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# BPDSI

# Borderline Personality Disorder Severity Index

**4th Version**

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## Adaptation of Weaver & Clum, 1993

Maastricht, The Netherlands: 06-09-1995, 04-04-1996, 11-11-1998, 08-07-1999

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#### Instruction

The BPDSI is a semi-structured clinical interview assessing the frequency and severity of manifestations of Borderline Personality Disorder during a circumscribed period of three months. Clinical judgment is a necessity for scoring the interview. Therefore, people conducting the interview need to be clinical trained.   
The interview is found suitable for repeated measurement. However, the interview must be conducted as much as possible by the same interviewer. To reach a balanced assessment, additional questions need to be asked next to the standard questions. Asking for actual incidents and/or examples is absolute necessary. Also, exclusions (e.g. depersonalisation because of drug use) must be actively questioned. In many cases it is important to have all actual incidents and/or examples of the last three months described, to rightly determine the frequency. Only with very high-frequent behaviours can some prototypical examples be sufficient, after which the frequency can be estimated. All frequency questions are scored on 10-point scales (0 = never; 10 = daily). This also applies to the items where such a high frequency is unlikely. At each moment of indistinctness or vagueness, notes have to be made, so no information will be lost. The scores and notes will be written down on a separate scoring form.

##### Introduction

“This interview is about a number of things people can experience. The intention is that you work out for yourself if you experienced that what is asked in the last three months and how often that has happened. All questions are asked in the same way, but if you don’t understand them completely you can easily ask for some explanation. Do you have any questions about this so far ?

Because we will only talk about the past three months, it’s convenient to determine which period that was. Today is (date), three months ago it was (date). That was around (important event/day in general and/or specific for the patient)”

**N.B. Text in *italic* print is meant for the interviewer, which is n o t meant to read out loud to the patient.**

**Abandonment**

These items refer to frantic efforts attempted by the interviewee with the goal to prevent someone with whom interviewee has a relationship, is bonded with or is dependent on from abandoning him/her. Examples are , among other things, begging someone not to leave or physically trying to prevent someone from leaving.1)

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* 1. Did you in the last three months ever become desperate when you thought that someone you care about was going to abandon you ?  
     *(when scoring positive, clear examples are required)*
  2. Did you in the last three months try to keep someone who’s important to you and who wanted to avoid you (or of whom you thought he/she wanted to avoid you) with you in a fanatic way ? (*e.g. continuous ringing up, checking, seducing…only exaggerated, forced, frenetic ways are scored)*  
     *(This item is about real and imagined abandonment; when scoring positive, clear examples of attempts are required)(Also scoring of examples / incidents that return at the items 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5)*
  3. Did you in the last three months ever beg or cry for someone not to leave you ?
  4. Did you in the last three months ever threaten to do something to make sure that someone wouldn’t leave you ? *(e.g. blackmail, lies, murder, suicide)*
  5. Did you in the last three months ever try to keep someone from leaving you in a physical way ? *(e.g. by standing in front of a door, hold on to someone)*
  6. How often did you in the last three months have a strong desire to hear someone tell you he/she loves you, cares about you, is not abandoning you, finds you attractive etcetera.   
     *(This can happen with both partners, family and friends)*
  7. How often did you in the last three months ask other people for affirmation, whereas the aim of the affirmation is reassurance that someone will not abandon you ?

