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stop walking on eggshells

NEWLY REVISED & UPDATED
THIRD EDITION

*Taking Your Life Back
When Someone You Care About Has
Borderline Personality Disorder*

PAUL T. MASON, MS
RANDI KREGER

“In the third edition of *Stop Walking on Eggshells*, Paul Mason and Randi Kreger update their classic work on borderline personality disorder (BPD). This edition adds new research and information to their seminal work and raises the standard. This book is a must-read for anyone whose family has been affected by BPD.”

—**Daniel S. Lobel, PhD**, clinical psychologist in private practice in Katonah, NY; and author of *When Your Daughter Has BPD* and *When Your Mother Has Borderline Personality Disorder*

“This third edition is filled with the wisdom and tips that come from the authors’ continuing work with people with BPD and their loved ones. I’m so glad they have added narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) in this edition, because the overlap of NPD and BPD is present in so many of the high-conflict individuals I see in relationships and conflicts that end up in court today. Family members, friends, professionals, and (frankly) everyone needs to read this book to understand and deal with much of the surprising and outrageous behavior we see in close relationships all around us now.”

—**Bill Eddy, LCSW, JD**, attorney, therapist, mediator, coauthor of *Splitting*, and author of *5 Types of People Who Can Ruin Your Life*

“This third edition of *Stop Walking on Eggshells* makes a very important contribution to better understanding the complexities of working with individuals displaying behaviors consistent with both BPD and NPD. The authors recognize that multiple factors and other diagnoses may also be operational and need to be taken into account. The advice and recommendations are practical, well explained, and give hope to clinicians and families, as well as those struggling with these perplexing disorders.”

—**Debra Resnick, PsyD**, clinical psychologist in private practice in the Philadelphia, PA, area who has been teaching and practicing dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) for approximately twenty years

“An important resource for clients who are being emotionally abused. It identifies two types of BPD—conventional and unconventional. While conventional BPDs typically exhibit overt behavior such as self-harm and suicidal ideation, unconventional BPDs don’t believe they have any problems. They project their pain onto others and refuse to take responsibility for their harmful actions. As an expert in emotional abuse, I have identified this behavior as emotionally abusive.”

—**Beverly Engel, LMFT**, internationally recognized expert in emotional and sexual abuse, and best-selling author of *The Emotionally Abused Woman* and *The Emotionally Abusive Relationship*

“*Stop Walking on Eggshells* is the quintessential book for families to understand BPD. The cases and examples are compassionate, accurate, enlightening, and starkly realistic—providing a true sense of how people with BPD think and feel, as well as how family members experience their behaviors. It includes comprehensive strategies, techniques, and responses for the most difficult situations, and provides the newest information about causes and help for BPD.”

—**Margalis Fjelstad, LMFT**, author of *Stop Caretaking the Borderline or Narcissist* and *Healing from a Narcissistic Relationship*, and coauthor of *Raising Resilient Children with a Borderline or Narcissistic Parent*

“Very impressive! This third edition of *Stop Walking on Eggshells* is a compendium of practical advice. Written in a friendly style, it’s like reading a letter from someone who really cares about you. New chapters, such as the chapter on BPD in children and teenagers, further enhance the book, discussing a previously ignored issue. I strongly recommend this five-star book.”

—**Christine Adamec**, coauthor of *When Your Adult Child Breaks Your Heart*

“For the last twenty years, *Stop Walking on Eggshells* has been my ‘gold-standard’ recommendation for learning how to live with, love, and care for people who struggle with BPD. Now, Mason and Kreger have improved and updated this masterpiece to include how to cope with narcissistic personalities as well. If you feel like you’re walking on eggshells around people in your life, then read this new edition.”

—**Jeffrey C. Wood, PsyD**, psychologist, coauthor of *The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook*, and author of *The Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Workbook for Personality Disorders*

Stop Walking on Eggshells, 2nd Edition

Endorsements:

“*Stop Walking on Eggshells* makes good on its promise to restore the lives of people in close relationships with someone diagnosed with BPD. It is a rich guide to understanding and coping with the reactions aroused in others by troubling BPD behaviors that negatively impact relationships. Readers will find this book very useful and beneficial.”

