

Post Abortion Grief

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“Certainly we must do whatever we can to reduce suffering: to avoid as far as possible the sufferings of the innocent: to soothe pain; to give assistance in overcoming mental suffering. These are obligations both in justice and in love, and they are included among the fundamental requirements of the Christian life and every truly human life. Great progress has been made in the battle against physical pain; yet the sufferings of the innocent and mental suffering have, if anything, increased in recent decades.”

Spe Salvi, Pope Benedict XVI, 2007.

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Post Abortion Grief - A Redeeming Grief

- What is Grief
- Definition for “Redeeming”
- How can grief of abortion become a redeeming grief



Definitions of “Grief”

Grief is “an intense emotional state associated with the loss of someone (or something) with whom (or which) one has had a deep emotional bond”

(Arthur S. Reber, 1985)

“There is ample evidence that humans grieve a loss to one degree or another”

(J.W. Worden, 1983)

Grief and weeping is “that ingrained response to loss”

(Bowlby, 1965)



Definition for “Redeeming”

To restore the honour and worth of an individual.

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Definition of Post Abortion Grief

Vincent Rue and Anne Speckard (1992) have defined post abortion syndrome as
“a type of post traumatic stress disorder, that is characterised by chronic or delayed development of symptoms, resulting from impacted emotional reactions to the perceived physical and emotional trauma of abortion.”

Post Abortion Syndrome: An emerging public health concern. Journal of Social Issues, 48 (3), 95-119.

Prof. Eric Seal (Psychiatrist) has define post abortion syndrome as : *“a delayed or slow developing prolonged and sometimes chronic grief syndrome. Post abortion syndrome is not like a more severe form of post natal blues. It is far more serious, more delayed in onset, more lasting and more fundamentally involved in subsequent personality development disorders.”*

(Transcript from Post Abortion Syndrome Seminar-Melbourne Australia)



Some Symptoms Of Post Abortion Syndrome

Depression and a deep sense of loss

(I want my baby back. My baby is dead and I killed him/her. I want to die) prolonged depression is not uncommon.

Frequent and uncontrollable weeping

This may continue for years. This at times can last for hours or days at a time.

Guilt and remorse

I killed my baby. Why did i do it? It was my son or daughter.

Low self esteem

The experience of abortion can negatively impact on the way men and women understand themselves. Ones own understanding of self worth truncated when guilt over the death of ones own child is present.

Disorientation and difficulty with concentration



Guilt

Whether chronic or acute. These feelings are the result of the individual's belief that they have not lived up to their own standards of belief and/or behaviour.

Isolation and alienation

A sense of being alone in her/his grieving over their loss is aggravated by the politics surrounding abortion and the public denial of the need to grieve for this decision (Disenfranchised Grief- Kenneth Doka, 1989)

Pervasive sadness

Unexplainable, unrelenting, "always" sad.

Grief and anxiety

Even though the abortion may have occurred years prior, the grief is as profound as it had just happened. A grief which never ceases.

Anger and rage

At self and significant others. Abortion providers, boyfriends, husbands, parents, friends, god.



Self Destructive Behaviours

Suicide Ideation, Attempts, Behaviours.

Substance Abuse, Alcohol Abuse

Eating Disorders (Bulimia/Anorexia)

Repeat Abortions

Relationship Difficulties

Sleep Disorders

Risk Taking behaviours (especially males)

Self mutilation

Increased tendency towards violence (both males and females)

(Sleep disorders include nightmares which often depict dismembered babies. Themes of death and failure. Themes of blood. Snakes.) Where sleep disorders exist drug and or alcohol are used to alleviate the problem. (Wanda Franz. *Medical & Psychological Impact of Abortion*, submission to US Congress, House of Reps. Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations Committee, Committee of Government Operations, 101 Congress, 16/3/1998)



Emotional Numbness

An inability to feel or allow oneself to feel.

Loss Of Joy Of Life

Loss of ability to laugh. I cannot ever laugh again

Loss of interest in matters of importance prior to abortion

Fear of Life (living)

Breast Cancer Connection (Prof. J. Brind, & Dr. A. Lanfranchi.)

Prof Joel Brind (Prof of Endocrinology) and Dr Angela Lanfranchi (breast Cancer Prevention Institute) have researched the link between abortion and breast cancer and found a marked increase in breast cancer associated with abortion. This especially in women who have not carried a pregnancy to full term and given birth. It is interesting that in Aust. Alone the increase in breast cancer especially in the very young women has markedly risen.



Who Grieves Over An Abortion?

All Women experience grief, sadness, regret and loss.
(Dr Anne Speckhard)

Some Findings

- Crying 81%
- Suicide Ideation 65%
- Pre occupation with aborted baby 82%
- Flashbacks

Disenfranchised Grief (Kenneth Doka)

Unacknowledged loss.

Complicated Mourning

Secrecy, un validated, no resting place. Death experience. Societal beliefs and laws give mixed messages.



Difficulties Related to Abortion Grief

- No Evidence of baby
- No formal leave taking
- No support system
- Social taboos
- Guilt & shame. Women refuse to forgive themselves
- And live alone in their pain.
- Post Abortion Grief counselling is new.
- No preparation prior abortion for possible psychological spiritual response.
- Lack of Rituals



Male Response to Abortion

- Not all men want an abortion.
- Not all men “force” an abortion.
- Male response to abortion of their child is
- usually different than female.
- Male violence to self appear to be the
- first fruit of this denial of his paternity.

Arthur Shostack

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High Risk Group

- Those who abort for genetic reasons
- Those with mental illness.
- Those who are ambivalent
- Adolescents
- Those who have been coerced into an abortion,
- Those who are estranged from family,
- Sexual assault victims
- Those with low self esteem
- Religious and cultural backgrounds.



Redeeming Our Grief - How?-Religious Model.

- Accept that the abortion has occurred.
- Accept that for you (client) it was a mistaken decision.
- If you have a religious belief accept forgiveness of God, your baby and yourself
- Relocate your baby now named into a place of peace and no pain.
- Conclude the baby's story.
- Unbaptized?
- A farewell service.
- Feel and Be forgiven and return to life to be lived whole.



The Non Religious Model.

- Recognise that abortion has happened.
- Accept that the decision was not a right one and has caused you pain.
- Create a story/history for your baby. E.g. Box with little special “things”
- Name Baby-Can be a “generic name” for boy/girl
- Create a farewell/letting go/release of baby.



There is much information on post abortion grief.

It is important to make oneself learned on the topic because, in the climate of this day, abortion is a reality within the life of most individuals and whilst it is so, and readily accepted and laws enshrined which declare that abortion is legal, the reality is that for most women the law written on their hearts does not match the law of the land.

For most women whether at time of abortion or anytime for the rest of their life, that abortion decision remains the most painful and least well tolerated and accepted.

Abortion for most women (in the quiet of their life) always means the death of their baby.

No matter what justification is made it always remains the intentional death of their baby...And for most women this is hard to live with.

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Thank you for listening.

Questions?

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