



# BPD FESTIVAL 2021 CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Revised 4/26/21



## BPD FESTIVAL 2021

# FROM STIGMA TO STRENGTH: UNDERSTANDING BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER FROM DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

**FRIDAY, MAY 14 -  
SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2021**

- Speakers with lived experience
- Interactive presentations highlighting the arts
- BPD education and resources
- Auction fundraiser to support Emotions Matter

**REGISTRATION REQUIRED.**

**CONTACT [info@emotionsmatterbpd.org](mailto:info@emotionsmatterbpd.org)**

**[www.emotionsmatterbpd.org](http://www.emotionsmatterbpd.org) #BPDFEST21**



**Emotions Matter, Inc.**  
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P: 516-350-8387

[info@EmotionsMatterBPD.org](mailto:info@EmotionsMatterBPD.org) • [www.EmotionsMatterBPD.org](http://www.EmotionsMatterBPD.org)

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Emotions Matter and our first-ever virtual conference, “BPDFest21: Understanding Borderline Personality Disorder from Diverse Perspectives.”

Emotions Matter was born out of the suffering of people with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) to advocate for, educate and support recovery. Founded in 2015 with little more than grit and fierce determination, it has grown to reach people with BPD across the globe.

The purpose of the virtual-conference is:

- To educate about Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), a highly stigmatized and often misunderstood mental illness
- To empower participants to share their experiences of BPD from diverse lens
- To inspire BPD recovery, offering hope, community support and resources.

Now more than ever, people affected by BPD need hope. With your help, Emotions Matter can give it to them. All ticket purchases, donations, or profit from the silent auction will fund Emotions Matter’s peer and educational programs throughout the year.

We hope you can join us for BPDFest21! Thank you in advance for your support!

Best,

*Paula Tusiani-Eng, LMSW, M.Div.  
Emotions Matter Board of Directors*



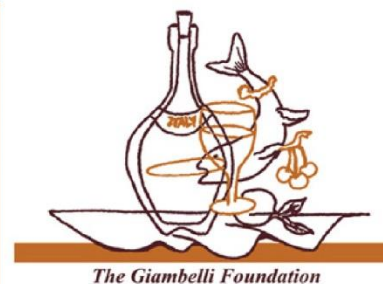
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## Schedule: Friday, May 14, 2021



### Big Apple Playback Theatre Performance: 6:30pm to 9:00 pm EST

**Big Apple Playback Theatre** is an improvisational multi-ethnic, multi-language theatre company in which the actors reenact audience members' life stories. This storytelling theatre is a vehicle for dialogue, community building, leadership development, entertainment and social change. For more information, <https://www.bigappleplayback.com/>

**What are the goals for this BPDFest?** For this performance, we hope your stories will help the community understand more about the experience of Borderline Personality Disorder from different perspectives. The goal is to increase awareness and promote learning about BPD.

**What will the Big Apple Playback Theatre Presentation be like?** The presentation has several parts. First, we will give a brief technical orientation and review the community guidelines. Second, Big Apple Playback will model how Playback works and to share ourselves with you. Third, actors will invite volunteer speakers to share and the actors will playback their stories and invite audience members to participate. Finally, we will process the experience together as a group to reflect on what we experience and learn about BPD.

**Is participation required to attend?\*** All participation in Apple Playback Theatre's performance is voluntary. Those who register for this performance for BPDFest21 can participate in two ways: 1) as an audience member or 2) as a volunteer speaker.

**Will my privacy be respected if I choose to volunteer or participate in the audience?** Yes, your privacy will be respected. This theatre experience will utilize Zoom Meeting rooms platform, and you have the option to rename yourself. Volunteers who choose to speak however, must turn their camera on. Additionally, this performance will not be recorded.

**What is expected if I volunteer to speak?** In order to participate, you will *volunteer yourself* to share briefly in conversation with Big Apple Playback members. The Big Apple Playback members will ask you a question and invite you to share. We will then offer you a "played- back" version of your story, your experience or your feelings.

**What questions will the Playback actors ask me?** If you think you may want to share as part of the performance, you can begin to ponder: How has BPD impacted you? If you could share one thing about your BPD experience with others, what would it be? Why? How have you personally moved from "stigma to strength" or how do you hope to? Each volunteer speaker may only be asked one question. These are examples of the kinds of questions which may be asked, but this is an improv experience and questions may vary.

