

Borderline Personality Disorder and Suicidality

- BPD carries a **significant risk of suicide** – estimates have varied from between **3-10%**
- **Suicidal ideation** (thinking and fantasizing about suicide) is **pervasive** in the borderline population
 - The rate of suicide is particularly high in the **young female patient** population
- **Motivations** for self-injurious behaviors are complex and vary among patients and between contexts
 - About 40% of self-harming acts done by borderline patients occur during **dissociative experiences**, when **numbness** and **emptiness** are at their worst.
 - For such patients, self-injury is often the only way to **relieve** the distressing experience of **not having “any feelings at all”**
 - Some patients report causing themselves **physical pain** generates **relief**, briefly stopping agonising **psychological pain**.
 - Sometimes people with BPD make suicide attempts when they feel **alone, abandoned and unloved**, or when life feels so painful as to feel **unbearable**.
 - There may be a **vaguely** conceived **plan to be rescued**, which represents an attempt to relieve the feelings of **aloneness** by generating some **connection** with others
- Patients' attitudes towards suicide acts **after the attempt** are generally ambivalent (i.e. if rescued I want to live, if not, I prefer to die)
- The **average number** of suicide attempts is 3
 - Suicide is **completed** on average once per 23 attempts
- **Outpatient therapy** and **treatment significantly reduce** the risk of suicide and self-harm, but **may not eliminate it** completely.

Sources: 1. Links P, Soloff P, Schiavone F. Assessing and Managing Suicide Risk. In: The American Psychiatric Publishing Textbook of Personality Disorders. American Psychiatric Pub; 2014. p. 385–405. 2. Brodsky BS, Groves SA, Oquendo MA, Mann JJ, Stanley B. Interpersonal precipitants and suicide attempts in borderline personality disorder. *Suicide Life Threat Behav.* 2006 Jun;36(3):313–22. 3. Yen S, Shea MT, Sanislow CA, Grilo CM, Skodol AE, Gunderson JG, et al. Borderline personality disorder criteria associated with prospectively observed suicidal behavior. *Am J Psychiatry.* 2004 Jul;161(7):1296–8. 4. Yen S, Pagano ME, Shea MT, Grilo CM, Gunderson JG, Skodol AE, et al. Recent Life Events Preceding Suicide Attempts in a Personality Disorder Sample: Findings From the Collaborative Longitudinal Personality Disorders Study. *J Consult Clin Psychol.* 2005;73:99–105. 5. Yen S, Shea MT, Sanislow CA, Skodol AE, Grilo CM, Edelen MO, et al. Personality traits as prospective predictors of suicide attempts. *Acta Psychiatr Scand.* 2009;120(3):222–9. 6. NEA. BPD. A BPD BRIEF | National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder [Internet]. 2011 [cited 2022 Dec 30]. Available from: <https://www.borderlinepersonalitydisorder.org/professionals/a-bpd-brief/>