—**Nina W. Brown, EdD**, professor and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA; and author of *Children of the Self-Absorbed*

“This book is the absolute go-to guide for my clients who are dealing with a loved one with BPD. Readable and thorough, it strikes a perfect balance of practical advice and emotional sensitivity. This book has helped so many people break through their sense of confusion and isolation by helping them to name, understand, and respond to the difficulties of this complex and misunderstood disorder.”

—**Daniel E. Mattila, MDiv, LCSW**

“This book is urgently needed now that a National Institutes of Health (NIH) study shows that 6 percent of the general population has BPD. I constantly get requests from families needing resources on BPD, and I recommend *Stop Walking on Eggshells* almost every time. This second edition is really easy to read and packed with even more useful tips for family members in distress.”

—**Bill Eddy, LCSW**, attorney, mediator, clinical social worker, author of *High Conflict People in Legal Disputes*, and coauthor of *Splitting*

“Amazingly, *Stop Walking on Eggshells* not only teaches readers how to recognize the signs of BPD, it also shows how they can make life and relationship decisions based on what they want and need instead of decisions controlled by the illness.”

—**Julie A. Fast**, coauthor of *Loving Someone with Bipolar Disorder*

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THIRD EDITION

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Borderline Personality Disorder*

PAUL T. MASON, MS
RANDI KREGER

New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Publisher's Note

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The authors, editors, and publisher have exerted every effort to ensure that any drug selection and dosage set forth in this text are in accordance with current recommendations and practice at the time of publication. However, in view of ongoing research, changes in government regulations, and the constant flow of information relating to drug therapy and drug reactions, the reader is urged to check the package insert for each drug for any change in indications and dosage and for added warnings and precautions. This is particularly important when the recommended agent is a new or infrequently employed drug.

Some drugs and medical devices presented in this publication may have Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clearance for limited use in restricted research settings. It is the responsibility of the health care provider to ascertain the FDA status of each drug or device planned for use in their clinical practice.

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Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night.

—Bette Davis, *All About Eve*

No matter how confused, self-doubting, or ambivalent we are about what's happening in our interactions with other people, we can never entirely silence the inner voice that always tells us the truth. We may not like the sound of the truth, and we often let it murmur just outside our consciousness, not stopping long enough to listen. But when we pay attention to it, it leads us toward wisdom, health, and clarity. That voice is the guardian of our integrity.

—Susan Forward, PhD

This book is for the children, young and old, whose lives have been affected by borderline personality disorder. And to our teachers: the hundreds of people who told us their stories, shared their tears, and offered us their insight. You made this book possible.

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Scott was more than my agent: he was my mentor, my coach, my emergency hotline, my chief cheerleader, my number-one believer. When I doubted this book would ever get published, he assured me that it would. When I felt like quitting because the sacrifices were too great, he reminded me of the people whose lives I had changed. His sense of humor and unwavering support sustained me and helped me believe in myself. Without him, there would be no third edition.

Three clinicians have helped me greatly, mostly with the research involving chapter 3, on narcissism. I thank them from the bottom of my heart. They are:

- Wendy T. Behary, author of *Disarming the Narcissist: Surviving and Thriving with the Self-Absorbed* (disarmingthenarcissist.com). She is the founder and clinical director of the Cognitive Therapy Center of New Jersey, which specializes in working with people with NPD.
- Bill Eddy, a lawyer, therapist, and mediator. He is the co-founder and Training Director of the High Conflict Institute in San Diego, California (highconflictinstitute.com). He is the coauthor of *Splitting: Protecting Yourself While Divorcing Someone with Borderline or Narcissistic Disorder* and the author of many other books. Moreover, he's the sweetest lawyer I have ever known, and he cares deeply about adults and children embroiled in high-conflict issues.
- Elinor Greenberg, PhD, psychologist and author of the book *Borderline, Narcissistic, and Schizoid Adaptations: The Pursuit of Love, Adoration, and*

Safety. She has a blog about narcissism at psychologytoday.com. She also specializes in working with narcissistic clients.

