



Poor Choices Can Leave Wounds That Time Doesn't Always Heal

I was a volunteer counselor in a crisis pregnancy center for 12 years. I gave free pregnancy tests, listened to women, and offered accurate information about their choices: to either continue their pregnancy or take the life of their child through and abortion procedure. Some women left our office and went directly across the street to the abortion clinic. I realized, however, that half of the pregnant women who walked out of the abortion clinic had far greater problems than an unwanted pregnancy. One could almost see the little clouds of spiritual darkness that followed the women into their cars.

Abortion advocates deny there is any harm in abortion, let alone psychological residue. They insist that abortion is far better and safer for women than a pregnancy. Research, however, is showing a different story. A study published in the January 2003 issue of the *Obstetric & Gynecological Survey* assesses the long-term physical and psychological health consequences of abortion by reviewing and analyzing 30 years of medical studies. Their research reveals a critical need for "a detailed study of the health effects of this common procedure." They recommend further studies to meet "the clear need for women to have accurate information" about the risks of abortion. [www.obgynsurvey.com]

Dr. David C. Reardon of the Elliot Institute, an organization that studies the effects of abortion, understands that abortion intrinsically contains the seeds of depression, guilt and anxiety with studies showing that at least 70 percent of post-abortive women view abortion as immoral or at least deviant behavior.

The effects of submerging real feelings about abortion

Depression

A study from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth showed that women whose first pregnancies ended in abortion were 65% more likely to be at high risk of clinical depression even after adjusting for age, race, economic and other factors. The occurrence of depression came about, on average, eight years later. Dr. Reardon states that many women conceal the fact they had an abortion, so these rates could actually be much higher if all women were truthful about their abortion history. [www.afterabortion.org/news/depression_msm.html]

Substance Abuse

Women with a prior history of abortion are *twice* as likely to use alcohol, *five times* as likely to use illicit drugs, and *10 times* more likely to use marijuana during their first pregnancy carried to term. This places the women at risk as well as their unborn children who could be born with congenital abnormalities due to the substance abuse. [*American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, May, 2003]

Effect on mothering later children

In a study published in the latest issue of the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, a child whose mother's history includes abortion has less emotional support at home and more behavioral problems than a child whose mother has not had abortions. The study links the problems that mothers have bonding with their subsequent children with unresolved grief and

loss and guilt. Often these parents are also over-protective of their children, believing that something might happen to them as "punishment" for their abortion.

Why the ambivalence?

According to a *Newsweek* poll, 48 percent of Americans believe that life begins at conception, including pro-choice advocates. In 1971, the pro-abortion editors of *California Medicine* noted that this conflict would have serious results: "the result has been a curious avoidance of the scientific fact, which everyone really knows, *that human life begins at conception and is continuous whether intra-or extra uterine until death*. The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as anything but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices. It is suggested that this schizophrenic sort of subterfuge is necessary because while a *new ethic* is being accepted the old one has not yet been rejected." (Italics added.) Dr. Julius Fogel, a psychiatrist and obstetrician who has personally performed over 20,000 abortions, makes this statement about the psychological effects of abortion on women: "A psychological price is paid. ...Something happens on the deeper levels of a woman's consciousness when she destroys a pregnancy. I know that as a psychiatrist." [www.afterabortion.org/stetson.html p. 6]

Post-abortive women often insulate themselves by suppressing the memories of or by denying the abortion. Memories might not resurface for five years after the abortion. Avoidance mechanisms and self-deception often require mental gymnastics, like sanitizing the terms of abortion, viewing their abortion as an evil "necessity," or by energizing themselves by actually promoting abortion publicly.

Two "clients"

As I learned very quickly from my crisis pregnancy center experience there are two "clients" in the counseling room; one is an innocent unborn child who, if left undisturbed, will mature and leave the womb; the other is a woman facing what she considers to be a "dilemma" that she hates. One of my clients said, when I asked her what she thought was growing in her womb, "Something I can't deal with." Often women come out of abortion clinics with a feeling of relief that the thing they "can't deal with" is gone. But the reality of their choice surfaces sooner or later.

Action:

Call your local crisis pregnancy center and ask what you can do to help women by being a counselor, mentor, donating clothing for babies and women, money or prayer.

For additional information on the effects of abortion, order CWA's excellent video "After the Choice" go to CWA's Website www.cwfa.org, or look at the Elliot Institute's excellent Website: www.afterabortion.org.