**If I volunteer, will I get to share my story in the performance?** Because of the numbers of registrations expected, not all volunteers who want to speak will be able to participate. Participants who wish to volunteer to speak are strongly encouraged to pre-register ahead of time at the following link: <https://secure.gqiv.com/for/bxmivd/event/828946/> Actors will do their best to include those who volunteer as part of the performance, but it is not guaranteed.

**Are there rules about what I can and cannot say if I volunteer to speak?** Yes, speakers are required to abide by Emotions Matter's community guidelines. For more information <https://emotionsmatterbpd.org/em-meeting-guidelines>.

**What if I get upset or triggered by something that is shared?** Though this experiential theatre, we want to honor the truth of people's experiences, while adhering to community guidelines. Audience members may experience intense and painful emotions, feelings, memories, thoughts and/or reactions. During our performance, we encourage you to take care of yourself. You are welcome to take a break from this performance at any time or withdraw from it entirely. In the event of a medical (including mental health) emergency, please seek emergency care through a doctor, hospital, or emergency call number such as 911 in the United States, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK (8255) immediately.

We also refer you to **Emotions Matter's** website for additional resources: <https://emotionsmatterbpd.org/what-is-bpd> or <https://emotionsmatterbpd.org/peer-resources>.





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**Schedule: Saturday, May 15, 2021**

**10:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. EST**

## ***Welcome Emotions Matter Board of Directors and Plenary Motivational Speakers***

*Rosa Nouvini, MD, Founder, Emotions Matter*

*Paula Tusiani-Eng, LMSW, M.Div., Executive Director/Founder*

*Plenary Speakers: Kristin Farmer, Brodie Boswell, Anna Steinberg*

Description: Featured speakers will highlight their recovery stories and advocacy for BPD in different parts of the country.

**10:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. EST—Break**

**11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. EST**

## ***Panel #1: Challenges and Opportunities in Understanding and Finding BPD Treatment***

*Panelists: Brandon Unruh, MD, Mary Flaherty, RN, Leeza Lakhter,  
Susan Parson*

Description: This panel will offer a brief overview of the different BPD treatments and the challenges in finding treatment. Panelists with lived experience of BPD will share their experiences about how they navigated the mental health care system, despite the real-world barriers which exist for those with BPD, and found a path forward.

## ***Panel #2: Exploring and Addressing BPD and Stigma***

*Panelists: Sara Masland, Phd, Penelope D, Haley Amering,*

Description: Stigma affects the lived experience of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) on multiple levels. During this panel discussion, you will learn how and why stigma exists and how to address it from a professional and lived experience perspective. The importance of community building, peer support, and sharing recovery stories will be highlighted.

**12:00 p.m. to 12:40 p.m. EST**

## ***Conversation Cafes: Listening Session for Special Communities***

### ***BPD in LGBTQIA+ Communities***

*Moderators: Laura Richardson, Ph.D., Ken McIntosh*

### ***BPD and the Family Experience***

*Moderators: Maria Solomon, LCSW, Rachel Hay*



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## *Conversations Cafes Cont.*

### *BPD for Professionals and Clinicians*

*Moderators: Frank Yeomans, MD and Mary Flaherty, RN*

### *BPD in Diverse Racial, Ethnic or Cultural Communities*

*Moderators: Daniel Gaztambide, PsyD, Yujung Choi*

### *BPD for those in Recovery*

*Moderators: Amanda Blachorsky, Jillian Papa, MPH*

**12:00 to 1:00 p.m. EST. Lunch Break**

**12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. EST  
Exhibit Hall Open**

**1:00 to 2:00 p.m. EST**

### *Panel #3 Building Community Support: Navigating Challenges in Family Relationships*

*Panelists: Maria Solomon, LCSW, Amanda Blachorsky, Rachel Hay, Brittany Eldridge*

Description: Both individuals with lived experience and family members can face challenges in their relationship while navigating BPD symptoms and accessing care on the road to recovery. In this

panel, a professional will introduce BPD as a bio-psycho-social disorder that can be affected by and impact family relationships, offering brief education about the role of families in the treatment of BPD. Individuals with lived experience of BPD and then family members will share their experiences on the journey.

