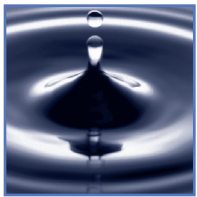




healthy coping after an abortion



Many women wonder how they will feel emotionally after an abortion. Some women are already having a difficult time deciding what to do or are experiencing intense feelings about abortion. Others have had previous problems coping with stress and are not sure how they will deal with an abortion. A lot of women have heard stories about other women who had problems afterward and wonder if that will happen to them. Here is some information that will help you cope after an abortion.

What's going on in your life?

If you are having strong feelings about the situation you are in, those feelings may not automatically go away after the abortion. Most women will feel relief that they are no longer pregnant. But, other issues like disagreements with your partner or a parent, feelings of sadness, anger, guilt or shame, strong religious feelings against abortion, or prior depression or anxiety problems, will likely continue after the abortion. You will want to look at the entire situation including ongoing problems, difficulty dealing with stress, and your religious or spiritual beliefs. An unexpected pregnancy--and deciding whether to continue a pregnancy-- is a crisis which can reveal a lot about your life, your hopes and dreams, your relationships, and your beliefs. The best thing to do is use what you have learned throughout this whole experience to make your life better.

Who can you talk to?

Support is the most important factor in helping you get through this experience. Support from others means that they will listen to you without judging and they will remind you that you are a good person making the best decision for your life. Hopefully you feel comfortable telling your support people how you feel, what you are worried about, and what kind of help they can give you. If you do not have people you feel comfortable talking to, ask your local clinic about counselors or clergy in your community, or call one of the talklines listed below.

Was it a hard decision for you?

Although others will be affected by a choice about pregnancy, the decision should be more about what you want and what you feel is right for your life. Certainly if a partner or a parent has strong feelings about this decision, that will have a big effect on you. But, if you let someone else make the decision, or you feel pushed into a decision, you are more likely to have a hard time later, regardless of what you choose to do. In addition, some women have a difficult time making up their minds, even about little things, and others feel they always need to be "perfect." If it is hard to accept that birth control can fail or that everyone makes mistakes from time to time, extra help may be needed to cope after a decision to end a pregnancy.



TALKLINES: Backline 1-888 493-0092 before or after an abortion or Exhale 1-866 439-4253 after an abortion.

Sorting out your feelings

A decision about a pregnancy is important and it is normal to have a lot of different feelings about it. For example, you may feel:

- Mad that you got pregnant, or angry at someone who has disappointed you, or frustrated that birth control didn't work.
- Sad that this happened. A sense of loss about the pregnancy or a lost relationship, or even the loss of your own "innocence" or how you see yourself.
- Shame about sex, a relationship, pregnancy, or abortion.
- Guilty that you are choosing yourself over others.
- Shock that this happened to you.
- Scared about what will happen or what others will think about you.
- Relief, or even glad that you can decide for yourself what is best for your life.

You are likely to feel a mix of feelings and it is very helpful to consider each feeling carefully. Writing down these feelings and talking to someone you trust are ways to deal with feelings.

What can you do to feel better?

Women don't make decisions about pregnancy lightly because they know how much responsibility it takes to raise a child. So, give yourself credit for doing the best you can and work hard to not judge yourself. Remember, you are a good person, making the best decision you can for your life. It is helpful to find a way to give meaning to this experience. This may mean figuring out what you have lost and what you have gained. What do you understand now that adds to your wisdom about life? For many women, the sacrifice of ending a pregnancy makes them clearer about achieving their goals as well as more compassionate toward others.

Dealing with your feelings can take time and there is no right or wrong way to move through this process. Set aside time to think about your experience and what it means, but if you feel like you are going over and over it, talk to a counselor or trusted friend to help you move forward in your life. Any religious or spiritual concerns you may have deserve your attention. Is forgiveness and compassion available for you in your faith? Is there someone to talk to about spiritual matters? Can your religion offer you comfort? Can you find a way to express all of this so that you can make sense of it? For suggestions on how other women have handled this experience see some of the resources below.

Sharing Your Experience

Being able to talk about your decision and experience with abortion can improve your emotional health. Over 1/3 of all women will have an abortion in their lifetimes. If they could talk about it more openly, you would benefit from their stories, just as others can benefit from your story. You know what is best for your life and you deserve the support of others at this time.

For a more suggestions on post abortion emotional health, go to www.aborticonversation.com and www.choicelinkup.com or www.pregnancyoptions.info. For help with religious concerns, www.rcc.org or www.cath4choice.org.



BROUGHT TO YOU BY: The Abortion Conversation Project and these sponsors: Cherry Hill Women's Center and related facilities at www.AbortionUSA.com, Northland Family Planning Centers (www.northlandfamilyplanning.com), Allentown Women's Center (www.allentownwomenscenter.com) Southern Tier Women's Services (www.AmyCousinsMD.com), Allegheny Reproductive Health Center (www.alleghenyreproductive.com).