

# Facing the Facts Leaving a Partner with Borderline Personality Disorder



Borderline  
Personality  
Disorder  
for Beginners

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By  
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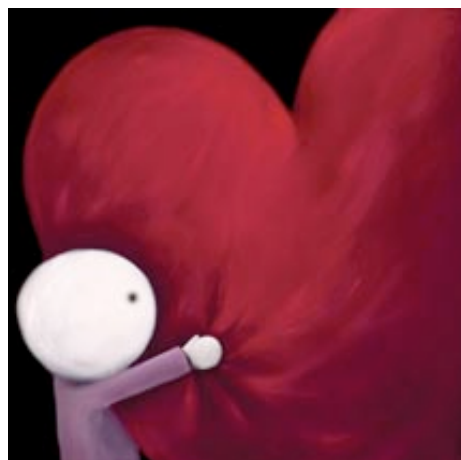
## LEAVING A BORDERLINE REALTIONSHIP

Separating from "The Borderline" often involves three stages: The Detachment, Ending the Relationship, and the Follow-up Protection.

### The Detachment

During this part of separating from "The Borderline", you recognize what you must do and create an Exit Plan. Many individuals fail in attempts to detach from "The Borderline" because they leave suddenly and impulsively, without proper planning, and without resources. In many cases, "The Borderline" has isolated their partner from others, has control of finances, or has control of major exit needs such as an automobile. During the detachment phase you should...

- Observe the way you are treated. Watch for the methods listed above and see how "The Borderline" works.
  - Gradually become more boring, talk less, share less feelings and opinions. The goal is almost to bore "The Borderline" to lessen the emotional attachment, at the same time not creating a situation which would make you a target.
  - Quietly contact your family and supportive others. Determine what help they might be - a place to stay, protection, financial help, etc.
  - If you fear violence or abuse, check local legal or law enforcement options such as a restraining order.
  - If "The Borderline" is destructive, slowly move your valuables from the home if together, or try to recover valuables if in their possession. In many cases, you may lose some personal items during your detachment - a small price to pay to get rid of "The Borderline".
- Stop arguing, debating or discussing issues. Stop defending and explaining yourself - responding with comments such as "I've been so confused lately" or "I'm under so much stress I don't know why I do anything anymore".
  - Begin dropping hints that you are depressed, burned out, or confused about life in general. Remember - "The Borderline" never takes responsibility for what happens in any relationship. "The Borderline" will feel better about leaving the relationship if they can blame it on you. Many individuals are forced to "play confused" and dull, allowing "The Borderline" to tell others "My girlfriend (or boyfriend) about half nuts!" They may tell others you're crazy or confused but you'll be safer. Allow them to think anything they want about you as long as you're in the process of detaching.
  - Don't start another relationship. That will only complicate your situation and increase the anger. Your best bet is to "lay low" for several months. Remember, "The Borderline" will quickly locate another victim and become instantly attached as long as the focus on you is allowed to die down.



- As "The Borderline" starts to question changes in your behavior, admit confusion, depression, emotionally numbness, and a host of other boring reactions. This sets the foundation for the ending of the relationship.

## Ending the Relationship

Remembering that "The Borderline" doesn't accept responsibility, responds with anger to criticism, and is prone to panic detachment reactions - ending the relationship continues the same theme as the detachment.

- Explain that you are emotionally numb, confused, and burned out. You can't feel anything for anybody and you want to end the relationship almost for his or her benefit. Remind them that they've probably noticed something is wrong and that you need time to sort out your feelings and fix whatever is wrong with you. As disgusting as it may seem, you may have to use a theme of "I'm not right for anyone at this point in my life." If "The Borderline" can blame the end on you, as they would if they ended the relationship anyway, they will depart faster.
  - If "The Borderline" panics, you'll receive a shower of phone calls, letters, notes on your car, etc. React to each in the same manner - a boring thanks. If you overreact or give in, you've lost control again.
  - Focus on your need for time away from the situation. Don't agree to the many negotiations that will be offered - dating less frequently, dating only once a week, taking a break for only a week, going to counseling together, etc. As long as "The Borderline" has contact with you they feel there is a chance to manipulate you.
- "The Borderline" will focus on making you feel guilty. In each phone contact you'll hear how much you are loved, how much was done for you, and how much they have sacrificed for you. At the same time, you'll hear about what a bum you are for leading them on, not giving them an opportunity to fix things, and embarrassing them by ending the relationship.
  - Don't try to make them understand how you feel - it won't happen. "The Borderline" only is concerned with how they feel - your feelings are irrelevant. You will be wasting your time trying to make them understand and they will see the discussions as an opportunity to make you feel more guilty and manipulate you.
  - Don't fall for sudden changes in behavior or promises of marriage, trips, gifts, etc. By this time you have already seen how "The Borderline" is normally and naturally. While anyone can change for a short period of time, they always return to their normal behavior once the crisis is over.
  - Seek professional counseling for yourself or the support of others during this time. You will need encouragement and guidance. Keep in mind, if "The Borderline" finds out you are seeking help they will criticize the counseling, the therapist, or the effort.
  - Don't use terms like "someday", "maybe", or "in the future". When "The Borderline" hears such possibilities, they think you are weakening and will increase their pressure.
  - Imagine a dead slot machine. If we are in Las Vegas at a slot machine and pull the handle ten times and nothing happens - we move on to another machine. However, if



on the tenth time the slot machine pays us even a little, we keep pulling the handle - thinking the jackpot is on the way. If we are very stern and stable about the decision to end the relationship over many days, then suddenly offer a possibility or hope for reconciliation - we've given a little pay and the pressure will continue. Never change your position - always say the same thing. "The Borderline" will stop playing a machine that doesn't pay off and quickly move to another.