### *Panel #4 Building Community Support: Navigating Challenges in Friendships or Romantic Relationships*

*Panelists: Kali Pezzi, Coral Lopez, Sarah Fineberg, MD*

Description: For this panel, professionals will provide a brief overview about how and why BPD symptoms impact interpersonal relationships. Individual speakers will then share their lived experiences of navigating friendships or romantic relationships, and highlighting how they addressed obstacles and deepened relationships on the journey.



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2:00 to 2:45 p.m. EST

## *Plenary: Writing for Recovery: A Collective Writing Performance*

**CALL FOR PROSE & POETRY FOR BPDFEST21:**

Participate in Collective Poem about Borderline Personality Disorder

- Share the BPD experience in words or verse
- Participate in a collective poem about BPD
- Feel empowered by writing to raise awareness

**emotionsmatter** BPD advocacy • awareness • connection  
For more information, contact [info@emotionsmatterbpd.org](mailto:info@emotionsmatterbpd.org)  
[www.emotionsmatterbpd.org](http://www.emotionsmatterbpd.org)

*Facilitator: Penelope D, Kali Pezzi*

**Description:** For this plenary session, Emotions Matter leaders Kali Pezzi and Penelope D will share the role of writing on their individual journey toward recovery from Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Writing can be a powerful tool to express emotions, bring emotions to awareness, and to help others understand the BPD experience. As part of this presentation, they will share the - previously submitted works from writers with BPD across the country about the BPD to create and perform a "found poem" live during the presentation.

For more information about how you can submit a prose or poetry entry to be a part of this found poem, [www.emotionsmatterbpd.org](http://www.emotionsmatterbpd.org).

2:45 to 3:00 p.m.

## *Concluding Remarks*

*Facilitator: Paula Tusiani-Eng, Emotions Matter Executive Director/Founder*

## *Update About BPDFest Silent Auction*

### Thank You to our BPDFEST21 Silver Sponsors



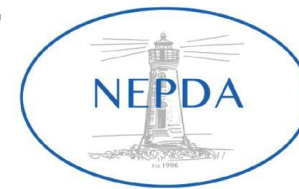
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## Schedule: Sunday, May 16, 2021

**12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. EST**

### *Welcome, Emotions Matter Board of Directors and Plenary Motivational Featured Speakers*

*Paula Tusiani-Eng, LMSW, M.Div., Executive Director/Founder*

*Plenary Speakers: Erin 'Incoherent' Cookman, Amanda Wang*

Description: Erin 'Incoherent' Cookman – Musician and Artist, Mental Health Advocate will do live performance and presentation.

**12:45 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. EST—Lunch Break**

**1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. EST**

### *Panel #5: Managing Crisis Situations on the Path Toward BPD Recovery*

*Panelists: Beth Brodsky, Ph.D, Melissa Ferdinando, Jillian Papa, MPH*

Description: In this panel, professionals will provide an educational overview about the suicidal behaviors associated with BPD, and describe best practices to manage these symptoms. Then those with lived experience, including people with BPD and family members, will describe how they managed crisis situations and severe symptoms, with an emphasis on coping and strategies for moving forward. Education and resources will be provided as part of this panel discussion.

### *Panel #6: Understanding BPD as a Disability at Work, School or in Daily Living*

*Panelists: Sandy Glover, Hannah Fox, Ayala Danzig, MD, Kellyann Navarre*

Description: Did you know that BPD is a mental health disorder that impacts daily functioning and living as a disability? In this panel, professionals will provide an overview about how and why BPD affects functioning. Speakers will share their lived experiences offering coping strategies for how they have managed their disability to achieve life goals at work, school and beyond. Educational resources will be provided as part of this panel discussion.

**2:00 to 3:00 p.m. EST**

### *Panel #7: Strategies for Self-Care and Managing Intense Emotions with BPD*

*Panelists: Rivka Lubin, Maria Solomon, LCSW, Rachel Hay*

Description: It takes lots of hard work, trying new things, and practice to manage emotions with BPD! Professionals on this panel will provide a brief education on the role of distress tolerance to manage emotions. Our panelists in various stages of recovery will share from their experiences, challenges and successes with managing emotions. Practical tips and strategies along with favorite distress tolerance activities will be among topics discussed.





