

Can We Feel Grounded And Alert?

As human, our natural response is to become defensive and counter their arguments with hostility and aggression of our own. But these damaging behaviors are rarely done with the intent to harm. Rather they are done out of desperation. But it is also important to acknowledge that they need professional psychological help. Offer your loved one all the support and care you can, but do not try and manage on your own. In addition, they are prone to misconstruing things that are said to them and taking offense when none was intended. These factors can make relating to someone with borderline personality disorder a complete minefield. While you want to treat your loved one the same way you would others, you must also be aware of the erratic behavior their disorder can cause. Ensure your meaning is as clear as possible. Do not rely on subtleties or facial expressions to get your meaning across. Offer ongoing and regular support. Validate what they are going through. Acknowledge that, while you may not be able to relate to their experience, you understand it is very real to them. If you understand the way they are feeling, tell them. But if their feelings do not make sense to you, try to find out more. Let them know you really want to understand. Encourage them to tell you more about the things they are feeling and why. Acknowledge that the person is suffering and help them break their goals down into small, manageable steps. Have realistic expectations. Do your best to remain positive and encourage the person to do the same. Communicate your boundaries clearly. If they are agitated, do your best to respond in a calm manner. If you feel in danger, remove yourself from the situation and call for help. Even though you may disagree with every word that comes out of your loved one's mouth, acknowledge that listening is not the same as agreeing to someone. You are simply accepting the person's emotions and perspective. For example, if your partner shares that she thinks you don't love her as much as you used to, you could say, All right, you feel that I don't love you as much as I used to. Again, by doing this, you are not agreeing with the statement, you are simply acknowledging the emotions and perspective of the other person. Avoid the temptation to point out all the flaws in the argument remind yourself that the goal of this reflection is not necessarily to agree. It is not about proving who is right or wrong. It is about helping someone you love to feel valued and heard, and about deescalating conflict before it transmutes into a crisis. Focus on emotions, not words. But rather than pulling your loved one up on something they may have said, look beneath their words to the core emotion beneath. It seems as though you are feeling hurt right now, is that right? Asking questions such as these will validate your loved one and their feelings and help them feel as though they are being heard. Do not attempt to take control of the person's life. Allow them to make their own choices and simply offer your support. Do not let this become a source of conflict. Avoid being drawn into their conflicts with other people. Do not be drawn into their attempts to do so. Do not try and talk them out of their feelings. You're not a terrible person, has the effect of invalidating their thoughts and feelings. Instead, try to understand what it is that has made them feel this way. Ask questions and listen carefully. Find out if there was something specific they did to make them feel like a terrible person. From there, engage in practical problem solving, ask them what they can do to rectify the situation. Do not attempt to be their therapist. Instead, assist your loved one in finding the right healthcare professional for them and offer your support throughout their treatment. Do not get

defensive. While it can be challenging not to take accusations and criticisms personally, acknowledge that it is not about you. Remind yourself of this on a regular basis and do your best to see beyond the illness to the person you love beneath. They have difficulty telling the difference between a minor issue and a full blown catastrophe. When you behave defensively, they see this as a sign that they are not valued. Instead, when your loved ones become reactive, take time to pay attention to what they are saying, without pointing out the holes in their argument. While it is easier said than done, do your best not to take their attack personally. After all, it is not about you. If your loved one makes a point about something you did wrong, or something you could improve on in the future, acknowledge and accept their point, make your apology, and attempt to discuss ways you can improve in the future. If, however if the conflict increases to points of threats, aggression or a tantrum, it will be most beneficial to walk away and attempt the conversation again when they have calmed down. Instead, provide a space where they can speak openly about what it is they are feeling or experiencing. This will then allow you to make a decision about whether to seek professional help on that occasion. These include shaving off their hair, isolating themselves from others, excessive scratching or a reduced appetite. Being alert to these symptoms and seeking help accordingly can stop a crisis from escalating and requiring serious psychiatric or medical attention. Even if they are done to seek attention, they are still indicative of deep emotional trauma. The person has deliberately injured themselves. The person has become severely affected by drugs and alcohol and is acting in a reckless manner. If you don't believe the situation has escalated to the point of being life threatening, however, refraining from calling the emergency services.