

## "Things that would not upset most other people, I went into hysterics over."

by Lilian in Florida

When I look back I can now see that I started to show symptoms of borderline personality disorder (BPD) when I was ten years old. My symptoms did not become obvious to the people around me until I was 14 and then even longer before I was misdiagnosed at the age of seventeen.

My mounting unstable emotional outbursts were what seemed to draw people's attention the most. I was incapable of controlling my ever increasing emotional states that would come and go at the drop of a hat. The yelling, screaming, crying, and throwing things for the smallest of infractions. Things that would not upset most other people, I went into hysterics over.

By the age of 10, I started skipping school. Always a chubby girl, the other kids at school picked on me and on good days excluded me. Because of my disorder these attacks, which is what I perceived them to be, made it hard for me to be around other children my age. Also around this time, I started to shoplift small things from stores. I didn't do this out of malice or the need to be rebellious. I just wanted things like cute pencils, stickers, or nail polish. When my mom would not buy them for me, I stole them. I couldn't help myself. When I got home to play with what I had stolen, I was so happy that I had got what I wanted. It gave me confidence to steal bigger and more expensive things.

My mother did not find out until I was sixteen and arrested at Burdines, a department store in Florida. I was sentenced to community service and had to attend a group meeting for people with poor impulse-control problems. This didn't work. I continued to shoplift until the age of 18 when the fear of going to prison for grand theft made me quit.

At the age of 14, my emotions had become so intense that I started to drink to help dull the raging war inside of me. This is when I also met my best friend. I was so happy that I had finally found someone who understood me and could handle my outbursts. Even she got worn out every now and then. We would both end up sitting on the kitchen floor crying and passing a bottle of vodka back and forth. I idolized her. To me, she was my mother, sister, and only friend. As you can see, I put her up on a pedestal and had impossible expectations of who she was and what she was capable of. For two years, we were inseparable: skipping school, drinking, shoplifting, and (because she wanted to) getting high. Then disaster struck. My mother announced that we would be moving to a city 40 minutes away with her latest boyfriend.

I was enraged. I hated my mother. She was taking me away from my best friend, the one person in the world who I could talk to and didn't think I was crazy. I let out a blood curdling scream and punched the wall. To make matters worse, shortly after my move, my best friend's mom found pot in her room and sent her to live with her father on the other side of the country. This all tore my heart out. I could only talk to her once a month because of the phone bills, and it was nowhere near enough. I started to slip into a severe depression that consumed everything I knew and was. I started sleeping all weekend. I would come home from school on Friday go straight to bed and not get out until Monday morning. At the age of seventeen I stopped talking. I could hear

everything everyone was saying to me, but I could not say a single syllable. I was taken to the hospital where I was admitted immediately to the psychiatric ward. After two days of tests and doctors, I was diagnosed with clinical depression and bipolar disorder. I was immediately prescribed medication. I was also assigned a case manager, psychiatrist, psychologist, and therapist. My therapist taught me coping skills to deal with my mood swings and after several medications my psychiatrist found the best medication for me. At this time, I started spending hours in the library reading about bipolar disorder and anything else in the psychology section. This is how I discovered that I actually had BPD. I tried to tell all my doctors, but none of them would listen to me. They all thought they knew me better than I did. The lithium made me feel tired all the time and clouded my concentration to the point that I could not study. So my senior year of high school, I dropped out. I slept 12 hours at night and read self-help books my therapist gave me between naps in the day.

To my greatest relief, my best friend's mother said that she could come home. It was like someone had turned on the light. Once again it was just the two of us. We stayed up all night telling each other everything that had gone on since we were apart. Things were great for a while. Then my mother's own disorder exploded.

I was kicked out at the age of 18. I was taken in by my grandparents, but the stress of my mother abandoning me was more than I could take. I was admitted to a crisis center by my case manager for not talking once again. My grandparents told me that they had no idea of the severity of my condition and were unable to deal with it. I was now on my way to stay with my aunt. I was so terrified of being abandoned again. I was determined to be the perfect niece. I got my GED at nineteen. I passed my driving test and started at the local community college. By this time, I had asked my psychiatrist to lower my dosage so I wouldn't be so exhausted all the time. My best friend had also gotten her GED and registered at the college as well so we could help support each other. We also both got part-time jobs at the same car dealership being the receptionist in alternate shifts. I spent as little time at my aunt's house as possible. I did not want her to feel like I was a burden. I finally was weaned off my medication, which I was ecstatic about. I never really thought it worked anyway, but I wasn't going to tell my doctor that. She thought I was in remission. I never got her to entertain that idea that I actually had BPD. The more I read about it the more I knew I had it.

I dropped out of college before the end of the first semester and moved in with my boyfriend. I also got fired from my job for doing drugs. I never spoke to my mother or grandparents again. During this time I moved around a lot. I changed boyfriends and friends a lot.

By the age of 22, I had racked up a massive credit card debt and after almost overdosing, I quit doing drugs. I don't even talk to my best friend anymore. I wouldn't even know how to find her.

I am now 26, working as a receptionist. Even though all my credit cards have been cancelled, I still can't seem to save any money. This past year my father died and my boyfriend of a year and a half broke up with me. I know I should seek help again, but I just can't bring myself to be put back on medication. Also if one more doctor tries to tell me that I'm bipolar and do not have BPD I'm going to scream. Just know there are people who suffer as you suffer. You're not alone no matter how much you feel like it.