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## *Panel #8: Portrayals of BPD in Pop Culture, TV, Books or Film: Finding Voices for Hope and Recovery*

*Panelists: Kimberly Rolfs, Roopa Grey*

Description: Have you ever watched a TV show or film that portrayed characters with BPD? Some fictionalized characterizations of BPD are based on stereotypes and others more authentic to the lived experience of this complex mental illness. This panel will explore different fictionalized characterizations of BPD in TV/Film and how they impact our understanding of BPD and identity. We will also explore how film/TV/writing/art can be a powerful medium to improve public awareness about Borderline Personality Disorder.

**3:00 to 4:00 p.m. EST**

## *Plenary: Art for Recovery: Interviews with Artists Impacted by BPD*

*Speakers: Ellen Mattesi, Leeza Lakhter and other artists*

Description: Ellen Mattesi, an Emotions Matter Art Show leader and professional artist who curated our 2020 Virtual Art Show, will facilitate a plenary session on the role of art in BPD recovery. As part of the presentation, she will invite artists who participated in the 2020 Art Show, "Beyond the Border: Expressions of Borderline Personality Disorder for Hope and Healing: 2020 Virtual Art Show" to talk about their art work via pre-recorded video segments. She will also share practical strategies and tips for utilizing art on the road to recovery.

**4:00 to 4:30 p.m. EST**

## *Acknowledgements, Volunteer Recognition, Get Involved*

## *Closing Remarks, Silence Auction Closes at 5:00 p.m. EST*

*Speaker: Paula Tusiani-Eng and Emotions Matter Board*

## *Acknowledgements and Sponsor Recognition*

**4:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST**

## *Exhibitor Booth*





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## Speakers' Biographies

### Big Apple Playback Theatre

Playback Theatre as a Tool for DialogueThePlayback Theatre technique is used widely in both therapeutic and artistic settings. Although it is unique in its ability to serve both arenas simultaneously, Playback Theatre is fundamentally about creating dialogue and connection through the telling and witnessing/honoring of our life experiences. These stories may be about trauma, family, work, love, hopes, fears, regrets, dreams, desires, or transformation/transition—whatever the theme, every story from every community member deserves to be listened to with an open ear. In Playback Theatre we attempt to honor our differences by celebrating our commonalities. Big Apple Playback Theatre serves various populations and organizations. The technique is used for entertainment, as well as a tool for mediation, dialogue, and self/community reflection.

### Haley Amering

Haley is a peer facilitator for one of the BPD Online Peer Support Groups that takes place once a month. She is an advocate for BPD awareness and education, and has utilized her lived experience with BPD to support others with similar experiences. In her spare time, Haley enjoys listening to music, reading, writing, and spending time with her loved ones.

### Amanda Blachorsky

Amanda is an Emotions Matter online peer group facilitator.

### Brodie Boswell

Brodie Michael Boswell or "EMCEE BRODZ" as he's better known is a 23-year-old multi genre artist from Adelaide, Australia. Coming up in the local hip hop scene Brodz has become known for his unique

style which blends guitar and heavy metal elements as well as electronic themes into hip hop. Brodz is also known for his openly vulnerable lyrics regarding his own mental health and the struggles he has faced and continues to work through. Recently since covid restrictions have ended Brodz has been actively playing shows locally and continues to work on his debut project scheduled for release this year.

### Beth Brodsky, Ph.D.

Beth S. Brodsky, Ph.D. is Associate Clinical Professor of Medical Psychology in Psychiatry at Columbia University, and Associate Director of the Suicide Prevention: Training, Implementation program at the Center of Practice Innovations, New York State Psychiatric Institute. Her areas of expertise include research and psychotherapeutic treatment of self-destructive behavior in Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), and clinical training in evidence-based practice for suicide prevention, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy. She has published a book and numerous articles and chapters on the topics of suicidal risk and treatment of suicidal behavior in Borderline Personality Disorder. She is trained in Dialectical Behavior Therapy and teaches DBT to psychiatry residents and psychology trainees. She has a private practice in Manhattan.

### Erin 'Incoherent' Cookman

My name is Erin 'Incoherent' Cookman and I've been making music about having Borderline Personality Disorder since I was very young. I didn't know that's what I was doing at first. It took me a long time to receive an accurate diagnosis and many years of abusive relationships, self-mutilation, alcoholism, and prescription medication to become the advocate you see before you. Turns out, even the ugly stuff is part of your recovery story. Acceptance and



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accountability have helped me become who I am. Art and advocacy help me thrive. Having BPD is only the beginning of my journey. Healing and growing past the limitations it set for me, is the work I am doing now. You are not defined by your diagnosis. In fact, a diagnosis gives you opportunity to redefine yourself. Define yourself in strength. Define yourself in courage. Define yourself as love.

