emotional coping skills.

When we are comfortable with an emotion, we can sit with and experience it. We can increase our comfort with emotions, so we can feel them and communicate them in healthy ways.

The brain in the palm of our hand

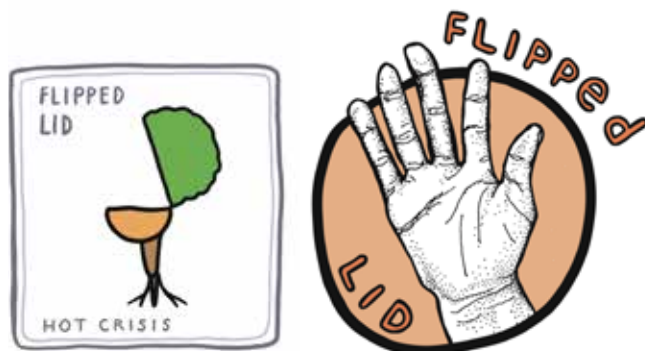
How our hands can remind us to hold ourselves steady

Tip: Handy reminders

You can make a 'held' fist when you are about to do something hard. This can help to remind yourself to stay present. Put your thumb inside your palm, then wrap your fingers around it. You are now holding your emotions treehouse safely.

Tip: Skill stacking

Say to yourself, in words or inside your head: 'I'm holding myself steady' over and over while your 'held' fist is closed. Slow your breathing on purpose. See if you can time your breath and words to match each other.



Hot crisis: 'Flipping my lid'

- Our 'lid' (the fingers) is 'flipped'
- Our wisdom tree goes into Hot Struggle or Hot Crisis
- We lose access to the thinking, high canopy brain
- Our emotions treehouse gets busy
- We are in fight, flight, functional flight or fawn states
- We are operating from a place of fear and danger

Flipped lid is represented by an open hand because it can feel like our thinking brain has disappeared.

Living well: 'Holding myself steady'

- Our hand or 'lid' is closed
- Our wisdom tree is held steady
- All of the parts of our brain and body are working together well
- We feel calm, balanced, alert but also relaxed
- We feel emotions and can still plan our reactions
- We can work towards our goals and values and adapt to present situations

When you are in hot struggle or cold struggle, you can bring yourself back to living well by:

- making a 'held fist'
- mindfulness strategies
- vagus nerve strategies

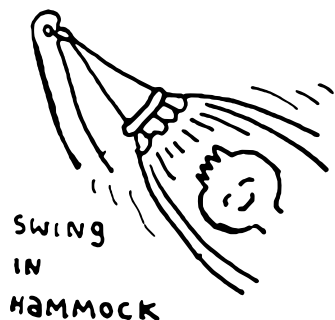
See more strategies in the 'staying well' section of this zine.

Cold crisis: 'My trap door'

- Our 'root' (the wrist) is 'flipped'
- Our wisdom tree goes into Cold Struggle or Cold Crisis
- We lose access to our emotions, body sensations (neuroception), and instincts ('gut reactions')
- Our thinking canopy tries to overcompensate for lack of access to body messages
- We are in freeze, flop, or functional freeze states
- We are operating from a place of fear and danger

Trap door is represented by a fist under pressure to represent the unbearable stress that divides us from our own bodies.

Staying well



Preparing for intense times

When we are well, we can learn new ways to cope and build habits that help keep us living well for more of the time. When we are calm, we are able to think things through, plan and practise ways to stay that way. To increase our time living well, we can get on with people in sustainable ways, including supporting others safely. We can also practise mindfulness and support our wisdom tree by training our vagus nerve.



Soothing

Another way to stay well is by making a habit of activities that soothe and calm us. Soothing activities often involve things that soothe our five senses (i.e. touch, smell, taste, sight and sound) or use movement. It can also be helpful to use soothing skills if we have been in crisis and struggle very often lately or for a lot of our lives.



Your support network

Caring for someone with BPD may have an impact on your own wellbeing. In the experience of the person's recovery, you may feel pain, suffering, sadness, guilt or despair of your own. Being a support person can be hard work. It's important to seek support of your own.

