

# Borderline Personality Disorder May Be Rooted in Trauma

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Two winters ago, after a spell of burnout landed her in the hospital, Ann began having disturbing dreams. Visions of her father turned into distressing flashbacks from her childhood—scenes of physical and psychological abuse.

A single mother of three daughters, Ann, whose name has been changed for privacy, grew up in a town in eastern Germany, an hour's drive from the country's capital, Berlin. She spent her childhood surrounded by alcoholics, including her father and her grandfather. After school, she would often return to an empty house, and she found no comfort when her parents came home. Both her mother and father were violent, physically and emotionally. As a teenager, she was raped multiple times. She also lost a close friend, who, after becoming pregnant, was murdered by her own father.

Of all those horrible experiences, Ann says that the thing that hurts the most is how little her parents seemed to care about her. When she told her mother she had been raped, her mother responded by saying she was to blame for her own assault. When she was hit by a car while biking to work, her father unsympathetically said, "Get up, everything is fine," and sent her on her way. It was only after a colleague rushed to her in shock, asking why her head was covered in blood, that she realized how bad the accident had been. "That's the hardest thing for me," Ann tells me, as her voice starts to tremble and tears fill her eyes. "To have parents that don't see you as a person."

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