

How Bojack Horseman has become the face of BPD

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It's been almost a decade since the first episode of Bojack Horseman premiered on Netflix, and nearly four years since we said goodbye. Since the start of the show, Bojack Horseman has been interpreted as a depiction of mental illness. More specifically, Bojack himself has been claimed by fans as the most accurate televised depiction of BPD, or borderline personality disorder.

BPD is a mental disorder affecting mood, identity, behavior and relationships. Individuals with BPD experience dramatic changes in interests and mood, impulsivity and feelings of emptiness. This often causes them to have unstable relationships and battle with depression and substance abuse.

Bojack Horseman follows the story of a humanoid horse trying to face the world with these symptoms. Show creator Raphael Bob-Waksberg claims he did not set out to make the show an expose of mental illness. Still, the show follows Bojack on his self-destructive search for fulfillment.

He is depicted as messy, selfish, angry, jealous and manipulative. His journey changes erratically as he both fights his nature and allows it to control him. In his search for identity and deeper happiness, he unintentionally destroys himself and the people around him. He makes impulsive decisions, battles substance abuse, idolizes casual sex and devalues and harms himself and others—all common symptoms of BPD.

Everyone in his path is affected, for better or worse. Princess Carolyn receives much of Bojack's harsh treatment throughout the show. He repeatedly pushes her away, sabotaging and devaluing their relationship out of fear and changing priorities.

Sarah Lynn represents the parts of his nature he is most ashamed of but feels most connected to and responsible for. The arc of their relationship highlights his self-degradation and impulsive behaviors.

Bojack sabotages Todd's dreams as an attempt to avoid abandonment.

Diane is put on a pedestal by Bojack from the early moments in the show, filling the role as his favorite person. His obsession and frustration with her and constant dependence on her for happiness and validation serves as an accurate example of the torturous "favorite person" dynamic.

More than anything, Bojack's battle with BPD shows the turmoil he endures within himself. He is neither entirely loveable nor entirely detestable. When he is doing well and trying to make improvements in his life, he's happier and so is the viewer. Moments later, he destroys every bit of progress he made, dragging the viewer into the same despair he feels. He shifts between completely idolizing himself and completely hating himself, taking the viewer with him. Bojack Horseman as a representation of borderline personality disorder in mainstream television gives those struggling with the same symptoms representation, relatability and oddly enough, hope.