Family and friends can support us more effectively when they have accurate information and their own support, too. Some sustainable strategies are below.

• Carer role

Educate yourself about BPD, listen without judgement or fixing, validate experiences, support efforts to seek professional help, take self-harm talk seriously, connect with emergency services when needed, self-care (know your limits).

• Responding to distress

Stay calm to provide a safe environment, recognise, label and validate feelings, avoid lengthy discussions and complex reasoning, provide space to cool down, offer physical comfort or sensory tools for self-regulation. Revisit when calm.

• Supporting recovery

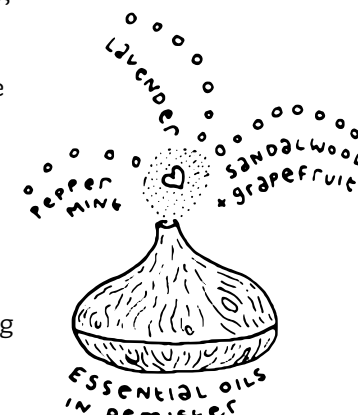
Build on trust, acknowledge efforts (not results), encourage 'agency' and self-worth ('I'm here if you need', 'How can I support with this?'), let go of 'shoulds', communicate with the treating team, go slowly, recovery is non-linear. Be 'Contagious with calm'.

• Validating

Confirm feelings, thoughts and actions make sense given how things happened. It is not consoling or agreeing, but recognising their feelings.

• Self-care

Take time to nourish and replenish yourself, and connect with activities outside your caring role. Complete a Carer Plan (see p. 36 to download) to help you during distress – for when it is hard to think clearly. Record your caring goals – e.g. building trust? Not rescuing? Include who to contact, what you agreed, and how you will look after yourself.





Mindfulness practises

Mindfulness is a form of brain training: it builds our capacity to pay attention. We can become mindful in any activity. Over time and with practise, we can become more present in each moment of our day.

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally to how things are.

It does not mean that you won't have thoughts when you practice mindfulness. You will have a lot of thoughts! They will get loud. Notice the thoughts you have. Try to let them drift away without getting too distracted.

Mindfulness requires an ongoing and regular practice. It's a 'way of being' rather than something you use at a time when you need it. There are lots of different ways to practice mindfulness and we would encourage you to try lots of different types of mindfulness, to see what works best for you.

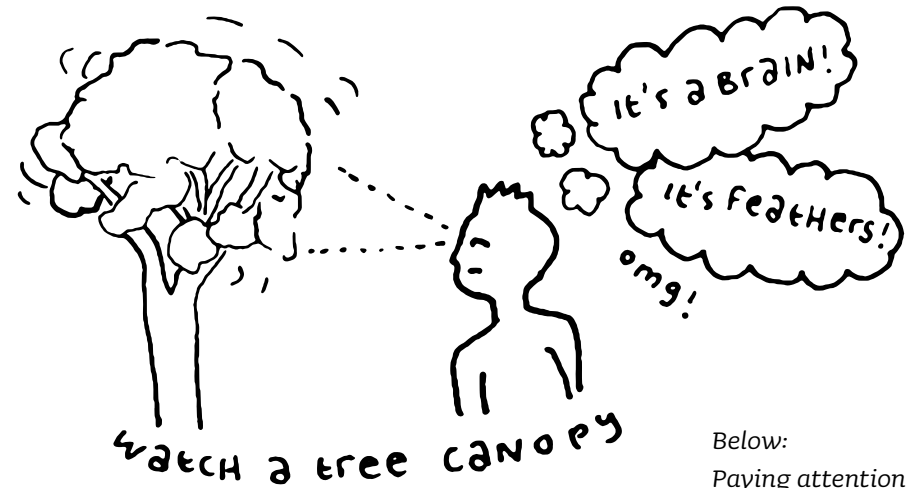
Benefits of mindfulness practice:

- Increasing emotional regulation
- Building tolerance to distress
- Reducing impulsive actions
- Reducing dissociation
- Increasing participation in life
- Increased awareness of self, others & environment

Mindfulness can increase our ability to shift our attention from one thing (e.g. difficult thoughts, strong emotions, urges) to another (e.g. what we are doing, our breath, what we can see or hear) with greater ease. Underlying each mindfulness practice is the action of focusing our attention on the here and now. Practising this shift in focus is a way of training our attention.

