

Emotional Effects of Abortion

by Sherwood Kaip, M.D.

What could a man possibly know about the emotional effects of abortion? Not much.

However, women who have ‘been there, done that’ have spoken out and we can all learn from them. Most importantly, *there is help* for those suffering from Post Abortion Stress (PAS) syndrome. Effective sources of help will be covered below. After all, God has promised us His forgiveness, if we seek it, no matter *what* we have done.

“Those of us who have had abortions describe PAS as a deep, disturbing sense of unrest and regret. We are unable to process the fear, 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 others involved in the abortion decision...

But the irony is we do not attribute our behavior or emotional issues to the abortion experience... After a woman has an abortion, she feels immediate relief, the problem has been solved. *What she isn't expecting is the backwash of emotions* from this supposedly Simple Solution to her problem. Her abortion experience *will* affect her psychologically, emotionally, physically, spiritually, sexually and it *will* affect her relationships for years to come. But she doesn't know any of this, she is blindsided and she either reaches out for help or begins building walls around her heart, hardening it, and denying the pain she feels.”

It is estimated that 80% of post-abortive women will experience some symptoms with half of those experiencing intense symptoms. The symptoms are extremely varied and include 39% reporting subsequent eating disorders, 57% reporting difficulty in maintaining or developing relationships, 73% reporting some sexual dysfunction, and 92% reporting ‘emotional deadening’, described as either feeling less in touch with their emotions or a “need to stifle their emotions”. Bouts of crying, depression, rage, anxiety and panic attacks, and drug and alcohol abuse are just some of the many other symptoms of Post Abortion Syndrome (PAS). For more information on these and other symptoms and effects, go to the Elliot Institute website <<http://www.afterabortion.org>>.

What brings on PAS? I think it could be summarized in two sentences. First: If it's not a baby, you're not pregnant. Second: *Without exception*, every

woman who has an abortion gets to ask, “I wonder how old little George(ette) would be now?”—*for the rest of her life.*

More importantly, what can be done about PAS? Fortunately, there is plenty of excellent help available for anyone you know, including men affected by abortion.

Locally, Father Jones and Father Francis are available. The St. Clements phone number is (915) 533-4915. If this would be too painfully close, there is help elsewhere in El Paso. Contact the Crisis Pregnancy Center (565-1152; <<http://www.epjustlife.org>>), or Coalition for Hope and Healing (564-4444), or Pastoral Counseling Service (544-4267).

If one still feels uncomfortable getting help for their ‘secret’ locally, there are national organizations anonymously dealing with the painful problem of Post Abortion Syndrome (PAS) all the time. One that appears excellent is Rachel’s Vineyard (toll free phone 1-877-HOPE-4-ME; web site <<http://www.rachelsvineyard.org>>). Rachel’s Vineyard offers anonymous weekend retreats. Other national organizations are Ramah International ((941) 473-2188: <<http://www.ramahinternational.org>>); and Safe Haven Ministries <<http://www.safehavenministries.com>>.

Is there *really* help for the pain of Post Abortion Syndrome? Judge for yourself.

“For 18 years I have been haunted with heavy guilt that no one could take away, tormented by thoughts of what that child would have been like. Through participating in Rachel’s Vineyard, I was finally able to forgive myself. I know that God has given me a peaceful mind, cleansed my heart and has washed away my guilt.”

“...I cannot describe the healing I have received from being present at that wonderful retreat. Thanks to Rachel’s Vineyard retreat I can look in a mirror without hating the reflection I used to see. Thanks to the wonderful counselors on that retreat, I can say “I am healed, I am loved, I am saved by my Redeemer and truly know it.”” [This woman tried suicide but the gun misfired!!] Other examples of effectiveness are available on the website and elsewhere.

No one need endure the pain of PAS any longer. We must love these people who are in such terrible secret pain, not judge them. WWJD (What would Jesus do?)

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