## Penelope D

Penelope D is a pre-dawn writer and post work napper. She earned her MA in the Social Sciences, an MFA in Fiction writing, and a Ph.D. in English Literature. She has taught at universities and colleges on the East Coast, Gulf Coast, and West Coast. Her prose and poetry has been published in *Digital Waves*, *Riggwelter*, *The Mockingheart Review*, *The Fem*, *Autostraddle*, *Apogee* and in the anthologies *This Assignment is So Gay: LGBTIQ Writers on the Art of Teaching* and *Closet Cases: Queers on What We Wear*. She lives with her partner in Northern California, where the stray cats let the squirrels run wild.

## Ayala Danzig

Ayala Danzig, MD is a fourth-year resident physician in the department of general psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine. Following residency, she will be completing a fellowship in Law and Psychiatry at Yale. Ayala received her MD from The University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and holds an MSW from New York University. She trains other residents on forensic topics using innovative and interactive techniques. Ayala is passionate about racial justice, prison reform, patient's rights and informed consent, and she speaks and publishes about these topics. Her recent writing has appeared in *Nautilus*, *Psychiatric Times* and *The Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine*.

## Kristin Farmer

Kristin Farmer is a Birmingham, Alabama native and owner of the culturally centric home goods and giftware line, *Curly Contessa*. After being diagnosed with bipolar II and Borderline Personality Disorder, the 32-year-old artist needed a way to celebrate the wins of her journey and decided to design gifts that represented her tribe. Adorned with portraits of Black women, *Curly Contessa* creates prideful shopping experiences for naturalistas across the globe.

## Sarah Fineberg

Sarah Fineberg is a psychiatrist at the Yale School of Medicine. She has served as a volunteer board member for Emotions Matter for the past two years. She directs a research lab that aims to understand the experience of having BPD and to improve treatment options.

## Mary Flaherty

Mary Flaherty is a Chicago/Honolulu transplant, currently living in Central Illinois (though she plans on returning to Hawaii eventually). Her worldview is expressed in her madness, queerness, feminism, and atheism. While she currently works as a psychiatric RN, she is in school for her doctorate to become a psychiatric NP. Mary lives with her partner, Anna, and their 6 canine children. She is grateful for her family, particularly her parents, for supporting her through hard times. Mary overcame a decade of BPD suicidality and now finds meaning in advocating for others living with BPD and mental illness.

## Hannah Fox

I'm Hannah and I've been a Peer Facilitator with Emotions Matter for about two years! I'm currently studying psychology in college,



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with the goal of eventually becoming a clinical psychologist. I'm also a huge animal lover! Some of my passions include art, reading, and advocacy work, specifically for the LGBTQ+ and disability communities, both of which I'm a member of!

## Daniel Gaztambide

Daniel José Gaztambide, PsyD, is assistant director of clinical training in the Department of Psychology at the New School for Social Research, and director of the Frantz Fanon Center for Intersectional Psychology. He is the author of *A People's History of Psychoanalysis: From Freud to Liberation Psychology*, and a psychotherapist in private practice. Daniel is an active spoken word artist in the Nuyorican scene, and a member of the Puerto Rican poetry troupe The Titere Poets.

## Sandy Glover

Sandy is a strong proponent of mental health advocacy and has utilized her own lived history to provide education and support. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in professional counseling. Her career began as a Mental Health Therapist but then decided to shift her focus to peer work. Through the Massachusetts Recovery Learning Community, she became certified in WRAP, a certified Peer Specialist, and a trained Peer Facilitator. She ran online support groups for three years through Support Groups Central. Currently, she is a NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) In Our Own Voice Presenter and has a published article through them. She also has a mental health blog website that she uses in hopes of reducing stigma.