Tip: Steps to be mindful

- Notice and bring your attention to the present moment, as it is.
- Describe what you are noticing to yourself – just the facts.
- Let your judgements roll by. Be kind to yourself when you get stuck in them.
- Return again and again to observing the present moment as it is.



Below:

Paying attention to urges is one way to be mindful. Photocopy the card below, and fill in the details as you need to. When action feels extremely urgent, you can notice the quality of the urgency.



URGE SCORECARD

Name:

give your

urge a

NAME

How much is acting on the

urge going to help or harm?

● draw a dot on the line to show

HELP

HARM

INTENSITY

RIGHT

NOW

10

HOW INTENSE

IS THE URGE

RIGHT NOW?

give it a

SCORE BY

WRITING A

NUMBER &

COLOURING

IN THE BAR



Training your vagus nerve

The vagus nerve is the tap root of your wisdom tree. It sends safety and danger messages from our bodies to the emotions tree house. It is made up of a cluster of nerves that starts at the base of your brain (or survival trunk) and travels in two directions:

- downwards – lungs, heart, diaphragm, stomach and inner organs
- upwards – upward to connect with nerves in neck, throat, eyes and ears

We can manually tell our vagus nerve that we are not in danger. This helps us feel safer immediately, and trains our bodies to feel less scared in day to day life. Forming habits that train our vagus nerve is called building 'vagal tone' because it is getting in shape.



Tip: Find out more

For more information about polyvagal theory and activating your vagus nerve:

- Deb Dana – 'A beginner's guide to polyvagal theory' (PDF & podcasts)
- Deb Dana – 'Befriending your nervous system' on YouTube

Tip: Be careful

Some activities may cause dizziness at first. Please be careful.

Mouth, throat & lungs

- Gargling mouthwash or salt water
- Drink soda water (bubbles activate via mouth)
- Humming (exhalation activates via vocal cords)
- Massage your own neck, on the sides below your jaw

Cold

- Splash cold water on your face (activates dive reflex)
- Take a cold shower (activates via gut & temperature)
- Go for a swim (activates via gut & temperature)

Safe connection

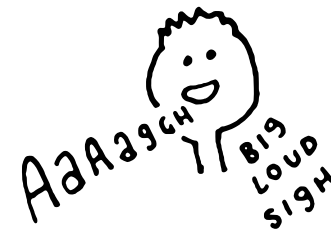
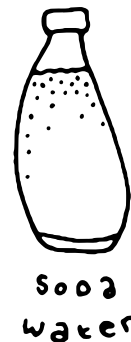
- Appreciating other people and nature
- Spending time with kind and safe people
- Full belly laughs (activates via stomach)

Movement

- Yoga or stretching
- Go for a low key walk (activates via gut)

Nature

- Enjoy plant friends (activates via smell)



Struggle strategies



Using struggle strategies

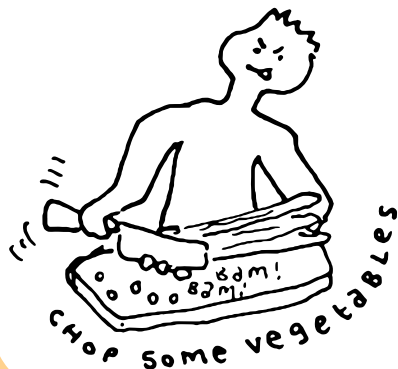
When we notice that we are starting to struggle, we may need to use skills and tools to get back to living well.

