

What is the Impact of Abortion?

Women and men who have gone through an abortion often experience guilt, sadness, fear, or anger afterwards. These emotions, or the suppression of them, will express themselves in a variety of ways. A number of studies have analyzed the impact of abortion on women and men:

- According to a 2002 study in the Southern Medical Journal, compared to women who give birth, women who abort their first pregnancy have a 62% higher risk of death, as well as a 2.5 times higher risk of suicide within the first eight years of their abortions.¹
- In 2006, based on a study of nearly 57,000 subjects with no known history of sleep disorders, the Sleep journal recorded that women were more likely to be treated for sleep disorders, a common response to trauma, after having an abortion. Aborting women were nearly twice as likely to be treated for sleep disorders in the first 180 days after their abortions, compared to women who delivered.²
- A 2010 study from the Canadian Journal of Psychiatry found that women who underwent an abortion had a 59 percent increased risk for suicide, a 61 percent increased risk for mood disorders, and a 280 percent increased risk for any substance use disorder, compared to women who did not have an abortion.³
- According to a 2011 meta-analysis in The British Journal of Psychiatry, studying nearly 900,000 women in six different countries, women with a history of abortion were 81 percent more likely to experience subsequent mental health problems, such as higher rates of anxiety (34% higher) and depression (37%).⁴
- In 2006 researchers in the U.K. surveyed women ages 18 to 55 about their reproductive histories, life-styles, and relationships and found that women who had previous abortions had a 60% higher risk of miscarriage in a later pregnancy.⁵
- A Life Way Research study published in 2015 shows that the church pews are filled with women who are silently dealing with their abortions. 4 in 10 of the surveyed women who had abortions were churchgoers when they ended their pregnancies. Only 7% of women discussed their abortion decision with anyone from church, and 76% said that their

church had no influence on their decision to terminate a pregnancy.⁷

We can guarantee that a woman in your life has had abortion and possibly been impacted by these emotional and spiritual problems. The Alan Guttmacher Institute reports that there were 926,190 abortions performed in the United States in 2014 alone.⁶

For the vast majority of women and men who feel regret, guilt, and shame about their abortions, some part of their healing process will need to address the spiritual implications. "Can God forgive me?" The Gospel with its message of forgiveness, reconciliation, and love is what women and men suffering after abortion need to hear.



¹ DC Reardon et. al., "Deaths Associated With Pregnancy Outcome: A Record Linkage Study of Low Income Women," Southern Medical Journal 95(8):834-41, Aug. 2002.

² DC Reardon and PK Coleman, "Relative Treatment Rates for Sleep Disorders and Sleep Disturbances Following Abortion and Childbirth: A Prospective Record Based-Study," Sleep 29(1):105-106, 2006.

³ Mota, NP et. al., "Associations Between Abortion, Mental Disorders and Suicidal Behavior in a Nationally Representative Sample," The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry 55(4): 239-246 (April 2010).

⁴ Coleman PK. Abortion and mental health: quantitative synthesis and analysis of research published 1995-2009. The British Journal of Psychiatry (2011) 199, 180-186.

⁵ N. Maconochie, P. Doyle, S. Prior, R. Simmons, "Risk factors for first trimester miscarriage—results from a UK-population-based case-control study," BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Dec 2006.

⁶ <https://data.guttmacher.org>

⁷ Green, Lisa Cannon. "Women Distrust the Church on Abortion." LifeWay Research. November 2016, <http://lifewayresearch.com/2015/11/23/women-distrust-church-on-abortion/>.

Resources for Abortion Aftercare

Silent No More Awareness Campaign

SilentNoMore.com
AbortionTestimony.com
AbortionShockwaves.com
silentnomoreawareness.org/resources/books-video-music.aspx

Option Line

1(800) 712-4357
OptionLine.org

National Memorial for the Unborn

Chattanooga, Tennessee
(423) 899-1677
MemorialForTheUnborn.org/

Rachel's Vineyard Ministries

(877) 467-3463
RachelsVineyard.org/

SaveOne

(615) 347-8800
www.SaveOne.org

Surrendering the Secret

SurrenderingTheSecret.com

Local Pregnancy Center

(Name of Pregnancy Center)

(Phone Number)



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Leetsdale, PA 15056
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Help
for
Hurting Hearts
after an abortion





Those of us who have had abortions often feel a deep, disturbing sense of unrest and regret. We are unable to process the anger, sadness, and guilt surrounding the abortion experience. We cannot grieve the loss of the baby, and we cannot come to peace with God, ourselves, or the others involved in the abortion decision. Many of us feel guilt, anxiety, and depression. Women who have had abortions often share that they struggled to bond with their living children, developed self-punishing behavior, and feared God's punishment. But the irony is that we do not attribute our behaviors or feelings to the abortion.

