

Disagree, Rather Than Invalidate.

Regardless of how well you handle your loved one's emotional outbursts, the very fact that you are there to respond and communicate with them means you are both a part of the issue, and also the solution. See past the stigma. Have the whole family agree on boundaries. Be sure to discuss the values behind the boundaries and make sure everyone understands why certain limitations are in place. Agree on what the consequences will be if these boundaries are broken. It can help to even have a contract which all parties sign. Doing this will help everybody feel more in control of the situation. Do not attempt to implement all the boundaries at once, rather introduce them one at a time. Do not make empty threats. It can be enormously frustrating and difficult not to get drawn into the provocations of your partner, friend or family member. But as you are no doubt aware, responding with hostility of your own is a surefire way to make the conflict escalate. However, if they have received the desired reaction from this particular person at least once in the past, they will continue trying for a long time before they change their behavior. The following steps can help you disarm your loved one before the conflict turns into a crisis. Do not make undue sacrifices. While you may well want to do everything in your power to help your loved one feel better, it is important not to do anything that is going to cause you to suffer in the long run. For example, do not stay up all night talking on the phone with them if you have work the next day. Do not lend them money you cannot afford, in the belief that they will have nowhere else to turn. Do not rearrange your entire schedule to fit in with their rapidly changing plans. Help your loved one by respecting your own needs. Do your best not to get defensive. While this is much easier said than done, avoid responding to their aggressive behavior with lines such as I'm only trying to help, you know. Do your best not to act hostile. If you feel your own rage beginning to surface, take a few deep breaths to calm yourself, count to ten or remove yourself from the situation. Return to the conversation when you – and preferably also your loved one – are feeling calm. Do not allow yourself to feel guilty. When your loved one is assaulting you with a barrage on insults, it can be difficult to ignore their hurtful words. Acknowledge this is simply a manifestation of an illness. Do not allow yourself to feel responsible or guilty for making them feel a particular way. You cannot be expected to fix it, or to solve the impossible, unsolvable dilemmas brought about by the disorder. Do not lecture them. Sure, we all know drugs are harmful or reckless driving can put the lives of many innocent people at risk. Remember, reasoning with them can be like attempting to reason with a child. They will only respond in an argumentative way. Do not act superior. While this is largely brought about by the disorder, of course, you yourself, along with everyone else in their sphere constitutes part of this network. Do not censor issues. If difficult issues such as suicide or violence arise, do not attempt to suppress them or change the subject. Instead, do your best to address them in a calm and rational way. Enlist the help of a therapist or counselor if you feel out of your depth. Do not attempt to deal with suicide attempts on your own. If such an incident arises, it is important to get the person to a psychologist or other health professional as soon as possible. Do not attempt to deal with suicidal situations alone. Understand and acknowledge their strengths. Though it may seem otherwise, many people with borderline personality disorder have a high level of interpersonal skills. This is evidenced by their ability to manipulate others and bring about the very emotional responses they are

seeking. Understand that their reactions have likely come about through a childhood of being invalidated by their family and so they carry the underlying belief that their job is to ensure everyone continues to undervalue them. Acknowledge that it is not a case of them being immature, or deliberately malicious. Do it in a calm and restrained manner, even in the face of their hostility. Do so without arguing about who is right or wrong. If you have done something wrong or made a mistake, be honest and admit it. While this may calm the storm for a brief period, it has the potential to lead to bigger issues in the future. Be clear about what you will and will not tolerate, with regards to language, aggression and violence. If your loved one crosses a boundary, immediately remove yourself from the situation and refuse to engage with them any longer. Be sure your loved one understands both the boundaries you have set and the consequences of breaking them. Help them to appreciate that you walking away does not mean you don't love them, but rather that you will not tolerate emotional abuse. You can also let them know that if they ever feel emotionally threatened by you, they are welcome to do the same. Pay Attention to Your Tone of Voice. This will render anything you say to diffuse the situation ineffective. This both naturally boosts your confidence and removes a level of emotion from the confrontation. We often sound very different in reality to the way we perceive ourselves, so practice by recording yourself on your phone and listening back so you can hear exactly how you sound. They often do this through making outlandish or wildly exaggerated statements. It does sound like you've been having a difficult time lately, validates the truth within the statement, while refusing to agree that life is always that bad.