Thank you, Wendy, Bill, and Elinor. I couldn't have done it without you.

I would also like to thank Margalis Fjelstad, the savvy author of *Stop Caretaking the Borderline or Narcissist: How to End the Drama and Get on With Your Life and Healing from the Narcissistic Relationship: A Caretaker's Guide to Recovery, Empowerment and Transformation*. She and I both write for family members who have a relative with traits of both borderline and narcissistic disorder. We're a very small club. In many ways, she has been a mentor to me and given freely of her knowledge. Thank you, Margalis.

I would like to acknowledge Rick Remitz and Fahar Faizaan for their dedication in establishing the borderline personality disorder nonprofit organization, The Black Sheep Project, and for giving me a once in a lifetime chance to build it from the bottom up. Thank you for letting me be the BPD consultant on your new movie. May it earn millions of dollars at the box office.

I would also like to thank author Christine Adamec, who was instrumental in helping me write chapter 10, *Waiting for the Next Shoe to Drop: Your Borderline Child*. As a coauthor of *Stop Walking on Eggshells for Parents: How to Help Your Child with Borderline Personality Disorder Without Sacrificing Your Family or Yourself*, she was the perfect guide.

Dozens of clinicians, experts, and BPD advocates from all over the globe contributed their insights to this book. Other people I interviewed include Joseph T. Bergs, MD; Lori Beth Bisbey, PhD; Barbara Blanton, MSN; James Claiborn, PhD; Kenneth A. Dachman, PhD; Jane G. Dresser, RN; Bruce Fischer, PhD; Marybelle Fisher, PhD; John M. Grohol, PsyD; John Gunderson, MD; Perry Hoffman, PhD; Janet R. Johnston, PhD; Otto Kernberg, MD; Jerold J. Kreisman, MD; Marsha M. Linehan, PhD; Richard A. Moskowitz, MD; Thomas Meacham, MD; Susan B. Morse, PhD; Cory F. Newman, PhD; Andrew T. Pickens, MD; Margaret Pofahl, ACSW; Joseph Santoro, PhD; Larry J. Siever, MD; and Howard I. Weinberg, PhD (Rest in peace, Perry Hoffman. You are deeply missed by everyone in the BPD community.)

Many books not related to BPD were also influential in my thinking. Chief among them was *The Dance of Anger*, by Harriet Goldhor Lerner, PhD. Its fundamental concepts are interwoven into every page of this book. When I first read it many years ago, it changed my life. I feel honored to be able to pass along Lerner's wisdom, and I am indebted to her for her inspiration. Books by

Susan Forward, PhD, also influenced this work, chiefly *Emotional Blackmail* (1997) and *Toxic Parents* (1989). I highly recommend all three books.

Finally, I would like to thank my publisher, New Harbinger Publications; my mother, Janet Kreger, for supporting my writing efforts since grade school; and Edith Cracchiolo, my guardian angel throughout this project.

—R. K.

Many people have encouraged me and supported me in the writing of this book. I wish to thank them all, and am especially grateful to the following:

- Monica, my wife of thirty-one years, whose love and unconditional faith and belief in me throughout this project, and everything we've done together over the years, mean everything to me. And to my children, Zachary, Jacob, and Hannah, who, in their own unique ways, consistently remind me of the important things in life.
- My graduate school mentor, Kathleen Rusch, PhD, who nurtured and supported my earliest interests in borderline personality disorder. In the main, without her coaching and confidence, this book would not have been possible.

I would like to similarly acknowledge all the clinicians and advocates who contributed their insights, experiences, and expertise to this. While there are far too many to list here, I continue to be inspired by the work they do every day in service to people with BPD and their families.

