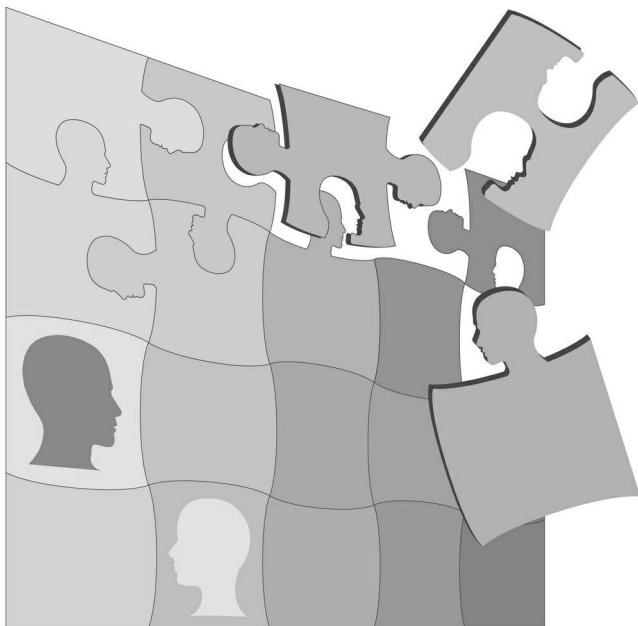


UNDERSTANDING
BORDERLINE
PERSONALITY DISORDER



THE LOST SELF

**The Impact of The Core
Wound
of Abandonment**

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**Understanding BPD - Impact - Core Wound of Abandonment
A.J. Mahari September 2008**

Below I have included the defining criteria of how Borderline Personality Disorder is characterized, described, defined by mental health professionals.

It is important, for you, if you are someone who has been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder that you know there is much more to it - much more to learn about it and understand about, from the inside out, than the way that mental health professionals label it, categorize it, and attempt to describe it.

In this first ebook of a series of 3 that explain and examine aspects of what it entails to better understand Borderline Personality Disorder I will be addressing the impact of the what I call the core wound of abandonment. The core wound of abandonment is the subject that I explain and examine in and of itself in my 3 core wound of abandonment series ebooks - “The Abandoned Pain of BPD”, “The Legacy of Abandonment in BPD” and “The Shadows and Echoes of Self - The False Self in BPD”)

This ebook, “The Lost Self” and the two others in this 3 part series which will be available in October of 2008 examine and explore the impact of what I call the core wound of abandonment. It is my hope that this second series on the impact of the core wound of abandonment in BPD will complement my Core Wound of Abandonment series where I actually define the many aspects of this abandonment trauma. Whether you have BPD or love someone who does it will be beneficial for you to further understand the many layered and complicated aspects of BPD that must be understood in order to make changes in the life of those diagnosed with BPD.

Understanding Borderline Personality Disorder

The Impact of the Core Wound of Abandonment

The Lost Self

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is very real. It can be a complex mystery to begin to unfold as you come to realize that either you or someone one you care about has been diagnosed with it.

BPD is essentially the pain of the loss of one's authentic self. It begins with the central causative factor of the core wound of abandonment. In the first 3 ebooks of my "core wound of abandonment" series of ebooks, "The Abandoned Pain of BPD", "The Legacy of Abandonment In BPD", and "The Shadows and Echoes of Self - The False Self in BPD", I have outlined much about what I call the core wound of abandonment.

If you haven't ordered those ebooks with this one, (and the two others in my Understanding BPD - The Impact of The Core Wound of Abandonment serices of 3 3books) you may want to read those along with this one.

The unrelenting impact of the core wound of abandonment is, among other things, steeped in the legacy of pain that

those with BPD have to live with and work to resolve. It is pain that the false self in BPD protects those with BPD from through the use of several complex and formidable defence mechanisms. Defence mechanisms that manifest most, if not all of what most would agree is *borderline behaviour*.

In my own experience as someone who has recovered from Borderline Personality Disorder I know both the very real pain and what stands between a person diagnosed with BPD and his or her getting on the road to recovery. What stands in between you, and you're getting on the road to recovery and getting better are the defence mechanisms that you've built up over the years. Defence mechanisms whose purpose is to protect you from the very pain that you need to understand, learn to face, and cope with in therapy.

