



# WHAT WORKS FOR ME: EXPERT PERSPECTIVES FROM PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

## Background

Living with personality disorder can be challenging, particularly when experiencing stressful circumstances. The information below was created by people with lived experience of personality disorder. They shared what has supported them in navigating through challenging times.

STRATEGY	WHAT MIGHT THAT MEAN?	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES
Caring for myself	<p>It is very important to take time for yourself. Caring for yourself can be a challenge and something that might feel uncomfortable at first.</p> <p>Starting small can be a first step.</p> <p>Using mindfulness to regulate, ground, centre and steady yourself can be supporting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to music</li> <li>• Making or preparing meals and snacks</li> <li>• Participating in something you love such as reading, making art, being in nature or other interests</li> <li>• Taking physical care of yourself such as brushing your teeth, having a shower or bath or wearing clothes that make you feel good.</li> <li>• Turning off or restricting TV, phone, news, social media. Choose when and how often you give energy to these things</li> <li>• Mindfulness or grounding:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Create a sensory or self-soothing box</li> <li>» Walk in the park or on the beach</li> <li>» Guided meditation</li> <li>» Observing your surroundings</li> <li>» Focused activities that uses the five senses (taste, hearing, sight, touch, smell)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Acknowledgement, acceptance and tolerance	<p>In some situations, change is not immediately possible. Decrease suffering by acknowledging that the situation may be unchangeable right now.</p> <p>This may mean learning to survive discomfort until these feelings settle (which they will)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to understand and accept what is out of your control (this does not mean that you need to approve or like it!)</li> <li>• Focus on what is possible to change. For example, you cannot change that the rain cancelled your planned picnic in the park, but you can find an alternative location!</li> <li>• Learning to allow time for challenging emotions to settle by using distraction practices</li> <li>• Learning new strategies to get through the moment in ways that keep you safe</li> </ul> <p><i>(These strategies might need lots of practice but can be learned for example through therapy)</i></p>

STRATEGY	WHAT MIGHT THAT MEAN?	EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES
Understanding yourself	<p>Understanding yourself and who and how you are in the external world, can support you to understand your thoughts, feelings and behaviours during challenging times. Understanding how the external world, family history and society affects you can also be important to begin to explore what makes you unique.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking in with yourself: what am I feeling today?</li> <li>• Asking yourself 'where did I get this idea from about myself/who gave me this idea?'</li> </ul> <p><i>(A better understanding can be gained through therapy)</i></p>
Connecting with people, communities and culture	<p>Engaging with communities of people with similar backgrounds, interests or experiences can support you feel a sense of belonging and understood.</p> <p>It is also important to consider what communities and people are not a safe or positive space for you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting to communities of belonging (such as peers, cultural background, gender and sexual identity, and religious practice)</li> <li>• Connecting to interest-based communities focused on similar activities (such as making music, sports, cooking and creative arts)</li> <li>• Choosing to spend time with people who actively support you and make your life more fulfilling</li> <li>• Learning more about effective ways of communicating (such as that it is OK to say no and put your needs first)</li> </ul>
Connecting with the natural world	<p>Caring for other living things and being in nature can support you feel more connected and mindful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» The environment</li> <li>» The country around you</li> <li>» Indoor plants</li> <li>» Pets and animals</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Spending time in parks and on beaches</li> <li>• Going for walks and exploring nature</li> <li>• Spending time in the sun</li> </ul>
Structure, routine and goals	<p>Structuring time actively, understanding and upholding responsibilities and working towards your dreams and goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping a daily or weekly routine</li> <li>• Working towards goals (both big and small) in ways that are achievable</li> <li>• Working alongside others who can support you in these practices and processes</li> <li>• Making sure you celebrate the steps along the way and plan for roadblocks.</li> </ul>
Engaging in all kinds of therapies and mental health treatments	<p>Therapy can support you through challenging times. This includes exploring and understanding what is going on for you, working through challenging experiences, and developing new perspectives.</p> <p>There are many diverse and creative therapies that can support your wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend structured appointments with health professionals like psychologists, counsellors, doctors, occupational therapists and art therapists</li> <li>• Engaging with peer support services</li> <li>• Practising and revising skills and strategies</li> <li>• Talking with a support person that can prompt you to remember skills and strategies you have</li> <li>• Accessing expert and educated resources on diagnosis and treatment from both mental health professionals and lived experience communities</li> <li>• Finding the right kind of therapy can take time. It is ok to try different approaches to find what is most meaningful for you</li> </ul>

*This fact sheet is based on discussions between people with lived experience of personality disorder, held in November 2020.*