BUCKINGHAMSHIRE NEW UNIVERSITY
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Supporting Personality Disorder in Higher Education

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Tigger Warning: We will be discussing suicide and self-harm

Contents

Questions

Please chime in and ask questions throughout the session by raising your hand

Step 01

Diagnosis & Theories

What is a personality disorder?

Step 02

Awareness

What do you need to know?

Step 03

Support

How do you support someone with a personality disorder?

Personality Disorders – Diagnosis & Theory

Categorical classification: clearly defined disorders.
Dimensional classification: trait pathology on a continuum.

Historically categorical approach was adopted by main classification systems (DSM and ICD).

Limitations of categorical classification models:

- Unwieldly diagnostic criteria
- In most instances people are diagnosed with borderline/EUPD or antisocial PD
- Issues of comorbidity

Recent editions have signalled a shift:

- DSM-5 (2013): Hybrid dimensional-categorical model (included in appendix as opposed to main body).
- ICD-11(2019): dimensional model based on severity of pathology.

ICD-11 (2019) vs. ICD-10 (1990)

- Transition from traditional personality disorder categories to emphasising severity of disturbance.
- Recognises that personality dysfunction is dimensional (exists on a continuum) and can change in severity over time.
- ICD-11 two step diagnostic process:
  - Step 1: does individual display features of a personality disorder?
  - Step 2: identify the severity of the disturbance

- Severity can be qualified with a description of domain traits (not categories but set of dimensions that correspond to underlying structure of personality functioning – we can all be placed on these dimensions).

Borderline/Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder

17.1%

Although rates vary widely, up to 17.1% of college students have reported clinically significant symptoms of BPD

- Feeling isolated or abandoned
- Self-harming or suicidal thoughts
- Coping with stress
- Strong emotions that you find difficult to manage
- Misusing alcohol, drugs or prescription drugs
- Understanding other people's point of view
- Maintaining relationships, work and home

You need to be experience 5 symptoms to be diagnosed under the DSM.

How to support people with Personality Disorder

Listen and validate their experience.

01

Validation

Remain calm – do not mimic their energy.

02

Calm

Sign-post to experts and existing support network.

03

Sign-Post

Sign-Posting

01

Emergency - 999

The person is in the process of a suicide attempt or serious self-harm (e.g. overdose)

02

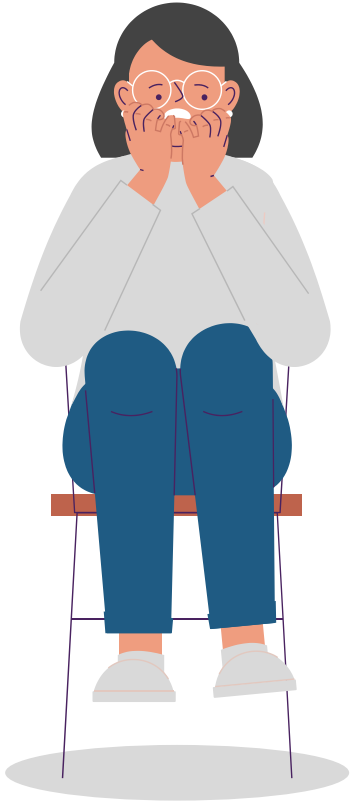
Urgent – 111 or A&E

The person has a plan to hurt themselves and cannot keep themselves safe

03

Safety Planning

The person feels like they are progressing towards crisis



04

Out of Hours Support

If they need to talk to someone out of hours, refer them to an expert (e.g. Safe Haven or Samaritans)

05

Student Services

In hours support – crisis management and ongoing

06

Social Distraction

If the person needs a distraction – not to talk about their thoughts/feelings

Assessing risk in relation to medication compliance

- Medication for PD should be avoided unless there is robustly diagnosed co-morbid depressive or anxiety disorder (in accordance with NICE guidance).
- Current evidence indicates that antidepressants have very limited efficacy in treating affect dysregulation, symptoms of low mood and anxiety associated with Personality Disorder.
- The evidence also indicates that second generation antipsychotics and anticonvulsants may have some efficacy in reducing the intensity of affect dysregulation for some individuals diagnosed with Personality Disorder.
- NICE guidance furthermore recommends that neither polypharmacy nor long-term prescription for the specific symptoms of PD is appropriate.

Questions?

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