At the heart of the core wound of abandonment in BPD and its impact are many factors. Central among these factors however is the pain of loss. The pain of abandonment. The loss of authentic self.

As I will be exploring in this series of 3 ebooks, there is a central dilemma that those diagnosed with BPD must find a way to address. This dilemma revolves around the dialectic of the pain of the core wound of abandonment - how central becoming aware of it is to recovery - and how having BPD impairs and even blocks the insight and awareness needed to address this pain.

The pain of BPD is often not pain that those with BPD are aware of actually feeling in a consciously-aware way.

The pain of Borderline Personality Disorder is a very two-faced pain, if you will. It is the pain of your lost authentic self held within what is more often than not the dissociated from and in effect, abandoned, inner child. It is also a pain that is perpetuated by the false self. A false self that has risen out of the ashes of your core wound of abandonment.

It is this self, the false self, that you, if you have been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder, live from and through. The false self is at the heart of much of the pain that you continue to re-experience when triggered in and through dysregulated emotional states that to varying degrees are experienced in dissociative ways.

The pain of Borderline Personality Disorder for those diagnosed with BPD is often not well understood. Those diagnosed with BPD trying so hard to protect themselves from feeling it because they do not know how to cope with it or understand it. This very reality is what often perpetuates borderline pain.

If you have Borderline Personality Disorder, you may not be very consciously aware of what I mean when I say to you that you are in a great deal of pain. Some people diagnosed with BPD report not feeling anything. Many with BPD use many methods, aside from or in tandem with defence

mechanisms, to avoid feeling this pain. Others still, drink, use drugs, cut, may have eating disorders, anxiety issues, compulsively gamble or engage in risky and frequent sexual activities all to avoid the pain that is central to Borderline Personality Disorder.

If you have Borderline Personality Disorder and you are not in touch with the pain I am talking about and will be talking about in this ebook, please understand that by the very definition of what it means to be diagnosed with BPD - this pain I am talking about is a part of your life. It may not be a part of your conscious experience. Although it is the pain of BPD that drives the need to protect and defend against dysregulated emotions, mood shifts, getting close to others, trusting others - most borderlines distrust most if not all the people they know or have known. These are indicators that you are in pain.

Other indicators of borderline pain, believe it or not, include feeling no pain at all - feeling numb. Along with anger and rage. If you are often angry to the point of rage or angry to the point of shutting down that you are so depressed that you believe you don't care about yourself or anyone or anything else and you feel despair and/or hopelessness - like nothing will ever be okay or nothing will ever change - this too is indicative of your pain.

Being diagnosed with BPD means, among many other things, that you do not know who you are. Not knowing who on is,

in and of itself, is a very painful reality in the lives of those with BPD.

Not knowing who are affects your ability to know what you want and what you need, who to trust, who to trust. In fact, it is this not knowing who you are that colours your experience emotionally in any and all efforts to feel and/or be connected to others - to relate with and or to others.

How can you relate to others in a consistent and stable way when you don't know how to do this with yourself because you do not yet know who you are?

Whether borderlines realize this consciously yet or not, the central reality of the core wound of abandonment, at the heart of BPD, is that the pain experienced as a very young child is what caused the loss of one's authentic self. It is this loss and the triggers and reminders of this core truth in the life of anyone with BPD that to be borderline or to have BPD is to be living in the absence of a known self.

That hurts. To not know who you are is a very painful place to be. It is this central reality of BPD that, in fact, leads to everything - to all behaviour manifested - to relationship rupture after relationship rupture, to everything referred to as being "typically borderline."

Think about all that isn't working for you in your life. Think about whether or not you are in touch with the feelings that

What does it mean to live from a *lost self*? What does it mean to live without a sense of actual or authentic self? If you have Borderline Personality Disorder, you, in one way or another, and to one degree or another, know the answer to this question in your own life experience and experience of BPD.

What does it mean to you, what comes to your mind when I ask, what is your experience of living your life with Borderline Personality Disorder and without knowing your *lost self*?

