

# SANE

FACTSHEET

## DECLAN

When I first started talking to people about having borderline personality disorder, it was hard to open up. I was trying to 'be a man' about it, and not show my emotions. It was usually at a party when I'd had a few drinks that I'd start to tell people. I started to drink a lot.

At the time, it felt like the best way to forget about my problems, but in retrospect I was trying to put a band-aid on a bullet wound. It just wasn't going to work.

Things started to change for me when I was 16 or 17. I started not enjoying the things that I used to, like playing sport and hanging out with friends. I became scared in social situations and in big public places. At the time, I'd just come out of a relationship and I thought that was the reason I wasn't feeling good. After a while, I started realising that it wasn't that; something was actually going on and I needed to get help for it.

Before my diagnosis, my knowledge of mental health was limited to what I'd seen in the movies and the media. The thought of me having a mental health issue was terrifying. I thought, 'I have a great life. Something like this shouldn't affect me.' I thought what I was going through went on in everyone's life; that everyone felt this kind of day-to-day sadness.

I remember in my first year at university I was seeing all the people around me and just being absolutely terrified. I thought everyone was looking at me; I thought everyone was judging me. It felt like everything was being taken control of by this feeling. There was no time during the day where I could just forget about it. I'd be lying there at night just tossing and turning, and that would just stress me out more and compound the problems. It's debilitating.

When I was diagnosed with BPD, I felt a sense of relief. The way I interacted with other people, the way I felt about relationships – it all made sense. I started to realise that I could be quite erratic.

When I was first put on medication, for once I felt like things were a little bit normal. And I remember thinking, 'Is this what I'm meant to feel like? Am I meant to not feel terrible all the time and not anxious?' It did take a bit of time to get there, but for once I felt like I wasn't being plagued by my thoughts constantly.

When you have a mental illness, you want the negative feelings to stop, not your whole life. I'm 23, I recently graduated from university and I'm working. I have to take the good with the bad.

When those familiar feelings build up, I just try and distract myself. I try and play some sport, I try and put on a movie, and then I wait it out. I might feel a little bit better tomorrow. And if

not, I know what's available to me if things do get worse.

If you're struggling, don't be afraid to get help. No matter how small you feel the issue is in your head. Although you may feel right now like things aren't as good as they should be, they will get better. I've been there, a lot of us have been there. You don't have to feel alone.

*Declan is a participant in [Young Faces of Mental Illness](#), a collaboration with SANE and batyr supporting young adults to share their stories. The project is supported by The Future Generation Global Investment Company.*