

Support group offers hope for Borderline Personality Disorder

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Janek Lowe/Record staff



A.J. Mahari, at her apartment in Kitchener

A.J. Mahari is starting a support group for people with borderline personality disorder, a mental health illness she struggled with herself.

KITCHENER — A.J. Mahari struggled on her own from childhood with Borderline Personality Disorder, for many years not knowing why she was overwhelmed by anger and anxiety.

She could not cope with people and the intense emotions that hit her suddenly. Mahari drifted through life until her 30's when she was determined to seek help.

“I just knew there was something really going wrong. I didn't know what it was, but I knew that I had better figure it out,” said the Kitchener woman.

Therapy, including intense group work, helped Mahari recover and she's being doing well for 15 years. Now she wants to help others. Her group will be a self help one that in which she will

offer information and experience from her own recovery, other sources and her 10 years of coaching experience.

Mahari is starting a Kitchener support group for people diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, the first meeting being held on July 4 at 1 p.m. and then every other week on Monday afternoons.

Borderline Personality Disorder is a serious, long-lasting, and complex mental health issue, according to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

People with the disorder have trouble handling emotions and controlling impulses. Highly sensitive, they can react with intense emotions to small changes.

Symptoms, usually appearing in late adolescence or early adulthood, include intense but brief bouts of anger, depression or anxiety, loneliness and neediness, and for some paranoid thoughts, volatile relationships and impulsive and harmful behaviours such as substance abuse and self-injury. About one out of 10 people with Borderline Personality Disorder commit suicide.

Appropriate treatment with therapy and, in some cases, medication can help people with the disorder make significant changes and overcome most symptoms.

“Recovery is really about finding out who you really are,” said Mahari, 54.

She started writing about her experiences online and people began emailing, leading her to a career as a [Life Coach, BPD/](#)

Mental Health and Self Improvement Coach, helping people with Borderline Personality Disorder and their families.

“I kind of fell into it just because people were asking me all these questions and somehow I was able to answer them,” Mahari said.

Peer support is invaluable for people with mental health issues, Strong said. Connecting with others lets people know they’re not alone, and the sense of community bolsters people working toward recovery.

Mahari is hoping for her group that will bring together people to share and support each other through Borderline Personality Disorder and learning coping skills and tools to improve their quality of life. She’s also planning a group for family members, partners, ex-partners, and friends, (Loved Ones of someone with BPD) whose lives are deeply affected by the disorder, too.

“Loved ones suffer. Really suffer, as well” Mahari said.

Mahari said the disorder is often misunderstood. Its hallmark emotional volatility, fear of abandonment, lack of trust, unstable sense of self, can lead to people being pushed away by friends and family, and even avoided by mental health professionals unwilling to tackle its complexity.

“Compassion is really important,” Mahari said. ***“Empathy is really important.”***

She wants people to know it’s possible to move beyond borderline personality disorder.

“There’s so much hope.”

Find out more about Mahari at borderlinepersonality.ca or email her at bpdinsideout@yahoo.ca

jweidner@therecord.com

Source: [Waterloo Region Record Newspaper](#)

And if you are Loved One of someone interested in the new support group for those with someone with Borderline Personality Disorder in their lives please also email A.J. at the above email address.