Believe it or not there is method in what might seem like the madness of this kind of question. Sit with it. Observe your reaction to it, mindfully, suspending and disengaging all judgement.

There is no need to be anxious. You do not have to feel shame. It is okay, if you do not know your *lost self* yet. It really is. Radically accept that.

As you mindfully observe your thoughts right now and any feelings that might come up for you in response to my question please know that the answers you come to realize will be the beginning (if you haven't actually begun) of your seeking to get in touch with *the lost self* inside of you.

That's the core issue right there. How can one accept something that is seen so negatively? How can one cope with the shame and the embarrassment? If you fit the borderline diagnosis, chances are you already have enough shame to sink a ship. Now you are being asked to add more? This needs to change.

Borderlines need to be taken off that negative “no-hoper” pile and placed in a dignified light in the Mental Health community and world at large.

Who wouldn't struggle with the various combination of issues that borderlines do if they had lost the authentic self they were born to be?

The *lost self* is at the heart of the reality of BPD. Nothing about the label or really even, directly, the traits that define BPD really speak clearly to the lost self that those with BPD end up living without.

The label doesn't speak to the lack of identity or to the reality that a borderline lives in and from a false self that is always at war inside him or her with a *lost self*.

The very fact that the characteristics that add up to one being “borderline” are also found in the average non-borderline population should be enough right there to bring this personality disorder out of the dungeon.

The fact that the traits that define BPD are human traits and not just “pathological” signposts of disorders speaks to the reality of the *lost self* explained by Object Relation Theory in those with Borderline Personality Disorder. (Klein, Masterson, Winnicott, et al.)

Great strides in therapy have been made in addressing many of the actions, thoughts, and feelings of those with BPD who can get access to these modalities of treatment and who can stick with therapy even and especially when it hurts. And, it does hurt.

This need to find, reclaim, and face, feel, and engage pain of *the lost self* that resulted from and that endures in your life from the impact of the core wound of abandonment is a process that requires taking personal responsibility and learning to challenge so many of the borderline false self defence mechanisms that manifest everything *borderline*.

I think we're getting there but still the helping profession and the world at large are not anxious to truly turn the light on BPD and bring it out of the darkness that it has been shrouded in for all time. For some reason many in the media, for example, continue to deny BPD the limelight of revelation so that it can be better understood by the masses -- why?

I know myself, now, as a person who has recovered from BPD I still get looks if people find out this was in my past and it's easy to find out since I am very open about it and

write about it. It is important to cut through the shame that this label first inspires and grasp it, accept it and work with it.

If one stops cold in the face of the feeling of all of that shame - shame that has its origin in the lost authentic self and the core wound of abandonment - one only intensifies the war between the borderline false self and *the lost self*.

Accepting this label gives you the power to out-grow it. It gives you the impetus to learn what you need to know about it and yourself in order that you can have the understanding of it that you will need to recover from it.

Focus more on your need to know and understand and heal. Do not focus on the needs of others to continue to cast BPD in a light of no-hope and toxic shame.

When I was in therapy the label was (except for “Mr. I-can’t-deal-with-you-another-second-shrink” who spent all of 20 minutes with me once only) avoided at all cost by those who treated me. I got to wondering why at one point. I was in group therapy and really making progress.

I had begun to read more and to want to know more about what my label really meant. I had the therapists wincing when I’d talk so openly in group to the others patients that I had Borderline Personality Disorder. It puzzled me and was also a source of amusement. Luckily they never directly

asked me to stop talking about it because I simply wouldn't have. It was my truth. I had my truth buried in others needs and secrets all of my life. I was not going to ever allow my truth to be cast into the shadows again.

My point here is I do not understand why the "helping profession" (a large portion of it at any rate) continues to shroud this diagnosis in shame. Whose shame is this? Who does this shame belong to? Is it the shame of someone who has BPD -- No! I think not.

It is the shame of the system that continues to flounder in trying to treat it. (Now I must say there are many dedicated and competent caring professionals out there who are helping borderlines get well -- but there are more who are not competent and who are not treating borderlines well at all)

The shame belongs to the events and the "object other" involved in the core wound abandonment experience that results in *the lost self* of the borderline and The Mental Health Professional community and not to those who have the personality disorder. (though I still wonder how many professionals out there doing the greatest dis-service to BPD aren't themselves borderline and in denial).