## Roopa Grey

Roopa has been a fierce advocate for mental wellness since 2007, after completing a Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) program in

San Francisco. She lives successfully with Emotion Dysregulation "Borderline Personality" Disorder in SF with her husband and son, a yellow lab. She grew up in the US, though born in India, and speaks Punjabi fluently. She began her advocacy as a public speaker for NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) in SF, presenting for diverse audiences before becoming a NAMI trainer. She is a certified WRAP facilitator, advanced-level certified Peer Specialist through both RAMS and RI International, and received the NAMI California Peer Award in 2016. She is also a current member of the RAMS SIP Team that received the MHSA Team of the Year Award for 2020. Roopa loves all things creative, especially the performing arts. She believes that life doesn't have to be black or white. We can learn to live in the grey. Her philosophy is that we have all made mistakes...and, we all deserve to be happy. Recovery is possible. If I can do it, so can you! Roopa has volunteer with Emotions Matter as a BPD Connections program speaker.

## Rachel Hay

Rachel is an Emotions Matter peer facilitator from Texas. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, playing her ukulele, watching YouTube videos on growing indoor plants, traveling to different states, and helping others who struggle with anxiety, depression, and BPD.

## Leeza Lakhter

Leeza Lakhter (they/them) is a queer self-taught tattoo and mixed media artist with Borderline Personality Disorder. Their artwork centers around spreading awareness for mental health issues, body and sex positivity, and LGBTQIA+ empowerment. Leeza is a licensed tattoo artist at LETMEPOKEU in Brooklyn, NY, which is a safe and comfortable space for their clients. Leeza always practices consent and trauma informed tattooing because they





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want other people with mental health issues to feel comfortable, understood, and safe.

## Coral Lopez

My name is Coral, and I was born and raised in the Bronx, New York. I hold a Masters in social work from Hunter College. I consider myself to be a mental health advocate, not only through my career choice, but everyday life. I am a peer leader for Emotions Matter. I started my recovery journey two years ago now, and helping others has been a key factor in my recovery. I enjoy playing the bass, and I love music especially rock/alternative. I enjoy art and writing. I also have a collection of anime, actions figures, and cartoon art. I consider myself to be a big kid at heart. I love movies and cinema particularly Dramas and horror.

## Rivka Lubin

Rivka has been a part of Emotions Matter since its inception in 2015. She was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder in 2010 and over the years has worked towards a life worth living. She has a BA in psychology and recently graduated with an MS Ed in Childhood Education from Hunter College. Rivka is passionate about advocacy work and is a contributor for The Mighty. She also has a blog where she documents her journey, reaching over 5,000 people.

## Sara Masland

Sara Rose Masland, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Psychological Science at Pomona College in Claremont, CA. As a clinical and personality psychologist, she studies how mental health stigma creates barriers to care for people with BPD, factors that contribute to stigma, and how stigma can be attenuated. She also studies emotion processing in personality disorders, including

BPD. She regularly teaches courses on personality and personality disorder, and is a certified trainer in Good Psychiatric Management (GPM) for BPD.

## Ellen Mattesi

Ellen Mattesi has been a professional artist for over 25 years. That includes fine art, illustration, designing fantasy spaces, children's interiors, puppets, sets, faux taxidermy, murals, visual displays, ornaments, and gifts, and writing creative blogs. She has also been an Emotions Matter art show curator and leader as a family member of a loved one with BPD.

## Kellyann Navarre

Kellyann Navarre, BA, is a psychology and disability studies college graduate and clinical psychological science research assistant, with lived experience of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). She is an Emotions Matter BPD support group facilitator and member of the education committee. She is also a member of the super contributor network at The Mighty, where she writes articles and hosts webinars on BPD and disability. Kellyann is dedicated to advocating for BPD, accessible care, and social justice.

## Jillian Papa

Jillian Papa is a Board Member and Peer Facilitator at Emotions Matters. She was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder in 2012 but has worked hard to overcome many obstacles and currently identifies as being in recovery. Jillian came to EM five years ago in search of resources and connection to others. She was inspired by the work being done and since then has supported everything from operations to peer support. Jillian is the Director of Research and Evaluation at a national non-profit organization called Action for Healthy Kids and received her Master of Public



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Health in Epidemiology from Emory University. When she's not working or volunteering, Jillian enjoys traveling, hiking, music, and raising her two Boston Terriers in her home in Chicago.

## Susan Parson

Susan Parson is an executive in the apparel industry, a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a wife and a mother. Her daughter was diagnosed with BPD in 2016. When given the choice to lie down and do nothing, Susan will stand up and do something. In this time, she is a supporter of a stigma free society and believer that all people deserve a life worth living.