**Interpersonal relationships**

There are three characteristics for this criterion. First of all, there must be a pattern of instable relationships, which can be characterized by regular conflicts and imminent or actual break-up. Secondly, these relationships must be intense, meaning that strong emotions are involved (e.g. euphoria, aversion, anger, resentment, despair). Thirdly, the interviewee must at some moments devaluate the other person (e.g. ”he’s really very mean”). At other moments the interviewee could idealize the other person (e.g. “my boyfriend is the most wonderful, attentive and strongest person I ever met”). These persons use, in psychoanalytic terms, splitting as defence mechanism. 1)

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**Partner relationship**

* 1. Were there moments in the last three months at which you thought that your partner was everything you wanted and other moments at which you thought he/she was awful ? (the conviction is essential i.e. intra-psychological, so it’s not necessarily about the actual relationship)
  2. How often in the last three months did you have ups and downs in your partner relationship ? (the focus is on the actual relationship)
  3. How often in the last three months did you break up your partner relationship and/or got together again ? (score both ‘on’ and ‘off’, so two times of breaking up and getting together again gives a score of 4 not 2)
  4. How often in the last three months did you start one or more new partner relationship(s) and/or did you end these ? (score both ‘on’ and ‘off’ separately)

**Other relationships**

* 1. Were there moments in the last three months at which you thought that your friends/ family members/ colleagues and/or other important persons were everything you wanted and other moments at which you thought that he/she were awful ? (the conviction is essential i.e. intra-psychological, so it’s not necessarily about the actual relationship)
  2. How often in the last three months did you have ups and downs in your relationships with friends/ family members/ colleagues and/or other important persons ? (the focus is on the actual relationships)
  3. How often in the last three months did you break up your relationships with friends/ family members/ colleagues and/or other important persons and/or got together   
     again ? ( score both breaking up and getting together)
  4. How often in the last three months did you start one or more new relationships with friends/ family members/ colleagues and/or important persons and/or did you end relationships ? (score both breaking up and getting together)

**Identity**

Self identity is a stable sense of self which provides unity of personality over time. The type of identity disturbance characteristic for borderline personality disorder exists of extreme shifts in the self-image of the person in question (who am I). These shifts manifest themselves in sudden changes with respect to jobs, career goals, sexual orientation, personal values, friends and the fundamental feeling one has about oneself (e.g. good or bad). These items must only be scored if the identity disturbance doesn’t fit the developmental age of the person in question (i.e. normal adult identity shifts are not taken into account). 1)

1. Were you in the last three months in diverse situations or with various people so different that you didn’t always behave as the same person and that you didn’t know anymore who you truly were ?   
   0. absent  
   1. questionable / some support  
   2. probable not knowing who he/she is, but not very clearly defined  
   3. (quit) clear not knowing who he/she is, but not very dominant  
   4. dominant, clear and well-defined not knowing who he/she is
2. Did it happen in the last three months that the idea of who you are, changed   
   strongly ?  
   0. absent  
   1. questionable / some support  
   2. probable instability of self-image  
   3. (quit) clear instability of self-image  
   4. clear and dominant instability of self-image
3. Did it happen in the last three months that the feeling of you being a good or bad person changed strongly ?  
   0. absent  
   1. questionable / some support  
   2. probable instability of sense of self  
   3. (quit) clear instability of sense of self  
   4. clear and dominant instability of sense of self
4. What have been your long term goals for life in the last three months ? For example which education, job and/or career would you want or wish for ?   
   Have these goals changed in the last three months ? (clients in treatment often tell their only goal is to get better and/or finish treatment well; this is scored as avoidance)  
   0. absent  
   1. questionable / some support  
   2. probable instability of long term goals / probable avoidance of dealing with long  
    term goals  
   3. (quit) clear instability of long term goals, but not very dominant / (quit) clear   
    avoidance of dealing with long term goals, but not very dominant  
   4. clear and dominant instability of long term goals / clear and dominant avoidance   
    of dealing with long term goals
5. Have you changed, in the last three months, in your view of what is morally right or wrong ? (…in your view about your standards and values / what you can and what you can’t do / what’s good and bad) (question intensity / direction / frequency of changes)  
   0. absent  
   1. questionable / some support  
   2. probable instability of moral values  
   3. (quit) clear instability of moral values, but not very dominant  
   4. clear and dominant instability of moral values
6. Have you had trouble, in the last three months, to determine what is important in your   
   life ? Has this changed in the last three months ?  
   0. absent  
   1. questionable / some support  
   2. probable instability of personal values / probable avoidance  
   3. (quit) clear instability of personal values, but not very dominant / probable avoidance but not very   
    dominant  
   4. clear and dominant instability of moral values / clear and dominant avoidance
7. Have you had trouble, in the last three months, to determine what sort of friends you would like to have ? Does the sort of friends you had change often ? (some people tell they don’t have friends; this is scored as avoidance)  
   0. absent  
   1. questionable / some support  
   2. probable instability with regard to friends / probable avoidance with regard to friends  
   3. (quit) clear instability with regard to friends, but not very dominant / probable avoidance with   
    regard to friends but not very dominant  
   4. clear and dominant instability with regard to friends / clear and dominant avoidance with regard to   
    friends
8. Did you, in the last three months, ever doubt if you wanted a sexual relationship with men or women ? After the interviewee’s reply: How often has this changed in the last three months ? (stable heterosexual/bisexual/homosexual orientation is scored 0)  
   0. absent  
   1. rarely  
   2. has probably doubts with regard to sexual orientation  
   3. has (quit) clearly doubts with regard to sexual orientation  
   4. has serious doubts with regard to sexual orientation