-Georgette Forney, Co-founder of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign & President of AFL

When a woman faces an unplanned pregnancy, often she isn't thinking of the baby but rather of self-preservation. She feels abortion is her only real choice.

After a woman has an abortion, she often feels relief, because the "problem" has been solved. What she isn't expecting is the flood of emotions that will follow this "simple" solution. Her abortion experience will affect her emotionally, physically, and spiritually for years to come. She will either reach out for help or begin building walls around her heart, and denying the pain she feels. Fathers of aborted children often suffer, as well.

If they share their feelings with someone who is pro-choice, they are told: "Just forget about it...It was your best choice...It wasn't really a baby yet." If they speak with a pro-life person, they are told something like: "There are other solutions...I can't understand how anyone can have an abortion."

The trauma of abortion is so great that it causes deep emotional distress, and each woman and man handles the stress uniquely. Many keep their hurt and pain hidden deep within their hearts, and it is very difficult to pry open the wound to let healing begin. But when these hurting people begin to seek help, will they find support and compassion from God's people?

Love and hope are what those suffering from a past abortion need. We can help these men and women to experience God's love and to find forgiveness available through Jesus Christ. As we help them, it is important that we approach it step by step. Educating them about the emotional and spiritual damage caused by abortion helps put their pain in context, leading them to realize they need help. The next step is finding the right kind of help, whether that is Biblical book study, individual counseling, after-abortion group counseling, a weekend retreat program, or pastoral care. Finally, going through the healing process or program allows the woman or man to be set free from the pain he or she has suffered. Please see the resource list on the backside of this brochure for recommended counseling programs and books.

Words to Encourage Healing

You can promote after abortion healing without ever talking to people about their past abortions! You don't need to be a trained counselor or an expert in abortion issues. All you have to do is sow a few words of healing into your everyday conversations.

In a simple, conversational way, share these 3 points:

1. Mention that you have come to a new understanding of the abortion issue, including why people choose abortion and how it affects them.
2. Express your compassion for women and men who have had abortions, knowing that they must constantly face the fear that others will judge them, and that they may be experiencing feelings of shame and regret; and
3. Describe how you have heard of new programs that help people find freedom from the burdens of shame associated with past abortions. For example, you might say, "I never really understood before how much pressure many women are under to have an abortion. I also didn't realize how much they feel judged and condemned by others. That fear of judgment can make it hard for them to seek healing. The good news is that there are a lot of programs to help people hurting after abortion."

That's it, you have planted the seeds. Perhaps they will ask for more information, in which case you can give them a copy of this brochure or refer them to an abortion aftercare ministry in your area. Just remember these 3 words: understanding, compassion, and hope.

What to Say and What Not to Say...

When Talking to Someone After an Abortion

Do listen patiently to everything they have to say. Expect and allow them to repeat themselves and to bring the subject up again later. They are trying to sort out their feelings. Verbalizing their feelings to someone who will listen helps them process the unexpected emotions.

Don't shut them off by changing the subject.

Do reassure them that it's OK to make mistakes. God wants to forgive us. All we have to do is to admit we need forgiveness.

Don't condemn them for making a bad or immoral choice.

Do reassure them that their feelings are normal. Others have experienced the same thing and found healing. Build up a sense of hope that they can be healed and reconciled with God and their child in heaven.

Don't deny that they lost a child.

Do allow them to vent their anger toward others, but look for the right time to encourage forgiveness and "letting go" of one's anger. Encourage them to see that the other people they blame were also confused, scared, or just looking for the best way out of a hard situation.

Don't encourage them to blame others for the abortion. But don't push them to forgive others, especially when they are in the initial stages of venting their anger and rage.

Do allow them to regret their choice. Allow them to reframe the experience as a tragic mistake. But remind them that we all can become better people when we learn from our mistakes. Even a negative experience can be used to help others.

Don't insist that they did the "right thing" or the "best thing" at the time.

Do encourage them to entrust their child to the care of God. Reassure them that, on a spiritual level, their loss is only temporary. Someday they can be with their child in heaven.

Don't suggest that having another child "someday" can make up for the one that was lost. Future children are a blessing and comfort, but they can't replace the child who was lost. The expectation that they can may cause parenting problems in the future.

Do give them a number to an abortion aftercare program or some other referral information. If you don't have it on hand, promise to get it to them within the week. Keep your promise.

Don't leave them without encouraging them, over and over again, to find and accept the help of abortion after-care counselors or peer support groups.

Do show that you care by continuing to be a sounding board for them.

Don't be afraid to ask them how they are doing with it in the future.