Distracting

When we are starting to struggle, we can buy ourselves time to reduce the chances of getting to crisis point. Our feelings of distress and urges to engage in unhelpful behaviours do not go on forever. Feelings do pass especially when there is nothing that is maintaining the feelings.

So, if we notice that we are becoming distressed, delaying or distracting can buy us time to allow the feelings and urges to reduce or pass and we can address the problem or issue that has come up.

- Do a puzzle, jigsaw, wordle or sudoku
- Notice all the things you can see around you, list them
- Try baking or cooking something
- Listen to an audio book or radioplay
- Re-watch a favourite movie or series
- Read a book or graphic novel

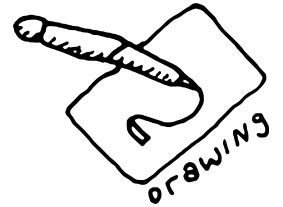


Expressing yourself

- Try to colour your emotions – take a bunch of textas or crayons and draw them
- Make faces at yourself in the mirror and laugh
- Write down as many positive things about yourself as you can
- Write down what's bothering you, then write a comforting message to yourself about it
- Ring someone you know will be comforting and talk it out

Releasing

- Stretch your body as much as you can, scrunch up your muscles until they are really tight, then release
- Jump up and down as fast as you can
- Dance to your favourite song, alone
- Run as fast as you can for a minute, then slow run for two minutes, then run fast again for a minute, then rest
- Pop some bubble wrap or play with something squishy
- Sing to yourself, or along with a song
- Go for a long (5km +) walk or a bike ride and notice everything around you
- Dance or move your body for at least 5 songs
- Watch something on YouTube that you know makes you cry



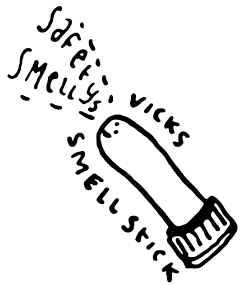
Crisis strategies

Using crisis strategies

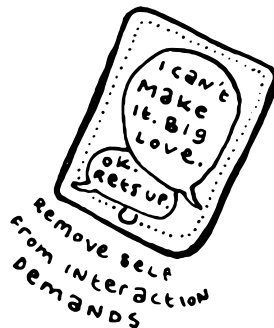
When we are in crisis or about to get there, we need tools that quickly break the cycle and that we don't have to think too much about.

They are quick and easily accessible tools that can change our biological response by:

- changing temperature (e.g. use ice on face, cold shower, splash face with cold water, head in the freezer, etc.)
- releasing excess energy (e.g. with a quick and intense burst of exercise, blowing up a balloon and bashing it around the room, etc.)
- modulating our breathing (e.g. calming breathing)
- changing our focus with things that capture our attention (e.g. through taste with lemon, through smell with tiger balm or through hearing with loud music).



DIY
version:
RICE IN A SOCK
Put in freezer bag



ORIENTING-
LOOKING AROUND &
CONSCIOUSLY NAMING
THINGS I SEE



STOP
Take a breath
OBSERVE surroundings
PULLBACK + perspective
PROCEED
w. support
skills

South Australian Resource Directory

Tip: Trustworthy sources

Accessing factually accurate information from a reputable source is important. Some good, trustworthy sources we recommend are:

Project Air

<https://www.uow.edu.au/project-air>

Australian BPD Foundation

<https://bpdfoundation.org.au>

BPD Australia

<https://www.bpdaustralia.org>

BPD Awareness Week

<https://www.bpdawareness.com.au>

BPD Co services

BPD Co offer a range of clinical group programs and peer-led programs and information sessions. Group programs are available via self-referral and have waitlists. Information sessions and one-off peer-led programs can be booked into directly via the website.

For more information about the group programs available, please visit our website or phone to speak with the duty worker on (08) 74256500.

Local Health Network services

Local Health Networks (LHNs) manage public hospital services and community-based health and mental health services. The community mental health services provide a number of services for people living with BPD.