## Kali Pezzi

Kali Pezzi earned her MFA in 2010 from Lesley University. She has been published in Gaslight Magazine, Boston Literary Magazine, Balancing the Tides, The Novice Writer, Tupelo Press 30/30 Project, Connotations Press and most recently became one of the winners of Newport Life Writing Contest. She works full-time for a family business and is committed to her volunteer work.

## Laura Richardson

Dr. Richardson is the executive director of Turn the Mind, LLC, and leads the intensively-trained DBT Team offering all modes of DBT. Dr. Richardson obtained her certification in DBT from the Linehan Board of Certification (DBT-LBC™). Dr. Richardson is certified in EMDR. For treating panic disorder, general anxiety, perfectionism and other anxiety-related issues, Dr. Richardson has been doing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for more than a decade. Dr. Richardson was a founding member and clinical advisory board member for Emotions Matter, Inc., an advocacy and education non-profit for people living with Borderline Personality Disorder and their families. Dr. Richardson previously served on the New Jersey

Psychological Association's Ethics Education and Resource Committee.

## Kimberly Rolfs

Kimberly Rolfs is a New York-based writer and producer. Her first original web series, *Life or Death, Basically*, which she created and wrote about her experiences dealing with Borderline Personality Disorder, premiered in 2018 and was an official selection of the New Media Film Festival and an International Independent Film Award recipient. The pilot of her newest web series, *Disavow*, which she co-wrote and co-created with Alex Hughes, had its New York premiere as an official selection of the Big Apple Film Festival, and her original full-length pilot *Transference* was a semi-finalist at the 2020 Austin Film Festival Script Competition. You can find her online at [kimberlyrolfs.com](http://kimberlyrolfs.com) or on Instagram @kimberlyrolfs.

## Maria Solomon

Maria Solomon, LCSW-R. Maria Solomon, LCSW-R is a Senior Clinical Social Worker at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Payne Whitney Day Treatment Program. She has expertise in diagnosis, assessment, and treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder, trained in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) in inpatient, outpatient and intensive day-treatment settings. Ms. Solomon supervises the social work staff and student interns at Payne Whitney. She also practices as a private psychotherapist, providing clinical services including consultation, assessment, referral, and psychotherapy to individuals, couples and families. Ms. Solomon is active in community organizations that support Borderline Personality Disorder, including peers at Emotions Matter and as a trainer for Family Connections with the National Educational Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder.



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## Anna Steinberg

My name is Anna Steinberg, and I am a baker and mental health advocate. I began a home-based bakery called Borderline Bakery at the beginning of COVID to help my own mental health and bring awareness and end the stigma of talking about mental health issues. I was diagnosed at age 21 with Borderline Personality Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, and Generalized Anxiety, however, I was not told about my BPD diagnosis until age 29. Once I realized that most of my mental health issues revolved around BPD, I was able to finally get the help and support I needed. I live in a small apartment with far too much baking and cooking supplies in Buffalo, NY with my rescue cat Marley, and my favorite things to do (besides baking) are cheering for Buffalo sports, binge watching The Office and Schitts Creek, and watching my cat act cute.

## Paula Tusiani-Eng

Paula Tusiani-Eng, Co-Founder and Executive Director of Emotions Matter Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to educate, support, and advocate for those impacted by Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). She received her Master's in Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in 2001 and her Master's in Social Work from Adelphi University in 2014. She received her Certificate in Non-Profit Management from Adelphi University in 2019. Paula is co-author with her mother, Bea Tusiani, of *Remnants of a Life on Paper: A Mother and Daughter's Struggle with Borderline Personality Disorder* (BPD). She lost her younger sister, Pamela Tusiani, who suffered from BPD at the age of 23 in 2001. Her passion for BPD education, resources and advocacy is in her sister's memory to help others survive and thrive with BPD with access to mental health care needed to achieve a meaningful recovery.

## Brandon Unruh

Brandon Unruh, MD, is the medical director of the Gunderson Residence, an intensive, specialized residential program for women with severe personality disorders. His clinical approach is anchored in the integration of evidence-based treatments such as dialectical behavior therapy, mentalization-based treatment, and general psychiatric management.