Finally, I would like to thank my coauthor, Randi Kreger, and our literary agent, Scott Edelstein, who approached me with the idea to write the first edition of this book in 1996. Never did we dream that, nearly twenty-five years later, we'd be working on a third edition.

—P. M.

Introduction to the Third Edition

More than one million copies in fifteen languages—that’s how many people have purchased copies of *Stop Walking on Eggshells* since New Harbinger published its first edition in 1998. Back then, most people were just getting started with cell phones and the internet.

At first, this book was turned down by many publishers because “No one knows what borderline personality disorder means.” The two of us had to fight for every scrap of information we could find.

Today, there is actually a sitcom in which one of the main characters has the disorder (not that it’s an *accurate* depiction). But the name BPD is out there—and, today, more people know what it means than ever before. The internet is teeming with information from clinicians, people with the disorder, and family members.

And a lot of it is due to the success of this book. Back in 1996, we intended to write the best guide to BPD for families. But the book turned out to be the basic go-to guide about BPD for anyone and everyone. We went viral before “going viral” was a thing. Once people heard a description of borderline behavior, they immediately recognized someone they knew, and bought the book. Many became advocates for the cause of helping families and protecting kids. They told us that being able to put a name on their loved one’s behaviors changed their lives.

Here’s a preview of what you’re going to see that’s new in this revised and updated Third Edition:

Updated information on the most recent BPD research, as well as new strategies and surprising recent discoveries about the disorder.

A focus on men as much as women: Recent research has determined that half the people with BPD are male. So there is a section in this book on men with BPD, and on how the disorder appears differently in men and women. There is also a special section, included in Appendix D, for men who find themselves on the receiving end of domestic violence.

Information on narcissistic personality disorder (NPD): We've added a chapter on narcissistic personality disorder because a new study has shown that about four out of every ten people with BPD also have NPD. Most of these people with BPD are of the unconventional type, who deny that they have the disorder and resist treatment. Randi's experience in interviewing hundreds of folks with BPD, and the people who care about them, confirms this conclusion.

An updated and greatly expanded chapter for the parents of kids who have BPD: This chapter provides a wealth of guidance, ideas, and information—as well as empathy, understanding, and inspiration.

An all-new, updated resources section: This includes books, websites, organizations, and a great many other sources of assistance, information, and hope.

Detailed information on conventional vs. unconventional BPD: Over the past twenty-two years, as a journalist interviewing thousands of people, Randi documented two different types of BPD. People with one form of the disorder often act 180 degrees differently from people with the other, even though both groups experience the same borderline traits internally. There will be times in this book when we speak of only one type or the other. When we do, we will note it in the text.

The first group, the *conventional* type, is people who have been diagnosed with BPD, and who can usually be found within the mental health system. They are in pain, seek treatment, and identify as having BPD. They meet the conventional depiction in the scientific literature and are eligible to be included in research studies, because they almost always harm themselves and feel suicidal.

The second, much larger group believes that they have no problems. They project all their pain onto others and never accept any accountability for their actions. They have an aggressive opposition to receiving therapy; they insist that the problem lies with everyone else's insensitivity or fragility; they usually function at a high level; they deny their pain by projecting

it onto close loved ones; and they make those loved ones into their targets of blame. We call this form of BPD *unconventional* because the people who have it do not feel suicidal and do not harm themselves, making them ineligible as research subjects. The people in this second, unconventional group are rarely formally diagnosed as having BPD. Paradoxically, despite the name *unconventional*, they are much more common than the conventional, formally diagnosed folks.

In chapter 2, we'll discuss these two forms of BPD in detail.

About Us

A few years after the first edition of this book was published, Randi wrote *The Stop Walking on Eggshells Workbook: Practical Strategies for Living with Someone Who Has Borderline Personality Disorder*. In 2008, she also wrote another major book on BPD, *The Essential Family Guide to Borderline Personality Disorder: New Tools and Techniques to Stop Walking on Eggshells*.

