



I. **PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES OF ABORTION¹**
A. **Possible complications following a surgical abortion:**

1. Infection
2. Incomplete abortion
3. Heavy bleeding
4. Damage to the uterus or nearby internal tissue
5. Perforation of the uterus
6. Perforation of the bladder
7. Cervical tears
8. Continued pregnancy
9. Cardiac arrest
10. Sepsis
11. Death of the mother

B. **Possible long-term complications following an abortion:**

1. Increased risk of infertility
2. Increased risk of tubal pregnancy
3. Increased risk of future miscarriage
4. Increased risk of premature deliveries
5. Increased risk of low-birth weight babies
6. Increased risk of breast cancer
 - a) Since 1973 breast cancer diagnosis has risen to 1 in 9 women
 - b) *The New England Journal of Medicine provides statistics in which incidence of breast cancer is 50% higher than among other women in the same age group*

The following quote was made by one of the most famous partial-birth abortion doctors:

"Women face a number of possible physical complications as a result of legal abortion, including hemorrhaging that requires a transfusion, perforation of the uterus, cardiac arrest, endotoxic shock, major unintended surgery, infection resulting in hospitalization, convulsions, undiagnosed ectopic (tubal) pregnancy, cervical laceration, uterine rupture and death."(Source: Warren Hern, "Abortion Practices," J.B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1990,p. 173 ff.)

Another famous study reported in the August 2000 Archives of General Psychology showed that:



17 percent of women participating in a study on the effects of abortion reported that they "had experienced physical complications (e.g., abnormal bleeding or pelvic infection) since their abortion. While 17% doesn't sound like very much, this percentage represents 255,000 women annually who experience physical complications after an abortion.

(Source: Brenda Major, et al., "Psychological responses of women after first-trimester abortions," Archives of General Psychology, August 2000, 57:777-784.)

Post Abortion Stress Checklist

Many times women who have had abortions in the recent or distant past experience physical and emotional repercussions. Since there is almost always a delay between the time of the abortion event and the onset of reactions, women are often unaware that these feelings may be related to post-abortion stress or trauma. (47 emotions)

Circle the things you struggle with since your abortion

Emotional/Psychological Effects

- * Sense of loss
- * Mourning
- * Regret and remorse
- * Withdrawal pregnant women or babies date
- * Feeling of numbness
- * Inability to forgive self
- * Depression
- * Lower self-esteem
- * Anger/rage impulses/thoughts
- * Despair
- * Sense of helplessness decisions
- * Fear of failure
- * Feelings of dehumanization
- * Thwarted maternal instincts
- * Avoiding situations with
 - * Remembering death
- * Preoccupation with death
- * Self-destructive behavior
- * Alcohol or substance abuse
 - * Hostility
 - * Suicidal
- * Guilt
- * Loss of confidence in
- * Loss of interest in sex



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- * Preoccupation with "would- be" due date or birth month
- * Hatred for anyone connected with abortion
- * Intense interest in babies with the abortion
- * Over or under-bonding with present or future children
- * Difficulty bonding with women
- * Frustration
- * Re-experience the abortion
- * Feelings of being exploited

Physical Effects

- | | |
|---|--|
| * Repeated crisis pregnancies | * Sleeplessness |
| * Miscarriages, premature births | * Exhaustion |
| * Menstrual disturbances | * Constant swallowing |
| * Crying/sighing | * Nervousness |
| * Loss of appetite/eating disorders | * Decreased work capacity |
| * Weight loss/gain | * Vomiting/gastro- |
| intestinal | |
| * Loss of interest in sex or disturbances other | * Relationship |
| difficulties | sexual problems promiscuous behavior (sexual |
| * Frigidity | addiction-like behavior) |

Counseling the Post Abortive Woman

I. Complications and Consequences from Abortion

A. Physical – see Handout 1

B. Emotional

1. Denial
 - a) Statistically many women stay in denial of their abortion for 7-10 years
 2. Complicating factors of denial
 - a) 60% of post-abortive woman report having some level of ongoing emotional distress.
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- b) Problems of the present are most likely connected to the unresolved past.
- c) 30% report having severe distress after an abortion
 - 1) Depression
 - 2) Anxiety attacks
 - 3) Suicidal tendencies
 - 4) Sexual dysfunction, promiscuity
 - 5) "Low self-esteem"
 - 6) Fits of rage
 - 7) Eating disorders
 - 8) Difficulty bonding with subsequent children
 - 9) Nightmares and flashbacks
 - 10) Numbing of emotions
 - 11) Difficulty falling asleep
- 3. Post Abortion Syndrome (see Handout 2)
 - a) Problems are debilitating
 - b) Feelings are overwhelming
 - c) She cannot function
 - d) Abortion advocates deny reality of PAS
 - 1) Consider it "a myth"

C. Spiritual

- 1. The spiritual consequences are the most devastating and least discussed aspect of abortion.
 - a) Abortion violates her moral code (Psalm 69:5)
 - b) Post-abortive women feel separated from God and are full of real guilt, fear, and shame.
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- c) Spiritual consequences are intended to drive them to their knees in confession and repentance for their sin.

