Skit: Mary Has All Kinds of Troubles

**Advocate:** Why is this woman wearing sunglasses?

**Substance Abuse Counselor:** Why is she wearing long sleeves in the middle of summer?

**All Helping Professionals (in unison):** Hmmmhhhhhhhh.

**Advocate:** Maybe she has a black eye … and bruises on her arms. I wonder if she’s being battered.

**Substance Abuse Counselor:** Maybe she’s wearing sunglasses to hide her pupils. And long sleeves to hide needle tracks on her arms. I’ll bet she’s an IV drug user.

**Social Worker:** Maybe she’s wearing everything she owns so she doesn’t have to carry it around with her. She could be homeless.

**Mental Health Professional:** She could be trying to attract attention to herself by dressing in an unusual manner. Attention seeking behavior is a classic symptom of borderline personality disorder.

**Mary:** To tell you the truth, I’m not really sure why I’m here.

**All Helping Professionals (in unison):** Hmmmhhhhhhhh.

**Substance Abuse Counselor:** Sounds like denial to me. Drug addicts are chock full of denial, you know.

**Advocate:** Sounds like she lacks awareness of abuse issues. I think she needs some domestic violence education.

**Social Worker:** Sounds like she lacks awareness of the community resources that are available to her. We need to talk with her about housing options.

**Mental Health Professional:** She sounds defensive. You know how touchy borderlines can be.

**Mary:** [Scratches herself.]

**All Helping Professionals (in unison):** Hmmmhhhhhhhh.

**Substance Abuse Counselor:** I think she’s got coke bugs. She’s in withdrawal.

**Advocate:** Oh no! I hope it’s not head lice or scabies again. We had that at the shelter last week.
Social Worker: She could just need to take a shower and wash her hair. A homeless person might not have access to facilities where she can do this.

Mental Health Professional: She’s going to be asking for some kind of medication. These borderlines are in our office every five minutes wanting something.

Mary: I’m afraid to go anywhere. I know I’m being watched. I’ve been seeing the same car everywhere.

All Helping Professionals (in unison): Hmmmmmmmmmm.

Substance Abuse Counselor: Could be drug-induced paranoia. She must owe money to her dealer. Or maybe she has a warrant out for her arrest.

Social Worker: Maybe she’s afraid of getting arrested for vagrancy.

Advocate: I think she’s being stalked. We need to help her get an order of protection.

Mental Health Professional: But you know, borderlines love a good crisis. It helps them feel more alive.

Mary: My partner won’t let me go to group sessions.

All Helping Professionals (in unison): Hmmmmmmmmmm.

Substance Abuse Counselor: She’s co-dependent, for sure.

Advocate: This is classic batterer behavior. We mustn’t blame the victim.

Mental Health Professional: Borderlines always have to be in a relationship, even if it’s abusive.

Social Worker: She might not like filling out the forms. They always ask for an address.

Mary: Okay, I know I need some kind of help. My life is one crisis after another.

All Helping Professionals (in unison): Hmmmmmmmmmm.

Substance Abuse Counselor: You have a substance use disorder. You need treatment, and some 12 Step meetings.

Advocate: You are the victim of a crime. You need justice. And some education about the dynamics of abuse.

Social Worker: You lack adequate housing. You need some referrals.
**Mental Health Professional:** You have a mental illness known as borderline personality disorder. You need therapy. And perhaps some medication.

**Mary:** Since I seem to have all these problems, where on earth do I start?

**All Helping Professionals (in unison):** Hmmmmmmmmmmmm.

**Substance abuse counselor:** Your priority must be sobriety.

**Advocate:** Our priority is your safety.

**Substance abuse counselor:** You must accept your powerlessness.

**Advocate:** You need to be empowered.

**Substance abuse counselor:** You need to look for your part in your problems.

**Advocate:** You are not responsible for what happened. The perpetrator must be held accountable.

**Substance abuse counselor:** You need to change yourself.

**Advocate:** We need to change society.

**Mary:** You people are driving me crazy. I’m out of here!

**All Helping Professionals (in unison):** Hmmmmmmmmmmmm.

**Substance Abuse Counselor:** She hasn’t hit bottom yet. Relapse is part of the recovery process for people with substance use disorders.

**Advocate:** It takes a battered woman an average of seven tries before she gets out of an abusive relationship.

**Social Worker:** She’ll be back when the weather starts getting cold.

**Mental Health Professional:** She’ll be back when she has another crisis. Got a stop watch?

**Substance Abuse Counselor:** She’ll be back.

**Advocate:** Yes, she’ll be back.

**Social Worker:** Uh huh. She’ll be back.

**All Helping Professionals (in unison):** She’ll be ba-a-a-ck …
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When the skit is finished, here are some questions to consider:

Can anyone relate to what you just saw?
What stood out for you the most?
What other labels might someone be burdened with?
What feelings did this bring up?
How can providers make sure that people are not revictimized when they seek help?
What does respectful advocacy or treatment look like?
How should Jane have been treated?
What steps can be taken to ensure that people’s needs are met?

Skit adapted from model developed by King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence Interdisciplinary Training Planning Committee, 2000.