Her advocacy efforts for families include holding workshops in Japan, serving as a BPD expert for a major motion picture, and blogging on BPD and NPD for four years on psychologytoday.com. She also appeared in a documentary discussing BPD and has given presentations about BPD nationwide and in Japan, including for the National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder.

In 2019, she began managing an online group that focuses on BPD education and support, called Moving Forward (movingforward@groups.io and <https://groups.io/g/movingforward/join>). It replaces her Welcome to Oz group. Her current projects include writing several books: one for parents and grandparents on preventing and healing BPD/NPD child abuse, and another about new tools to move forward when someone you care about has BPD/NPD. She is also working on a new edition of her book co-written with Christine Adamec and Daniel S. Lobel, *Stop Walking on Eggshells for Parents: How to Help Your Child with Borderline Personality Disorder Without Sacrificing Your Family or Yourself*. To be notified when those are available, join her mailing list at her website, stopwalkingoneggshells.com.

Paul Mason, MS, FACHE, serves as the vice president of Ascension Medical Group in Wisconsin. In this role, Paul provides management, leadership, and operational support for more than 200 clinicians and their medical practices. Paul is board certified in healthcare management and is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Both of us welcome you to this revised and updated Third Edition. We're glad you're here. In the pages to come, you'll find a wealth of useful tools, current information, and, above all, sanity and hope.



PART 1

**understanding
BPD behavior**

CHAPTER 1

Does Someone You Care About Have Borderline or Narcissistic Personality Disorder?

After fifteen years of marriage, I still couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong. I researched in libraries, talked to doctors, spoke to counselors, read articles, and chatted with friends. I spent fifteen years wondering, worrying, and believing too much of what she was telling me about myself. I doubted myself and hurt so much without knowing why. Then one day, I finally found the answers on stopwalkingoneggshells.com. I started crying with relief. Although I can't get my significant other to admit she needs help, at least I finally understand what's going on. It's not my fault. Now I know the truth.

—Sophie

Is This Book for You?

You picked up this book because you're always tense in a relationship; you never know what to expect from a loved one; and being around them feels like walking on eggshells. Even when the relationship is going well, you are anxiously waiting for things to take a painful turn.

Stop Walking on Eggshells

- Is the relationship always focused on your loved one's needs and wants, never on yours? Have you begun to lose track of your own needs and wants?
- Does your loved one make unreasonable demands, and keep insisting on them, to the point where you feel that saying "no" is not worth the pain?
- Have you tried to explain your point of view a million times and never gotten through? Are they so unwilling to understand you that you wonder if they're even capable of it?
- Does your loved one never show a trace of empathy for what you go through?
- Do they act normal in front of other people, but insult you, call you names, and otherwise treat you very badly when the two of you are alone?
- When you fight, is winning and being right more important to them than your feelings—or than the issue being discussed?
- Do they talk in confusing circles, or twist what you say and use your own words against you?
- Do they blame and criticize you obsessively?
- Does what they say often make no logical sense?
- Is it clear that they've lost all perspective on who you actually are?
- Are you the focus of their intense, violent, or irrational rages that grow way out of proportion to what instigated them?
- Do you feel manipulated and lied to, as if they'll say anything to get what they want?
- Do they need to always be in control?
- Do they have meltdowns when things don't go as planned, or they don't get their way?
- Do you feel like you're dealing with someone whose emotional maturity is like a toddler's—even if they are very educated or have a high position at work?
- Do you feel exhausted, confused, spread too thin, overwhelmed, depressed, hopeless, frustrated, or completely misunderstood?

If you answered yes to many of these questions, we have good news for you: you're not going crazy. It's not your fault. And you're not alone. You may be having these experiences because someone close to you has traits associated with borderline personality disorder (BPD), narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), or both.

In the pages that follow, we'll share some true stories of people who discovered that someone they cared about had one or both disorders. As with all examples in this book, these are drawn from the thousands and thousands of stories that have been shared online over the course of twenty-two years. (Details have been changed to conceal identities and protect people's privacy.)