II. Issues to Focus On In A Post-Abortion Counseling Ministry

A. Her Responsibility

- 1. This does not mean condemnation, shaming, or pity
 - a) Ask probing questions
 - 1) About circumstances surrounding pregnancy
 - b) Do not assume anything
 - 1) About her abortion decision
 - 2) About the procedure
 - c) Expect a variety of emotional responses.
 - d) Be patient with her.
 - 1) Allow her to experience the weight of what God is allowing her to feel.
 - e) Help her to recognize her culpability – this is critical.
 - 1) No blame shifting
 - f) Go slow. This may take weeks.
 - g) Perfect place for the Gospel

B. Guilt

- 1. Feelings of guilt
 - a) She will feel overwhelming guilt and shame
 - b) Feelings of guilt are a consequence
 - 1) David (Ps. 38; 44:15-16; 55)
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- 2) Satan will add to her torment
2. "Real" guilt
 - 1) Allow her to experience the weight of "real guilt."
 - 2) "Real guilt" goes beyond her guilty feelings.
 - 3) She must see her sin as God sees it so she can see His forgiveness.
3. Resolving the guilt
 - a) Confessing areas of real guilt, not feelings of guilt
 - 1) Sexual immorality
 - 2) Making a selfish decision
 - 3) Deception
 - a. Lies to her parents, boyfriend, husband about being pregnant before the abortion
 - b. Lies about where she was during the abortion
 - c. Lies afterward about having the abortion
 4. Having the abortion/ending the baby's life
 - b) Confession and repentance are the only means by which a post-abortive woman or man can be reconciled to God, first for salvation and then to reconcile the abortion choice.
 - 1) It is critical to understand that all sin is forgivable in Christ, and the post-abortive person must run to Him for forgiveness (Romans 8).
 - c) An opportunity to present the gospel to someone who is bearing much more than the guilt of her abortion choice.
 - d) Because our counsel is biblical in nature, the counselee has to receive the Word of God as her authority in this matter.



C. Shame

1. The difference between guilt and shame:
 - a) Guilt – what I have done is bad.
 - b) Shame- I am bad because of what I have done.
2. Unresolved shame results in
 - a) Self-destructive behaviors
 - b) Depression
 - c) Eating disorders
 - d) Not informing medical personnel of previous abortions
 - e) Hesitating to go to the ER with post-abortive complications
 - f) Masking the shame with promiscuity, alcohol, drugs
 - g) Self-condemning talk that reinforces the shame
 - h) The Christian woman
 - 1) Multiplies shame because of her faith
 - 2) Believes God has rejected her because of abortion
 - 3) Tries to hide from God (Gen. 3) by avoiding church, prayer, Bible reading
 - 4) Apostasy
3. Resolving the Shame
 - a) Guilt and shame are intended to be heeded, listened to, and worked through.
 - 1) The counselor must present a strong case for the counselee's identity in Christ.
 - 2) Teach her to renew her mind.
 - 3) Remind her what the Bible says about when we confess our sin to God
 - 4) Remind her what the Bible says about her position in Christ.
 - a. In Christ she is not shameful.



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- b. In Christ she is not hated by God
- c. She is not evil and as a Christian cannot consider herself to be so.

D. Fear/Anxiety

1. She has fear on various levels
 - a) Fear of discovery
 - b) Fear of judgment
 - 1) By God
 - 2) By others
 - c) Fear of punishment/retribution
 - 1) By God
 - 2) Future children being deformed/dying
 - 3) Infertility
 - d) Fears living the rest of her life with the secret, the pain and the knowledge of what she's done
 2. Overcoming Fear
 - a) Teach Justification
 - 1) Justice has been served.
 - 2) She has been found "guilty" by God for the abortion – and every other sin– and Christ has paid the penalty for it.
 - b) Teach her about the Character of God.
 - c) Teach her the difference between consequences for actions and punishment from God.
 - d) Teach her to remind herself of truth when the memories surface and thoughts drive her to despair.
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- e) Teach her not to meditate on her past sin.