More professionals need to disclose the diagnosis to their patients and clients. Those who are seeking help need to be as open to understanding what BPD means as they can be. Perhaps there is a natural reaction of denial. For some

This might be a good point in this ebook to ask yourself how the way that BPD is described and how that label is applied fits for you or doesn't fit for you

Each individual person diagnosed with BPD is still an individual. You may still need to learn more and figure out exactly who the individual that you are is in totality. That notwithstanding, however, remember, that not everything said about BPD will apply to you, necessarily. You may not experience every trait.

Or perhaps all of the traits did apply to you and now maybe there is one or more that don't. It's important to remember that the label of BPD is something that identifies certain common traits that are often very problematic and challenging for most with BPD. There are patterns. But no one person with BPD is all of the patterns together. No one person with BPD is "always" every aspect of what is described as BPD.

You may notice that, wherever you are in your journey, you have some better days than others. That you have strengths and talents in your life that have to do with pursuits outside of interpersonal relationships or the realm of emotional challenges.

Take time to celebrate the individual aspects of the parts of you that you do have some stronger understanding of.

The bad news is that Borderline Personality Disorder is a mental illness that is shrouded in stigma in many areas of life. One of the main reasons for this is that it isn't understood all that well by many who have it and many who know or care about someone with it.

The good news, however, believe it or not, to counter-balance the reality and challenges of the stigma of BPD, is that really, in life, there is some form or degree of stigma attached to almost anything that a person or certain group of people either don't know much about or who are hurt by something that they don't understand.

Stigma, like so many other things, bias, prejudice, and the like, is in the perception of the one who doesn't understand and who isn't very capable of tolerating difference.

Practice this next time you encounter stigma, remind yourself that it says more about the person who has the stigma. Stigma that someone else forwards does not have to be taken personally. It's really about them.

is an absence of acknowledging who “I” am.

To find your “self” and to build a stable sense of identity you must act always from a place of integrity. You must make an informed choice to step onto the path of truth and to walk that path no matter how much it hurts. It is very difficult at first. It, like anything else, does get easier over time.

Borderline Personality Disorder has stolen your identity. If you want to reclaim yourself -- and to know WHO YOU ARE -- then you must make the choice to face your pain and to do the work. It means changing how you think, how you feel and how you act. It means dedicating yourself to truth, honesty, integrity and to learning to cope with being the vulnerable, hurting soul that you are.

No more bravado. No more games. To answer the question: Who Am I -- a borderline must give up the games, the lies, the manipulations, the focus on “other”, the giving away personal power and personal responsibility to “other” and the secondary gains of helplessness and of being needy and must look inside where your true self awaits the arrival of your love, devotion and support.

Secondary gains that you might not yet be consciously aware of.

Having Borderline Personality Disorder is not a life sentence. It means (among other things) that you have not fully developed your identity. It means that you have been alien-

ated from yourself, most often, by what has happened to you and or how you have perceived and interpreted what has happened to you in your life thus far. You are free, you really are free, to write a new life-script -- one that enables you to find the answers the question: **Who Am I?**

As you answer that question, you will be healing from Borderline Personality Disorder. Refuse to abandon yourself any longer. Instead learn to be there for yourself. You really can and will find YOU when you want to badly enough.

As you journey on to the answers to who you are you will come to understand that defining yourself and getting to know your real true will be reflected by learning how to be congruent. When you have congruence between your thoughts, actions, feelings and behaviour you will know what it is to live in the grey between the extremes of black and white and knowing that holding onto the paradoxes in everyday life and adult-emotional reality is what is required of the real you – the you that will be healthier as this congruence becomes more and more prevalent in your experience of self.

Today, I am no longer borderline. I know who I am. I know what I like and what I don't like. I know what I value. I know what actions and words are true to my being and which ones wouldn't be. I accept myself. I take care of myself. I meet my own needs. I do not look to others to do this for me or to define me anymore. Yes, in all truth, the journey to my own

Who am I? Why do I need to know?