Jon's Story of Being Married to a Woman with BPD and NPD

Being married to Gina is heaven one minute, hell the next. Her moods change by the second.

Even when I do exactly as she asks, she gets mad at me. One day she ordered me to take the kids somewhere because she wanted time alone. But as we were leaving, she threw the keys at my head and accused me of hating her so much I couldn't stand to be in the house with her. When the kids and I got back from the movie, she acted like nothing had happened. She wondered why I was still upset and told me that I have problems letting go of my anger.

It wasn't always like this. Before Gina and I got married, we had a whirlwind, fantasy courtship. She idolized me—said I was perfect for her in so many ways. The sex was incredible. I wrote her love poems and bought her expensive gifts. We got engaged after four months, and a year later we were married and on a ten-thousand-dollar dream honeymoon.

But right after the wedding she began taking meaningless little things and turning them into mountains of criticism, interrogation, and pain. She accused me of wanting other women constantly and would point out imaginary examples to substantiate her claims. She became threatened by my friends and began cutting them down. She said bad things about my business, my past, my values, my pride—anything connected to me.

Still, every so often the old Gina comes back—the one who loved me and thought I was the greatest guy in the universe. She's still the smartest, funniest, and sexiest woman I know, and I'm still very much in love. I wish I could get her the help she desperately needs so she can be this person all the time.

Mary's Story of Parenting a Child with BPD

We knew something was wrong with our adopted son, Richard, when he was eighteen months old. He was cranky, cried a lot, and would scream for three hours straight. At age two, he began having several tantrums a day—some lasting for hours. Our doctor simply said, "Boys will be boys."

When Rich was seven, we found a note in his room saying he was going to kill himself when he turned eight. His elementary school teacher referred us to a local psychiatrist, who told us Rich needed more structure and consistency. We tried positive reinforcement, tough love, and even diet modification. But nothing worked.

By the time Rich was in junior high, he was lying, stealing, skipping school, and raging out of control. The police became involved when he attempted suicide, started cutting himself, and threatened to kill us. He would dial the child abuse hotline each time we disciplined him by sending him to his room. Our son manipulated his teachers, his family, and even the police.

He could be very sharp and charm people with his wit, good looks, and sense of humor. Every counselor was convinced that his behavior was our fault. By the time they saw through his deception, he would refuse to go back. And each new therapist never took the time to read through his chart, which by now was several inches thick.

Finally, after threatening a teacher at school, he wound up in a short-term treatment center. At various times we were told that he had attention deficit disorder or suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from some unknown trauma. One psychiatrist said he was suffering from "depression with psychotic disorder." Lots of people told us he was just a bad kid.

After four hospitalizations, our insurance company told us they would no longer pay. The hospital said he was too sick to come home. And the local psychiatrists were advising us to go to court and have ourselves declared unfit parents.

Somehow, we found a state-subsidized inpatient hospital, where he received his first BPD diagnosis. They put him on various meds, but said that there was little hope of him getting better.

Rich did manage to graduate from high school and start college, which ultimately was a disaster. His maturity level now is about age eighteen, although he's twenty-three. Reaching adulthood has helped some, but he still fears abandonment, can't sustain a long-term relationship, and has quit four jobs in two years. His friends come and go because

he can be overbearing, obnoxious, manipulative, and opinionated. So he depends on us for money and emotional support. We're all he has left.

Kendra's Story of Having a Mother with BPD and NPD

I was never interested in girly things, but my mother dressed me up like a little princess and paraded me off to her friends. When we were alone, she would criticize me relentlessly for getting the clothes dirty, not acting right in front of her friends, or not being interested in being the best-dressed and most popular girl in school. That was always her dream, not mine.

My "nada" tapes play in my head, which are all the bad things she said to me that repeat continuously. They seem impossible to erase: The times after my parents divorced and she said I was destroying the family. The meals where she would complain about my manners and tell me they were so bad I wouldn't have any friends.