E. Lack of Assurance

1. Her abortion decision causes her to doubt
 - a) her abilities
 - b) her decision making
 - c) her judgment
 - d) her ability to parent future children
 - e) her salvation
 - f) her ability to be forgiven
 - g) her ability to be a wife
2. Giving Assurance
 - a) Peter's denial of Christ
 - b) Study the life of David.
 - c) Go to the Bible for wisdom and guidance.
 - d) Form relationships with people who will lead her biblically.
 - 1) This will be difficult for her if other people she trusted led her to abort.
 - e) Work with her through biblical decision-making and the sovereignty of God.
 - f) Recommended resource: Step By Step, by James C. Petty

F. Anger

1. She may have anger in a number of areas and to a variety of degrees.
 - a) At those who helped, encouraged, assisted, paid for the abortion
 - b) At the boy/man who impregnated her
 - c) At the Pro-life movement
 - d) At the Pro-choice movement/abortion industry
 - e) At God
 - f) At herself
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2. It is not acceptable to blame shift (Proverbs 20:22).
3. It is not acceptable for her to *remain* angry with anyone for the abortion (Colossians 3:8).
4. Anger will keep her in bondage to the past and will feed the roots of bitterness (Hebrews 10:12).

G. Bitterness

1. Bitterness results from unresolved anger
 - a) At what her life has become
 - b) At her decision to abort
 - c) At those who have children
 - d) At her parent/man
 - e) At the pro-life movement
 - f) At the pro-choice movement
 - g) At God
2. Bitterness is bondage (Colossians 3:8)
3. Anger feed the roots of bitterness (Hebrews 10:12).
 - a) It becomes a circular pattern.
 - b) Bitterness is worse because it is perpetual anger.
4. Resolving anger and bitterness
 - a) Determine if any of her anger righteous.
 - b) Help her to look at her sinful heart of anger.
 - c) Help her to see her sinful responses when angry.
 - d) Questions aimed at the heart will expose what and whom she is really angry with.
 - e) Help her to see her part in the abortion decision – going back to accepting responsibility for her own actions.

H. Forgiveness

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1. Biblical forgiveness

- a) Forgiveness is a command.
- b) She must learn biblical forgiveness and ask the Lord's help in forgiving everyone who was involved in her abortion (Romans 12:19).
- c) She must accept God's forgiveness for her part in having an abortion, which is the only way to unload sinful anger (Psalm 38:18, Psalm 32:5).
- d) She chooses to forgive based on what she has been forgiven.
 - 1) Use the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in Matthew 18.
- e) Forgiveness is an Act of Faith.
 - 1) It is not a feeling.
- f) Forgiveness is a promise not to dwell on the incident mentally (Philippians 4:8).

2. Forgiving yourself

- a) There is no biblical support for forgiving yourself.
- b) Negates the finished work of Christ

I. Grief

1. Grief is often unresolved

- a) Pro-abortion literature and counsel often denies her feelings and experiences as being real.
- b) She cannot share her loss with anyone.
- c) Can be very complicated
- d) She often believes she has no right to grieve.
- e) She carries the same grief as any woman who loses a child.

2. Resolving the Grief

- a) The purpose of grieving is in part to accept the loss of someone you loved.
 - b) Grieving is to be for a period of time.
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- c) Grieving is to be moving forward.
 - d) We never “forget,” but if our grieving is healthy, we are not immersed in grief for the rest of our lives.
 - e) Loss due to abortion is different from losing a person with whom we’ve had a “living relationship.”
 - f) The grieving may have been silent and secret since the procedure was done.
 - g) Your counselee may cry, scream, and wail uncontrollably when she is finally able to grieve the loss of her baby aloud.
3. Remembering Baby
- a) Write a letter.
 - b) Create a memorial stone.
 - c) A piece of jewelry with the baby’s expected birth month
 - d) Planting a tree
4. Cautions in Grieving
- a) You must be careful not to encourage your counselee to engage in assigning the baby a gender and formulating a “life” for the baby in her mind.
 - b) She must not try to communicate with the baby or make assumptions about the baby that the Bible does not state.
 - c) She may have a “feeling” that her baby was a boy or girl, but unless she knows the baby’s gender from testing, she is speculating.
 - d) Abortion sorrow and grief can be ‘redeeming’ and indeed can only be healing when experienced as a redemptive type of grief.
 - e) It is important that she not create an idol out of the baby
 - 1) Worship the baby
 - 2) Make baby the focus of her life
 - f) Discourage formulating a “life” and gender for her baby.
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5. Primary reason for grief

“Abortion should not be fought on the basis that killing a human being is wrong because he or she is so valuable, but on the basis that, when a child bearing God’s image is slaughtered, it is God who is attacked because that child bears His image. ... An attack on the image of God is serious, not because of man’s great worth, but because of the One whose image he reflects.”

–Jay Adams, *A Call to Discernment*, pp. 18-19

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