**Impulsivity**

Next are a few examples of things people can act on impulsively. Things of which you later thought that you better had not done them or things that caused or could have caused problems for you or your environment. *(behaviour with the primary goal of eliminating negative feelings and/or inducing positive feelings is essential; not the behaviour with the primary goal to damage oneself or others)  
  
The core characteristic of this criterion is the inability of the person to control his/her impulses, through which he/she gets involved in behaviour that is satisfactory in the short term but can be damaging in the long term. The behaviours mentioned below are examples, they don’t cover the full spectrum of impulsive behaviours.* 1)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. How often in the last three months did you irresponsibly spend money and/or spend more money than you actually can spend ? (e.g. gambling, impulsive buying, making many and long phone calls)
2. How often in the last three months did you have sex with people you didn’t or hardly knew ?
3. How often in the last three months did you have unsafe sex ? (sex without considering the possible self-damaging consequences and/or pregnancy)
4. How often in the last three months did you have too much alcohol and/or did you use alcohol at the wrong moments ? (with alcoholic people: note the standard use of alcohol at 4.4.A on the score-form, everything on top of that is scored at 4.4)
5. How often in the last three months did you use too much soft drugs and/or did you use soft drugs at the wrong moments ? (with drug addicts: note the standard use of soft drugs at 4.5.A on the score-form, everything on top of that is scored at 4.5)
6. How often in the last three months did you take pills ? (not with the goal of suicide but with the goal to get high)
7. How often in the last three months did you use hard drugs ? (with drug addicts: note the standard use of hard drugs at 4.7.A on the score-form, everything on top of that is scored at 4.7)
8. How often in the last three months did you have episodes of binge eating ? (all binge eating is scored, so with or without loss of control, with or without planning etc.)
9. How often in the last three months were you reckless in traffic ? (e.g. driving too fast or under the influence of alcohol) (not caused by dissociation)
10. How often in the last three months have you committed thefts ? (with what intention ? It’s essential that it’s done to get a good feeling or to push aside a bad feeling, it’s not about enriching oneself)
11. How often in the last three months did you do things impulsively that could have gotten you in trouble or actually did get you in trouble ? (e.g. cancel appointments, not keeping up to agreements, subscribe to a course/education, book a vacation) (not automutilation or suicidal behaviour; note answers on score-form)

**Parasuicidal behaviour**

The next questions inquire if you tried to hurt or wound yourself in the last three months.

