

## **Systems approach for emotional predictability and problem solving (STEPPS) for people with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)**

### **Knowledge of the STEPPS programme**

An ability to draw on knowledge that STEPPS programmes maintain an explicit educational focus, and that this is reflected in the structure and process of the groups	
An ability to draw on knowledge of the three phase that comprise a STEPPS programme:	
	Awareness of illness: helping clients to understand the diagnosis of BPD and to consider how it applies to themselves and their behaviour
	Emotion management skills training: helping clients develop skills for predicting and managing episodes
	Behaviour management skills training: helping clients to learn and/or relearn more functional patterns of behaviour
An ability to draw on knowledge that the STEPPS programme is delivered:	
	in a group format (usually over 20 sessions)
	using a structured protocol that specifies the learning tasks for each session
An ability to draw on knowledge that each STEPPS group operates as a 'mini-system' within which:	
	feedback and support is offered both by group leaders and by members
	members are expected to take responsibility for generalising new skills to key players in the system within which they live
An ability to draw on knowledge that STEPPS is intended to augment, and to be integrated with, the support/ treatment clients receive from mental health services, rather than being a stand-alone intervention	

### **Selection of group members**

An ability to identify clients who seem able:	
	to share time with other group members
	to limit discussion of their problems to the educational focus of each session

### **Group process**

An ability to draw on knowledge that STEPPS groups are usually facilitated by two individuals who remain with the group for its duration	
An ability to draw on knowledge that the group process needs to maintain a consistent psycho-educational focus, and hence group leaders should take care to:	
	limit discussion of individual issues, unless these are illustrative of the topic focus
	avoid attempting to manage crises through discussion within the group
	avoid conducting individual therapy within the group
An ability, throughout the intervention, to maintain the group's focus on the process being taught, rather than on specific content	

### **Ability to introduce group members to basic procedures used in STEPPS**

An ability to introduce group members to the importance of their maintaining a 'training folder', used to store training resources, accessed and extended in each session, maintained and regularly reviewed by each client, and shared with others in their "system"	
An ability (at relevant points) to introduce group members to the recording systems used by clients to track progress and their use of skills e.g.:	
	BEST (Borderline Evaluation of Severity over Time)
	Skills Monitoring Card (to track the use of emotional and behavioural management skills)
	Emotional Intensity Continuum (to track emotional intensity in relation to feelings, physical sensations, thoughts, filters, urges to action and behaviours)

Behaviour Management Test (to track a range of behavioural goals, such as eating or sleeping)

Goal Progress report (to track the achievement of goals)

An ability to help group members to identify individuals who can act as their 'reinforcing team' (people who will help them identify skills needed in a specific situation during an emotional crisis, and who could be other group members, significant others or other professionals)

### Group content

An ability systematically to deliver the STEPPS programme in a prescribed order, and to set and review homework tasks relevant to the focus of each session

An ability to deliver the programme in the following order:

increasing awareness of BPD, describing diagnostic criteria and how these apply to each member of the group

describing cognitive filters common in BPD ("stable and enduring pattern of thinking that develop during childhood and become elaborated throughout an individual's life") and helping each member to consider how these apply to themselves

describing techniques for distancing at times of emotional intensity

teaching relaxation skills (as a means of staying in the present and distracting from emotions) , and starting all subsequent sessions with a period of relaxation

introducing emotion management skills e.g.:

communicating feelings more effectively (distancing then communicating)

challenging thoughts, in order to temper immediate emotional reactions and impulses

distracting from emotional upset, by identifying and implementing distracting/ self-soothing activities that can be employed at such points

managing problems by learning about and using problem-solving skills procedures

learning behaviour management skills (aiming to identify a set of goals in relation to eating, sleeping, exercise, leisure, physical health and management of abusive relationships), and in each of these areas:

identifying behaviours that are out of balance (e.g. excessive or inappropriately restricted eating)

identifying the behaviours that are to be targeted, and setting the goals for this work

developing and monitoring an action plan

improving relationship behaviours through the application of skills learned in the STEPPS programme

An ability to ensure that each successive lesson is integrated with previous material, such that each step is integrated into a holistic and linked set of skills

An ability to include a session for members of the clients' reinforcing team that outlines the aims methods and goals of the STEPPS programme approach, the ways this conceptualises BPD, and the strategies being taught by the programme

An ability to conclude the STEPPS programme by evaluating the group itself, and by asking clients to evaluate their progress using the various recording tools integral to the programme