

happiness. They miss you, but they do not resent or condemn you, because they live in the love and mercy of Christ. Do not try to hold onto them by prolonging your grief; hold onto them by sharing their happiness in heaven.

Finding the Right Help . . .

When looking for a post-abortion counselor or support group, keep in mind that many of these groups have different philosophies and approaches.

Many are run by women who have had abortions themselves. Some are run by licensed psychiatrists, psychologists, or social workers. Others are extensions of churches or crisis pregnancy centers.

Be sure to ask lots of questions in order to find a group or counselor with whom you feel comfortable.

In some cases, especially if you have a history of psychological problems or other trauma that may complicate your abortion problems, you may need the help of a professional counselor.

Don't expect that just any licensed counselor can help you. Indeed, many professional counselors are unaware of or may even be politically hostile to post-abortion issues. Many women have reported that their therapist's insistence on looking at everything but their abortion made their problems worse.

If you want a professional counselor, make sure you find a therapist who has experience and training specifically in the field of post-abortion counseling. Your local post-abortion ministry or

crisis pregnancy center can probably refer you to one.

Help Is Just a Phone Call Away

The following is a partial list of the many organizations offering post-abortion counseling either by phone or by providing referrals to a network of counselors around the country.

In recent years, many crisis pregnancy centers have also begun to offer post-abortion counseling. You may want to inquire about post-abortion counseling by calling your local crisis pregnancy center or asking for a referral from a sympathetic pastor at your local church. Many post-abortion counseling services are free.

The National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing (NOPARH) sponsors a nationwide referral service for those seeking help after abortion. For a referral contact NOPARH at 800.5WE.CARE, or access its website at <http://www.noparh.org>.

Rachel's Vineyard www.rachelsvineyard.org - Rachel's Vineyard offers weekend retreats for any woman or man who has struggled with the emotional and spiritual pain of an abortion. Come allow others to share, cry and heal with you.

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Pamphlet 627

Are You Suffering from Post-Abortion Stress?

If you have had an abortion(s), you may be suffering from post-abortion stress. Answering the following questions can help you figure out how the abortion(s) may have effected your life.

Do you find yourself struggling to turn off feelings or memories related to your abortion(s)? Do you need to keep reminding yourself to just forget it or put it behind you?

Do you become uncomfortable around reminders of the abortion, such as being around babies, pregnant women, doctor's offices, or when hearing news reports about abortion?

Do you feel nervous or anxious at the idea of telling a loved one about your abortion? Is your abortion a secret that is holding you back from greater intimacy with others?

When you do choose to share your abortion experience with others, are you overcome with strong feelings such as anger, sorrow, grief, or guilt?

Do you have trouble talking about the abortion issue as a political issue? When you do talk about it, do you find it hard to respect opposing views, or do you becoming overly emotional, either in support of or opposition to it?

Do you have an unhealthy sense of fear that you, your loved ones, or your other children will be hurt or killed? Are you "smothering" or overly protective of your children?

Do you tend to look at life in terms of "before" and "after" the abortion(s)? Has the abortion changed the way you look at yourself? Are there traits about your "self" before the abortion that you lost but would wish to regain in your life? Do you become angry or depressed more easily?

Have you experienced "reconnectors" to your abortion, such as nightmares, flashbacks, or hallucinations, such as hearing a baby cry?

Was there a period after your abortion when you experienced an increase in the use of alcohol or drugs (illegal or prescription)? Have you experienced other forms of emotional deadening?

Have you experienced any suicidal thoughts? Do you take risks that put your life in danger? Do you try to hurt yourself? Have you developed any eating disorders?

Have you lost interest in taking care of yourself? Do you care about how you look? Have you tried to become less attractive to avoid the risk of becoming involved in a relationship, love, and sex?

Do you have trouble with finding, building, or maintaining good relationships with people of the opposite sex? Do you have trouble with issues of trust and control? Do you get involved in hurtful or abusive relationships? Do you tolerate abuse because you don't feel you deserve any better?

Is there an increased distance between you and your parents or siblings because of the past abortion(s)? Is there tension between you and others because the abortion is something everyone avoids talking about?

Have you lost the desire for sexual intercourse? Do you have increased pain during intercourse? Have you become promiscuous because of low self-esteem? Have you lost your desire to have children?

Do you experience periods of depression, heightened anxiety, or cramping during certain months of the year, particularly during the months that would correspond to the month of your abortion(s) or the due date of the aborted pregnancy?

Have you lost your faith? Have you lost a sense of God's peace? Do you think God still loves you? Are you afraid of God? Have your rejected belief in God for emotional reasons rather than thoughtful reasons?

If you are experiencing any of the above problems, post-abortion counseling may help. Skilled and understanding people want to help. Many have been through the same things you are going through now. There are many post-abortion counselors and support groups, often run by women who have had abortions, who can help you find out how to deal with your experience.

After an Abortion: Steps Toward Healing

1. Recognize that the road to full recovery can take time and effort. While God is always near to you, sorting out your life and your feelings, overcoming the ever-present temptation to give in again to despair and doubt--these take time.

2. Recognize that it is normal and good to mourn the loss of a loved one. Just as mourning the loss of a parent or spouse takes time, so does mourning the loss of an aborted child. In the case of abortion, the mourning process is often

cut short and never completed because of denial or feelings of guilt which block the mourning process. You must courageously allow the mourning process to get back on track. Accept your grief as normal rather than something which must be covered up or pushed away. Recognize that the pain of your loss will fade as your healing progresses.

3. Recognize that you are not alone. Others have been through the same experience and the same trials. Their experiences and understanding can help you. They want to help you, just as you may want to help others after you have finished going through the healing process. Finding a post-abortion counselor or support group through our list of Post-Abortion Healing Resources may be very helpful to you.

4. Admit your personal responsibility but also recognize that others, too, were involved. Pray for God's forgiveness for both yourself and everyone else who either encouraged the abortion or failed to help you avoid the abortion.

5. Forgive yourself. God does not want you to live a lifetime in mourning. Your sin has been forgiven. You have been made new in Christ. Rejoice in the knowledge that one day you will be with your child in the arms of the Lord.

6. Forgive others. Recognize that they, too, acted out of ignorance, fear, or petty human selfishness. If possible, let them know that you forgive them. Forgive even the abortion providers.

7. Give your children over to the care of God, their Heavenly Father, and the true Parent of us all. Know that they are loved, happy, and well cared for. They, too, desire your joy and