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**Automutilation with self-injury as immediate consequence, i.e. tissue damage or physical pain, without any suicidal intention**

1. How often in the last three months did you deliberately hit yourself or did you hit your head, fist, knuckles or other body part into something ?  
   Or smash a window with your fist and/or other body part ?
2. How often in the last three months did you scratch or pinch yourself ?
3. How often in the last three months did you bite yourself ? (what generally speaking hurts, so no nail biting)
4. How often in the last three months did you tear your hair ? (can also be eye brows or eye lashes)
5. How often in the last three months did you cut yourself ? (also cutting relatively shallow, more or less resulting in scratches)
6. How often in the last three months did you burn yourself ? (cigarette, flat- iron)
7. How often in the last three months did you stick needles and suchlike in your body ?
8. How often in the last three months did you harm yourself on purpose ? (e.g. swallow sharp objects, take dangerous substances, enter sharp/dangerous objects into body openings like the vagina, penis, ears etc.; note well on the score-form)

**Suicide (plans/attempts)**

1. How often in the last three months did you want to kill yourself ?
2. How often in the last three months did you tell other people that you wanted to kill yourself ? (not scored when it’s about passive suicidal ideation e.g. telling others “I wish I was dead”)
3. How often in the last three months did you make plans to kill yourself ? (when these plans lead to particular steps, score at 5.12)
4. How often in the last three months did you take steps towards killing yourself ? (when these steps lead to an attempt, score at 5.13)
5. How often in the last three months did you attempt to take your own life ?

**Affective instability**

I now want to ask you about mood changes. It is about striking changes towards a dejected/depressed, irritable, anxious, desperate and/or angry mood.

Affective instability refers to the alternating, instable quality of mood of the interviewee. Even though the mood alteration is often abrupt, a sudden onset of the change in mood is not required. Instead, this criterion specifies frequent affective shifts that are indeed strong but of relative short endurance (rather hours than days or weeks). 1)

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1. Do you know such mood shifts towards a dejected (depressed) mood ?  
   How often in the last three months did this happen ?  
   (Not because of Axis I diagnoses: question!! / check also SCID I results)
2. And how often in the last three months towards a irritable and/or edgy mood ?  
   (Not because of Axis I)
3. And how often in the last three months towards an anxious mood ?  
   (Not because of Axis I)
4. And how often in the last three months towards a desperate mood ?  
   (Not because of Axis I)
5. And how often in the last three months towards an angry mood ?  
   (Not because of Axis I)

(When in doubt of the influence of Axis I diagnoses: score the items but take notes and discuss with the researcher)

**Emptiness**

Chronic feelings of emptiness are often linked with feelings of boredom, loneliness, worthlessness or feelings “you can’t define”. 1)

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1. How often in the last three months did you feel bored or empty inside ?  
   (This is about feelings of emptiness or boredom resulting in stress or inadequate behaviour. Inadequate behaviour also includes the negative influence of these feelings on normal or adequate behaviour. For example not being able to do anything while it was desired or necessary to do something.)
2. How often in the last three months didn’t you do anything as a consequence of these feelings of emptiness or boredom, while you actually did want to do something ?  
   (e.g. stay in bed instead of doing shopping)
3. How often in the last three months did you do things as a consequence of these feelings of emptiness or boredom, while you actually did want to do something else ?   
   (e.g. going out instead of working, alcohol and drug abuse can also belong to this criterion)
4. How often in the last three months did it happen that you couldn’t take a moment to rest ? (e.g. cleaning or pacing up and down, this is interpreted as avoidance of rest to keep feelings of emptiness away)

**Outbursts of anger**

The next questions are about outbursts of anger or rage.

