



# The Courtship Dance of the Borderline

*By Anthony Walker*

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A unique reflection by a psychiatrist on his former marriage to a patient with Borderline Personality Disorder, and the disturbing effects on the relationship.

Borderline Personality Disorder has levels of prevalence, social dysfunction, health care utilization, and chronicity that make its public health significance similar to that of other major psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression, yet it has not received comparable attention. The Courtship Dance of the Borderline is an important statement that will enhance public consciousness about a disorder that is universally recognized and widely discussed within mental health circles. Never before has Borderline Personality Disorder been so intimately explored and detailed from the perspective of a spouse. Now a psychiatrist recounts his relationship with a sufferer of the condition, and the complex issues that arise in the relationship.

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## **The Courtship Dance of the Borderline** By Anthony Walker Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2353137 in Books
- Color: Other
- Published on: 2001-10
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .39" h x 5.98" w x 9.04" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 139 pages

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Walker's disturbing memoir follows the relationship between the author (a psychiatrist) and his wife, Michelle, from its tumultuous beginning in 1985 to their ambivalent last good-bye three years later. The subtitle "a case study" attempts to maintain a professional distance from this devastating relationship, but it's all too clear that the illness from which Walker's wife suffered came close to dragging him down with her. Walker is first smitten by Michelle when, as a medical student, he encounters her on rounds, where she is presented as a recent suicide attempt. He can't understand how such a beautiful, sexy young woman would want to kill herself and returns to interview her for a school presentation. Despite warnings from his teacher, friends and father, he falls deeply in love and is drawn into her world, only to emerge with great difficulty a year later. Walker, an outgoing, athletic, cheerful young man, relinquishes more and more of himself to Michelle and gradually becomes isolated, depressed, devious and even violent as he tries to cope with-and ultimately escape from-Michelle. Walker, who now treats teenage girls with borderline personality disorder, is not an expert writer. His dialogues often sound as if the speakers learned English as a second language. But this intimate narrative, showing how the best intentions of a naïve, compassionate young doctor can lead him straight to hell, will fascinate readers who've dealt with similar situations firsthand. The three appendixes provide welcome information about the definition, diagnosis and treatment of borderline personality disorder.

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From [Booklist](#)

Walker, then a student at a Miami medical center, met and fell in love with a young patient who had attempted suicide. He should have buckled up, for the beautiful Michele was to take him on an exceedingly bumpy ride. Walker, now a psychiatrist, recounts in sometimes graphic detail his three-year relationship with a woman who suffered from borderline personality disorder, which is characterized in part by impulsiveness, inappropriate or intense fits of anger, unstable interpersonal relationships, and suicidal behavior. It is named as it is, Walker says, because psychiatrists first theorized it was a pathology lying on the figurative border between psychosis and neurosis. Walker began his relationship with Michele in hopes of rescuing her from the grips of the terrible ailment. In the end, he was the one who needed rescue. His very personal account, with names and specific details changed to shield privacy, portrays the seductive nature of a "borderline" and how the disorder ravages not only its victims but also those who love them. *Donna Chavez*

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## Review

"This sexually and emotionally frank account realistically captures the characteristically intense appeals and disillusionments that can be expected in a relationship with someone who has [borderline personality disorder]. . . . This book is an important statement that will enhance public consciousness about a disorder that is universally recognized and widely discussed within mental health circles. . . . Alongside the movie *Fatal Attraction*, the book and movie *Girl, Interrupted*, and the psycho-biographical accounts of the borderline personality traits found in Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe, [*Siren's Dance*] can titillate even as it teaches." --John G. Gunderson, M.D., from the Foreword

"A vivid story of love, romantic rescue, and the painful limits of compassion. Dr. Walker successfully transforms the experience of his tortured marriage into an important book about the impact of borderline personality disorder on human hope and caring." --Richard Schwartz, M.D., author of *Marriage in Motion*

and assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School

"Avoiding the temptation to blame the borderline for the doomed relationship, Mr. Walker honestly describes his own mistakes and lets us listen in on the advice he failed to heed. . . . This book will validate readers' experiences with borderlines in their own lives and hopefully prevent them from making the same mistakes." --Randi Kreger, coauthor of *Stop Walking on Eggshells*

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#### **David Browning:**

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**Antoine Anderson:**

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