There are 10 LHNs in South Australia. For further information and to find you LHNs visit the link: <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/Public+Content/SA+Health+Internet/About+us/Our+Local+Health+Networks>

Other services providers

There are a range of non-government services, primary health services and private practitioners who provide services for people living with BPD. The programs available can vary depending on where you live or the service criteria. Talk to your GP and the BPD Co duty worker about what's available in your area.

Free crisis support phone numbers & messaging

Mental Health Triage 13 14 65

Lifeline 13 11 14 , or online chat at <https://www.lifeline.org.au>

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467, or online chat, or video call at <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au>

For support in a mental health crisis, dial
13 14 65

For a medical emergency, dial
000
and ask for 'ambulance'

Free, walk-in mental health support centres

LOCATION	SERVICE NAME & ADDRESS	PHONE	OPEN DAYS & TIMES
Adelaide CBD	Urgent Mental Health Care Centre 215 Grenfell Street Adelaide	(08) 8448 9100	» 24 hours/day » 7 days/week
Northern/ Elizabeth	Medicare Mental Health Centre 3 Gillingham Rd Elizabeth	1800 595 212	» Monday-Friday 8:30am-9pm » Saturday 12noon-6:30pm » Sunday 12noon-6:30pm
Northern/ Salisbury	Safe Haven Cafe 9 John St Salisbury	(08) 8209 0700	» Tuesday-Friday 5pm-9pm
Southern/ Morphett Vale	Southern Wellbeing Hub 4/118 Main South Road Morphett Vale	(08) 8326 3591	» Wednesday 12pm-8pm » Thursday 12pm-8pm
Rural/ Port Pirie	Mental Health Alternative Care Service Old Port Pirie Community Health Building Alexander Street Port Pirie	0403 816 239	» Monday-Friday 8:30am-4:30pm

Other BPD carer services

LOCATION	SERVICE DETAILS	SERVICE FOR	HOW TO ACCESS
Unley or online	Family Connections 12-week program	» Carers of people with BPD	Register at the NEABPD website: https://www.bpdaustralia.org/
Unley or online	Sanctuary BPD Carer Support Group Meets 2nd Tuesday monthly 6pm	» Carers of people with BPD	Register by email info@bpd-carers-sanctuary.org or website: https://www.bpd-carers-sanctuary.org



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Original concept credits

Pages 8-9

Anatomy of Living Well, Hot & Cold Crisis & Struggle by Dr KJ Hepworth

Window of Tolerance by Dr Stephen Porges

Living Well Thermometer by Dr KJ Hepworth

Pages 12-13

Connection Candles by Dr KJ Hepworth <https://neuroqueero.com>

Pages 14-15

Wisdom Tree Inside Us by Dr KJ Hepworth

Polyvagal Theory by Dr Stephen Porges

Pages 16-17

Brain in the Palm of Your Hand by Dr Bonnie Badenoch & Dr Dan Seigel

Page 18

Emotions-Sensations Wheel by Dr KJ Hepworth adapted from the Emotions-Sensations Wheel by Lindsay

Braman and the Emotions Wheel by Dr Gloria Wilcox

Pages 19-22

Noticing My Vibe Activity & My Crisis Plan Activity by Dr KJ Hepworth

Further links

BPD Fact Sheet — Borderline Personality Disorder Collaborative

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/0164b4df-9af6-42a1-85b5-cc3e1046e4aa/WhatisBPD.pdf>

BPD Fact Sheet — Project Air

<https://www.uow.edu.au/project-air/resources/fact-sheets/>

Carers Plan — Project Air

<https://documents.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@project-air/documents/doc/uow247543.pdf>

Hack Your Nervous System — Omega Project

<https://www.omegaprojectpt.com/post/hack-your-nervous-system>

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For more information

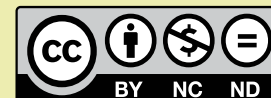
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Public-I2-A1



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by BPDCAWWG* for consumers and the community August 2024.



Interpreter



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*Borderline Personality Disorder Collaborative Partnering with BPDCo BPD Awareness Week Working Group



Government
of South Australia

SA Health



you
ARE NOT
ALONE