I am forty-two, yet my mother still feels compelled to tell me what is wrong with my life, my house, and my family—whatever. I'm actually a well-known and much-admired software developer, one of the first women in my industry. But her friends and associates don't know what that means, so it's useless to her. Our relationship is mainly over the telephone, and when the phone rings, my heart sinks. I make sure I am never alone with her. Never.

Ally's Story of Having a Sister with BPD

My sister, Sarah, felt deep hurt, anguish, and trauma that created emotional glass shards I spent most of my childhood tiptoeing around. Even though I was younger, my mother taught me to appease Sarah and keep her happy, which is like keeping a volcano from erupting. So many nights of little sleep, chaos, and being called awful names. I questioned my sense of reality. I was always on edge, trying to keep the peace. This has profoundly affected how I connect with others today.

I was always committed to relating with Sarah to show her how much I loved her. But lately my emotional and physical safety have been threatened. My sense of self was completely torn down, my struggles and vulnerabilities were used against me, I was hit, and some possessions were broken. I had to make the hardest decision of my life: to cut off contact.

I miss the good times. When things were good, they were really good. But I don't miss the terrible abuse or the feeling of losing myself. When I

feel really sad, I remind myself that going “no contact” is one of the most loving actions I can take. I will always love Sarah. I hope one day I’ll fully accept that she can’t show me love and care in the same way.

Now that you’ve read these experiences and peeked inside the lives of others who love a highly challenging person, it will be clear whether this book is for you, and whether one or more of the stories you just read remind you of a loved one.

Before we go on, though, please know that your safety and well-being are our main concerns. So take a moment to see if you need help immediately.

Signs That You Need Help Right Now

If any of the following situations applies to you, set down this book and get help immediately. Later, once you are safe, you can come back to it for information, clarity, and inner resolution.

Seek immediate personal or professional support if your loved one does (or has already done) any of the following:

- Threatens violence or physical action; or puts a violent hand on you, even if it doesn’t hurt too bad; or destroys objects; or makes you feel physically unsafe in any way.
- Takes, or threatens to take, the children from you.
- Makes, or threatens to make, false accusations of child abuse against you.
- Lies to a police officer about something you didn’t do to get you arrested or in legal trouble.
- Breaks the law.
- Expects you to take part in an illegal action.
- Puts you or your family in harm’s way.
- Steals money from you, or puts you or your family at financial risk.

- Routinely threatens divorce.* (If they straightforwardly tell you that they no longer wish to be with you, do not hang on. Begin planning now for a divorce or separation. And do not be surprised if they blame you for instigating the breakup.)

If you are feeling trapped and helpless, seek therapy right away. Therapy can also help if you are currently coping in unhealthy ways, such as drinking, taking mind-altering drugs, eating too much, or isolating yourself.

Getting help promptly is especially important in any of these situations:

- You have considered (or are considering) killing or harming yourself.
- You are in a deep depression.
- Friends have expressed concerns about your mental or emotional state.

Here are some good places to start:

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- Suicide Prevention Line: 1-800-273-8255
- Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453
- Therapist Search: psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/

Once you are safe, keep in mind that you are not going crazy, and—despite what your loved one may insist—you are not the cause of all the problems. More likely, the truth is that they have a personality disorder.

What Is a Personality Disorder?

When relating one on one, people like Gina, Rich, Kendra's mother, Sarah, and millions of others seem to have individual quirks, triggers, and time-bombs as part of their dysfunctional personalities. But these personalities (as you will see) are dysfunctional in the exact same ways, regardless of the

* In this case, please read *Splitting: Protecting Yourself When Divorcing a Borderline or Narcissist*. Then prepare for them to divorce you. Keep in mind that it typically takes months to put together a case with the proper documentation. If you wait for your partner to make the first move toward divorce, by the time you act they may already have removed important documents, personal items such as photographs, etc.