Who am I when I don't understand?

Who am I when I think everything is someone else's fault?
Is it? Could it really be?

Who am I when talk to a therapist and tell them things that
even I am not sure what to think about them?

Who am I when I get so angry I end up punishing others for
how I feel?

Who am I when I am so self-absorbed because I am so
afraid of this pain inside that I do not understand? Who am
I then?

Who am I when I define myself as a borderline? What does
that really even mean to me? What does it mean to those I
tell about it?

Who am I? Why do I need to know?

What is it about myself that I most do want and/or need to
know right now? --- I wonder.

The Glass Wall of Borderline Personality Disorder

Being dissociated from the lost self and its feelings often leaves those with BPD living behind walls of glass. There is agony in that enclosed space. You can find and free that lost self that is your self. I talk about how the walls form and how the walls can be taken down.

When one has a personality disorder, such as Borderline Personality Disorder, in which the *lost self* is not known life can feel like it is being lived from behind a wall (or walls) of glass.

Most borderlines are quite intelligent in terms of their intellectual capacity. Most borderlines lack the corresponding emotional intelligence. This is why they are often referred to as doing things that are “age-inappropriate”.

As I’ve said before a big part of relationships is one’s emotional maturity and stability. Here is where many borderlines hit that glass wall.

From behind this glass wall one really can see and intellectually be aware of what others are experiencing and sharing with one another. The problem is that this knowledge or

awareness is not always consistent. It also often cannot be translated through the wall of glass.

The wall of glass that is BPD is something that one can only perceive from the inside. It is not visible per se. It cannot be identified by those outside of the glass.

Those who do not have BPD would not have reason to stop and wonder what it is that is between them and those who do have BPD. This wall of glass is often not as apparent to many with BPD as one would hope.

Therefore they go about trying to partake of life in the ways that others do only to hit up against this transparent wall of glass time and time again.

Instead of realizing that it is the glass wall that encompasses them (mainly in the sense of their emotions) they throw stones at others, blaming others for why they feel so tied up in knots inside and for why they feel so distant or why they cannot seem to find and feel the emotions that they know, intellectually, would be

The internal wall that is the glass that encases the borderline is the wall that separates him or her from the lost self inside and from others. It is the inner wall that is projected out onto others and experienced by the borderline as if it is something that belongs to and has been erected by others.

appropriate in any given situation. Attempts at penetrating this borderline wall of angst often only end up making it thicker.

The only way to shatter the glass wall is to do your work from the inside out. To know that you can take better care of yourself, even from behind the walls of glass than others. Other people need to take care of themselves and this is why they rarely have time to try to take care of you.

“People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.”

Asking a person what this quote means: “People who live in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones” has been an often used question that professionals ask to try to assess the connection a borderline has or doesn’t have with “shared reality”.

Mental Health professionals would throw this out to me time and time again when I was borderline and truthfully I don’t think the ways in which I interpreted this helped me at all. It took years to truly see the other side of this quote. It can mean many different things to many different people.

Still, though, the bottom line is that if you live in a glass house or behind a wall of glass and you think it’s prudent to throw stones at others than how much of a

sense of the damage that you are doing to yourself or your own house do you have?

The borderline with a *lost self* cannot respect others, relate to others emotionally, and continues to seek to have others meet his or her needs in ways that are tantamount to throwing emotional stones at others and ending up puzzled as to the responses of others, over and over again.

To me the quote above speaks the fact that we all have vulnerabilities and that this is okay. Often, though, borderlines, dissociated from *the lost self* and the essence of their own vulnerability will strike out at others and then not understand the reactions they get or why they then feel so hurt. This too can be part of re-living one's past traumatic life-drama. Negative life schemas that are fueled by negative core beliefs. Negative core beliefs that are housed within *the lost self*.

The walls of glass can be broken down bit by bit. But should they be utterly shattered by your throwing stones at others they have an amazing ability to re-develop again and again. Each time that you look to another to do for you what you need to do for you that is you in effect throwing a stone at your own glass house - the glass house that is your *lost self*.

Throwing stones is blaming. Throwing stones is not taking responsibility for your own actions and the consequences of said actions.