

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

When Emotional Intensity Fuels the Cycle of Relapse



What is Borderline Personality Disorder?

Borderline Personality Disorder is a mental health condition marked by intense emotional reactions, unstable relationships, and difficulty regulating impulses. People with BPD often experience a deep fear of abandonment—and may swing between seeing loved ones as perfect or as the enemy.

What Does it Look Like?

> **Explosive Reactions**

A minor comment leads to a crisis, and you're left wondering what you said wrong.

> **Unstable Relationships**

One week you're their favorite person, the next you're being shut out completely.

> **Black-and-White Thinking**

You're either fully trusted or completely blamed, with nothing in between.

> **Impulsive, Destructive Choices**

Reckless spending, risky relationships, decisions that create chaos for the whole family.

How Does BPD Contribute to Relapse?

Your loved one isn't using because they lack willpower. For someone with BPD, emotions hit with an intensity that feels unbearable—and substances become the fastest way to make it stop.

1) **Emotional Flooding Drives Use**

Substances become the fastest way to escape feelings they haven't learned to regulate on their own.

2) **Short-Term Programs Lack Depth**

You can't build a lifetime of emotional regulation skills in 30 days, or even 90 days.

3) **Without Treating BPD, Relapse is Likely**

They leave treatment and return to the same overwhelming emotions, with no new way to cope.

Prevalence:

1.4–2.7% of U.S. adults¹

Co-Occurrence:

78% develop a substance use disorder in their lifetime²

Relapse Risk:

2–3x more likely to develop new SUDs than other disorders³

Sources: ¹ NIMH, National Comorbidity Survey, Replication / ² Deutsches Ärzteblatt International (2014) / ³ Walter et al., *Addiction* (2009)

Treating BPD and Chronic Relapse at Burning Tree Ranch

BPD doesn't respond to quick fixes. Our **long-term, progress-based model** gives clients the extended time needed to practice emotional regulation—not in a controlled 30-day environment, but across months of daily life within our structured program.

Clients advance through the program when they **demonstrate genuine change** in how they handle stress and relationships, not when a calendar says they're done.



“Clients with BPD are often the most convincing that they’ve changed—because they believe it in the moment. Real transformation requires enough time for families to see consistent behavior, not just words.”

 **Brook McKenzie, LCDC**
CEO, Burning Tree Ranch



Dual Diagnosis Treatment for BPD Co-Occurring with Addiction

When BPD and addiction occur together, treating only one leads to relapse. Emotional dysregulation drives substance use—and substance use destabilizes emotions further.

- **Treating Both Conditions Together**
Without treating the underlying disorder, the change is temporary.
- **Building Life Skills**
Practical skills are required to manage emotions without substance use.
- **Providing Enough Time**
It takes time to replace deeply-ingrained patterns with new ones.

Dual Diagnosis:

The presence of **both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation's only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at www.BurningTree.com.

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