*Inappropriate anger refers to the intensity of anger of the person, which is not in proportion to the cause of the anger. Manifestations of extreme physical (violent) behaviour, like hitting people or throwing things, can indicate a lack of anger-control with regard to anger/rage. The rage is often expressed in the context of an actual or experienced lack of care/attention, loss or neglect.* 1)  
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1. Does it happen that you are in a bad temper and/or have a fit of rage ?  
   How often in the last three months did this happen ?
2. How often in the last three months did you react cynical and/or sarcastic to other people ?  
   (stinging, sneering, mocking)
3. How often in the last three months did you swear, scream and/or slam doors ?  
   (make noise)
4. How often in the last three months were you so mad that you weren’t approachable anymore, that you couldn’t be brought to reason anymore ?  
   (outbursts of anger)
5. How often in the last three months did you throw things, break things etcetera ?
6. How often in the last three months did you attack others ? (physically)

**Dissociation and Paranoid ideation**

Some people strongly react to stressful events.

Some people with borderline personality disorder develop transitory paranoid or dissociative symptoms during periods of stress. These symptoms are rarely of such severity that an additional diagnosis can be made (i.e. psychotic disorders). The stressor often is an actual, supposed or anticipated abstinence of care/attention of a carer (e.g. partner, parent, therapist). In such situations can the actual or supposed return of care/attention result in remission of the symptoms. The dissociative symptoms exist of periods of dissociative amnesia (sometimes expressed through the person’s feeling of “losing time”), depersonalisation (i.e. the feeling of becoming estranged from yourself or moving away from yourself) or derealization (i.e. the feeling that the external world is unreal or unusual). These periods usually last a few minutes or hours. 1)

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**Dissociation**: **depersonalisation (9.1), derealization (9.2), consciousness (9.3), memory (9.4 and 9.5)**

1. To what extent in the last three months, did you feel not like yourself anymore, as if you stood outside yourself, or did you experience yourself as in a movie or dream ?  
   (NB…self is both body and mind)(Not because of drugs)
2. To what extent in the last three months, did you perceive the world around you entirely different, or experience it entirely different, so that this appears very strange or unreal to you ?  
   (e.g. other people look unfamiliar or like robots)(Not because of drugs)
3. To what extent in the last three months, didn’t you know anymore what you were doing or where you were ?  
   (Not because of drugs)
4. To what extent in the last three months, didn’t you all of a sudden recognize for you familiar people and/or objects anymore ?  
   (Not because of drugs)
5. To what extent in the last three months, couldn’t you quite remember important things anymore ?   
   (Not because of drugs; clinical judgement of the importance of something, so not always out of the interviewee’s perception)

**Paranoid ideation**

1. To what extent in the last three months, did you have trouble with being very suspicious or distrusting other people ?  
   (Not because of drugs)(The idea is essential)
2. To what extent in the last three months, were you convinced that other people were out for you, that you were being pursued ?  
   (Not because of drugs)(This item is about a temporary delusion)
3. To what extent in the last three months, were you convinced that other people were unfairly treating you ?  
   (Not because of drugs)(This item is about a temporary delusion)

1) Explanations cited from Weertman, A., Arntz, A. & Kerkhofs, M.L.M. (2000). Gestructureerd klinisch interview voor DSM-IV persoonlijkheidsstoornissen (SCID-II; pages 66 – 71). Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger. This is a Dutch translation of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV axis II personality disorders (First, M.B., Gibbon, M., Spitzer, R.L., Williams, J.B.W., Benjamin, L.S. (1997). User’s guide for the structured clinical interview for DSM-IV axis II personality disorders (SCID-II). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press).

**Rückmeldung über die Anwendung eines Verfahrens aus dem Elektronischen Testarchiv des Leibniz-Zentrums für Psychologische Information und Dokumentation (ZPID)**

Absender:

Sehr geehrte/r Herr/Frau

ich möchte Ihnen hiermit mitteilen, dass ich das unten näher bezeichnete Verfahren aus dem Elektronischen Testarchiv des ZPID in einer Forschungsarbeit eingesetzt habe. Im Folgenden finden Sie dazu nähere Erläuterungen.

Thema der Arbeit: ..............................................................................

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eingesetztes Testverfahren:..................................................................

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Publikation geplant in: .........................................................................

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Datum Unterschrift