## Follow-up Protection

"The Borderline" never sees their responsibility or involvement in the difficulties in the relationship. From a psychological standpoint, "The Borderline" has lived and behaved in this manner most of their life, clearly all of their adult life. As they really don't see themselves at fault or as an individual with a problem, "The Borderline" tends to think that the girlfriend or boyfriend is simply going through a phase - their partner (victim) might be temporarily mixed up or confused, they might be listening to the wrong people, or they might be angry about something and will get over it soon. "The Borderline" rarely detaches completely and will often try to continue contact with the partner even after the relationship is terminated. During the Follow-up Protection period, some guidelines are:

- Never change your original position. It's over permanently! Don't talk about possible changes in your position in the future. You might think that will calm "The Borderline" but it only tells them that the possibilities still exist and only a little more pressure is needed to return to the relationship.
  - Don't agree to meetings or reunions to discuss old times. For "The Borderline", discussing old times is actually a way to upset you, put you off guard, and use the guilt to hook you again.
  - Don't offer details about your new life or relationships. Assure him that both his life and your life are now private and that you hope they are happy.
  - If you start feeling guilty during a phone call, get off the phone fast. More people return to bad marriages and relationships due to guilt than anything else. If you listen to those phone calls, as though taping them, you'll find "The Borderline" spends most of the call trying to make you feel guilty.
  - In any contact with the ex "Borderline", provide only a status report, much like you'd provide to your Aunt Gladys. For example: "I'm still working hard and not getting any better at tennis. That's about it."
  - When "The Borderline" tells you how difficult the breakup has been, share with him some general thoughts about breaking-up and how finding the right person is difficult. While "The Borderline" wants to focus on your relationship, talk in terms of Ann Landers - "Well, breaking up is hard on anyone. Dating is tough in these times. I'm sure we'll eventually find someone that's right for both of us." Remember - nothing personal!
  - Keep all contact short and sweet - the shorter the better. As far as "The Borderline" is concerned, you're always on your way somewhere, there's something in the microwave, or your mother is walking up the steps to your home. Wish "The Borderline" well but always with the same tone of voice that you might offer to someone you have
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just talked to at the grocery store. For phone conversations, electronic companies make a handy gadget that produces about twenty sounds - a doorbell, an oven or microwave alarm, a knock on the door, etc. That little device is handy to use on the phone - the microwave dinner just came out or someone is at the door. Do whatever you have to do to keep the conversation short - and not personal.

### **The key to health is the early identification and treatment of problems**

In all of our relationships throughout life, we will meet a variety of individuals with many different personalities. Some are a joy to have in our life and some provide us with life-long love and security. Others we meet pose some risk to us and our future due to their personality and attitudes. Both in medicine and mental health - the key to health is the early identification and treatment of problems - before they reach the point that they are beyond treatment. In years of psychotherapy and counseling practice, treating the victims of "The Borderline", patterns of attitude and behavior emerge in "The Borderline" that can now be listed and identified in the hopes of providing early identification and warning. When those signs and indicators surface and the pattern is identified, we must move quickly to get away from the situation. Continuing a relationship with "The Borderline" will result in a relationship that involves intimidation, fear, angry outbursts, paranoid control, and a total loss of your self-esteem and self-confidence.

If you have been involved in a long-term relationship with "The Borderline", after you successfully escape you may notice that you have sustained some psychological damage that will require professional repair. In many cases, the stress has been so severe that you may have a

stress-produced depression. You may have severe damage to your self-confidence/self-esteem or to your feelings about the opposite sex or relationships. Psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and counselors are available in your community to assist and guide you as you recover from your damaging relationship with "The Borderline".

### **For More Information**

This pamphlet was prepared for *Facing the Facts* by Joe Carver, PhD, a clinical therapist and one of over 20 Professional Members at *Facing the Facts*.

After graduating from Ohio University with a Bachelor's Degree in 1971, Carver joined the Psychology Department at a local state-operated inpatient psychiatric facility, Portsmouth Receiving Hospital. Carver immediately began graduate course work, initially at Xavier University in Cincinnati OH, then Marshall University in Huntington, WV and finally returning to Ohio University in

Athens, OH. After graduating with a Master's Degree, Carver co-founded a private practice corporation, Southern Ohio Psychological Services, Inc. Returning to Ohio University, Carver began doctoral studies and was granted my



Ph.D. in 1989. Carver then obtained a license to practice in 1990 and has remained in private practice. In July 1996 Carver parted from his original corporation and formed another private practice as a solo practitioner; Joseph M. Carver, Ph.D., Inc.

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