What is Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)?

Borderline personality disorder is a mental illness classified as a Personality Disorder that causes intense mood swings, impulsive behaviors, and severe problems with self-worth. It can lead to troubled relationships in every area of a person's life.

Most of the time, signs of the disorder first appear in childhood. But problems often don't start until early adulthood. Treatment can be hard, and getting better can take years. Problems with emotions and behaviors are hard to improve. But with treatment, most people with severe symptoms do get better over time.

What causes this disorder?

Experts don't know exactly what causes borderline personality disorder. Problems with chemicals in the brain that help control moods may play a role. It also seems to run in families.

Often, people who get it faced some kind of childhood trauma such as abuse, neglect, or the death of a parent. The risk is higher when people who had childhood trauma also have problems coping with anxiety or stress.

What are the symptoms?

Everyone has problems with emotions or behaviors sometimes. But if you have borderline personality disorder, the problems are severe, repeat over a long time, and disrupt your life. The most common symptoms include:

1. Intense emotions and mood swings.
2. Harmful, impulsive behaviors. These may include things like substance abuse, binge eating, out-of-control spending, risky sexual behavior, and reckless driving.
3. Relationship problems. You may see others as either "good" or "bad" and may shift from one view to the other suddenly, for minor reasons. This can make relationships very difficult.
4. Low self-worth.
5. A frantic fear of being left alone (abandoned). This fear may lead to frantic attempts to hold on to those around you. Or it may cause you to reject others before they can reject you.
6. Aggressive behavior.

Other symptoms may include:

1. Feeling empty inside.
2. Problems with anger, such as violent temper tantrums.

3. Hurting yourself, such as cutting or burning yourself.
4. Suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts.
5. Times when you feel paranoid or lose a sense of reality (psychosis).

It's easy to confuse this disorder with other mental illnesses. And they may overlap. So if you think that you or someone you know may have borderline personality disorder, see a doctor or a psychologist. Don't try to diagnose yourself.