## Amanda Wang

After receiving a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder in 2007, Amanda Rances Wang soon founded the only in-person, peer-led support group for Borderline Personality Disorder at the time. Starting from only a handful of people, the group has grown to 900 registered members. She has also spoken of the hope, strength and vitality occurring within the borderline personality community at places like the National Institute of Mental Health, Yale University, School of Medicine, Columbia University, and the National Alliance for Mental Illness. Amanda has been featured in the 2010 July/August issue of Scientific American Mind, the 2016 May issue of Women's Health Magazine, Pamela Slim's book, "Body of Work: Finding the Thread That Ties Your Story Together" from Portfolio, and a 2018 article on cosmopolitan.com. She has also written an article for Well+Good in September of 2019. She has been fortunate to have received the Fountain House Humanitarian Award in 2017 for her advocacy work in mental health.

## Frank Yeomans

Dr. Yeomans is Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University, Director of Training at the Personality Disorders Institute of Weill-Cornell, Lecturer in Psychiatry at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, and



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Director of the Personality Studies Institute in Manhattan. He graduated from Harvard College and went on to obtain his M.D. from the Yale University School of Medicine and complete his training in psychiatry at the Payne Whitney Clinic of the New York Presbyterian Hospital-Weill Medical College. Dr. Yeomans' primary interests are the development, investigation, teaching, and practice of psychotherapy for personality disorders. He has participated in establishing training programs for psychodynamic therapy of personality disorders in numerous sites in North America and Europe. He has authored and co-authored numerous articles and books, including A Primer on Transference-Focused Psychotherapy for the Borderline Patient, and Psychotherapy for Borderline Personality: Focusing on Object Relations, co-authored with Drs. John Clarkin and Otto Kernberg. He was the head of the team of TFP therapist in the RCT reported on in the article "Evaluating three treatments for Borderline Personality Disorder: a multiwave study" that appeared in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* in June 2007.





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## Acknowledgements

### Emotions Matter Board of Directors:

Paula Tusiani-Eng, LMSW, M. Div., Melissa Ferdinando, Sara Rosenberg, Dan Hofert, JD, Catherine Dishner, Lauren Nauser, Diana Diamond, Ph.D., Sarah Fineberg, MD, Yujung Choi, MGH, Rosa Nouvini, MD, Michael Blankman, Gwendolyn Brown, Maria Solomon, LCSW, Jillian Papa, MPH, and James Mallinson.

### Support Staff and Communications Interns

Londyn Harp, Beth Karcher, our graphic design and social media volunteers, Ken McIntosh, and Angelica Gillespie.

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Brandon Unruh, MD, Leeza Lakhter, Mary Flaherty, Susan Parson, Sara Masland, Phd, Haley Amering, Penelope Dane, Maria Solomon, LCSW, Rachel Hay, Brittany Eldridge, Sarah Fineberg, MD; Coral Lopez, Kali Pezzi, Beth Brodsky, Phd, Jillian Papa, MPH, Ayala Danzig, MD, Kellyann Navarre, Sandy Glover, Hannah Fox, Rivka Lubin, Roopa Grey, Kimberly Rolfs, Rosa Nouvini, Ellen Mattesi, Amanda Wang, Erin 'Incoherent' Cookman, Anna Steinberg, Brodie Boswell, Laura Richardson, Ph.D., Frank Yeomans, MD, and Scott Fisher.

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## The Facts about BPD

BPD is a common and largely misunderstood mental illness characterized by a neurological impairment in processing emotions. It can cause impulsivity, thought distortions, difficult interpersonal relationships, identity confusion, suicidality and self-harm.

BPD affects 6 out of every 100 people in the United States. 20 to 30% of those with a substance abuse disorder have BPD. 10% of those with BPD lose their lives to suicide.

## About Emotions Matter

Emotions Matter, Inc. is a non-profit 501c3 organization founded in 2015 to advocate, educate and support those impacted by Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD).

Our vision is to create a world in which every person with BPD has access to treatment, resources or support to achieve recovery. We work toward this vision by offering BPD peer support programs, stigma-free resources, and educational workshops.

## *Why We Advocate for BPD*

Despite its severity and prevalence, individuals with BPD face significant social, political, and economic barriers to recovery.

Research is poorly funded compared to other mental disorders.

Individuals with BPD are labeled as “manipulative” or “difficult” and subjected to public stigma and shame.

Individuals with BPD often experience discrimination by health care providers, because the majority of evidence-based treatments are not covered by insurance and there are not enough trained clinicians.

Lifesaving treatment remains inaccessible for most Americans.

With intensive therapy and community support, BPD is a highly treatable disorder.

*Get Involved with Emotions Matter!*

For more information:

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