Adolescent Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) may be characterized by social problems, academic problems, and self-harm behavior. BPD also comes with future risks for development, such as negative health outcomes and addiction. Early detection and intervention are important. In this post, we’ve developed some strategies that may help parents who have an adolescent who was diagnosed with BPD. This information is for educational purposes only and should not be considered to be an offer of professional evaluation or treatment. Please consult with your healthcare provider regarding the applicability of this content for your child.

**Question:** What can be done when my child is engaging in non-suicidal self-injurious behavior?

Non-suicidal self-injury (or NSSI) is the intentional act of harming oneself while lacking suicidal intent. Forms of NSSI include cutting, burning, scratching, and hitting. While these symptoms might make a parent feel incredibly helpless and powerless as you scramble for a solution, there is light at the end of the tunnel. There are two approaches to treatment that are helpful. One option, Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT), is a time-limited therapy for adolescents that focuses on helping the teen to identify problems in interpersonal relationships, problems with self-management, and problems in behavioral patterns. Another option is Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for Adolescents (DBT-A), which includes 20 weekly individual sessions with a therapist, as well as skills training groups. APA’s Psychologist Locator is linked below in the article, and can be used as a resource for finding a qualified professional in your area. Asking for credentials or filtering specializations could ensure that your child is being treated with an approach that has been found to be helpful for non-suicidal self-injury.

**Question:** If I were to take my child to a healthcare professional, would they just give them pills to fix it?

Recent research has shown that there is minimal evidence to support medication treatment for borderline personality disorder in adolescents. As a parent and advocate for your child, it is a good idea to read summaries of the studies and research. Be prepared to ask questions if medication is recommended and you do not agree or want more information before deciding.
to agree. Identify a trusted healthcare professional who is up-to-date on medication practices and is willing to be a good neutral party in navigating decision-making.

**Question:** A personality disorder is serious, and I do not think a personality is even formed for someone as young as my child. Why should I accept this diagnosis?

BPD is a reliable and valid diagnosis in adolescents. Furthermore, early detection has been supported in national treatment guidelines. If borderline personality disorder is left untreated, the likelihood of successfully managing the disorder decreases. This means that earlier intervention and treatment are key, and this is the approach that science is now emphasizing the most. Early detection and treatment may ease the risks associated with the disorder, and ultimately help your child have a better future by getting them treatment early.

**Question:** How can I relate to my child with Borderline Personality Disorder?

It has been found that young people with Borderline Personality Disorder, or BPD, are more likely to be at risk for school and work problems. As a parent, you can offer support in this area by trying to accommodate their struggles. Strive to have a close relationship with teachers and helpful school faculty, and help your child learn how to get organized. Try not to get frustrated with them when they make mistakes. Early detection and intervention are important. We’ve developed some strategies that may help parents who have an adolescent who was diagnosed with BPD. This information is for educational purposes only and should not be considered to be an offer of professional evaluation or treatment. Please consult with your healthcare provider regarding the applicability of this content for your child.

BPD was found to be a significant predictor of future self-care habits. Adolescents with BPD may struggle to find healthy or adequate coping strategies, and in turn may experience unhealthy sleeping and eating patterns. As a parent, you can help your child grow and develop by scheduling activities and self-care time that will help them to maintain wellness and balance. One idea would be weekly time spent together doing meaningful activities that your child selects, with attention being solely on your teen or child.

Young people with BPD generally struggle in peer relationships. As a parent, you can help them succeed by modeling better social skills for them, such as modeling how to properly say no and set boundaries. Additionally, avoid comparing your child to their siblings or other children.
Young people with BPD may exhibit suicidal behavior or non-suicidal self-injury such as cutting. If your child exhibits any of these behaviors, it may be helpful to contact a healthcare professional for guidance. If you find out that your child is self-harming, the best way to react is by being calm, direct, and without judgment. Do not dismiss such injuries and seek medical attention as needed. Start a conversation about self-harm calmly and listen silently without interrupting. A wonderful resource for parents that is devoted entirely to the concern of self-harming in teenagers can be found here: https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/mental-health-physical-health/mental-health-disorders-concerns/self-harm.

Finally, parents are encouraged to learn more about the diagnosis and offer support to their adolescents in consultation with a qualified mental health professional. For parents and clinicians, there is much that can be done to mitigate the future risks that come with BPD in children. Please consult with your healthcare provider regarding the applicability of this content for your child.

The above suggestions are not intended to substitute for professional help. If you feel you would benefit from talking with a professional and would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our Psychologist Locator. You can also ask your health care professional or a trusted friend to recommend a psychologist or other mental health professional.