

# *Bridge to Healing*

A Practical Guide for Helping  
Women with Abortion in Their Past

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# The Problem with Silence

The silence was deafening. Carol's heart was in turmoil. I thought I could trust her. I didn't think she would reject me. I never should have told her. I will never share this with anyone ever again.

Carol Everett sat in a car with her good friend, Barbara. For the first time in her life, she had shared a dark secret, something that had haunted her for years—she had aborted her third child.

In the face of her confession, her trusted friend was silent. Carol felt hurt and rejected. Later, Barbara explained, “I didn't say anything because I was afraid of saying the wrong thing.”

Barbara cared deeply about Carol. She just did not know how to help her.<sup>1</sup>

## You May Be the Only Person Who Can Reach Her

Many of us feel like Barbara. We care deeply about the post-abortive men and women in our lives. We want them to find hope and healing. We desire to help them, but we do not know how so we never say anything. We may fear inadvertently heaping guilt or condemnation onto these precious men and women with our words. Many of us feel that if we are silent, at least we will avoid doing harm.

We fail to realize that the silence itself can be harmful. Silence can be just as condemning as poorly chosen words. Silence can leave a hurting person to hurt alone with no hope.

So how do we lovingly reach into the lives of those who have chosen abortion?

I will attempt to answer this question in the following pages.

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<sup>1</sup> Everett, Carol and Shaw, Jack. *Blood Money: How I Got Rich off a Woman's Right to Choose*. Multnomah Books. 1992.

## Let's Listen as Women Share Their Wisdom

Over the past several months, I have interviewed women about their abortion experiences. I talked to women who had multiple abortions in their past and women who had only one abortion in their past. I spoke with women who grew up in the church and women who did not. Their stories vary widely but they all dealt with similar trauma after their abortions. The following pages contain quotes and testimonies from these women about their abortions and their healing journeys.<sup>2</sup>

We will explore how women often feel after abortion, what resources may be of help to them as they seek to heal, and how you can best love and reach out to them. (I also include a section on helping a friend who does not regret her abortion.)

It is important to mention that men struggle with guilt and shame after losing a child to abortion as well. While this resource focuses mainly on women, many of the ideas and principles throughout will be helpful if you are seeking to reach out to a man who has lost a child to abortion.

I hope you will join me. The heart of your friend or family member is worth the time you will spend preparing to reach out to her.

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<sup>2</sup> All of the quotations in this resource are from the post-abortive women I interviewed in 2020, unless otherwise noted. I have kept the names of the women I interviewed anonymous. Quotes with women named come from published books referenced in the footnotes.

# How Does Abortion Affect Women?

Marie kept her abortion secret for 30 years. In recollection of that long season she said,

“The bondage of secrecy is like being gagged, bound, thrown into the water and always feeling as if you’re drowning. I would ache inside and never feel whole.” <sup>3</sup>

Other women have echoed similar feelings after abortion:

“As a result of my abortion, I felt intense shame that kept my head down and my mouth shut. I remember a Christian counselor telling me that when I first came to his office, and for weeks after, I would sit with my head down, avoiding eye contact, unable to answer any of his questions or share what was going on in my life. On the inside, I was beyond desperate and grasping for any bit of hope that life would be “normal” again, but shame kept me silent and afraid. It not only silenced my voice, it also robbed me of my identity.” <sup>4</sup>

“There were times at church where the subject of just general abortion would come up and I would panic and think, everyone here would be horrified if they knew. My face would turn red and my heart would pound.” <sup>5</sup>

“After my abortion, I went emotionally numb to cope with the reality of what I did. I went out with a girlfriend that night and got drunk. I began coping with my pain by stuffing it with social drinking to the point of blacking out several nights a week. I felt haunted, and I felt that I deserved punishment for what I had done.” <sup>6</sup>

“Over the years, I didn’t have any real friends because I didn’t want to get close enough where you start sharing your secrets because [the abortion] was something I didn’t want to talk about.” <sup>7</sup>

“Superficial relationships would definitely describe my life. I was managing all my relationships from the grid of my abortion-wounded heart. I lived in constant fear of judgment and abandonment. I always felt as if there was something missing in my relationships, and that was authenticity.” <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Maria, quoted in Karen A. Ellison, *Healing the Hurt that Won’t Heal: Freedom for the Abortion-Wounded and Help for the Church They Fear*, High Bridge Books, 2019, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> Sheppard, quoted in Ellison, *Healing the Hurt that Won’t Heal*, pp. 45, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Post-Abortive Woman, Name Withheld for Privacy, Personal Interview with Author, 2020

<sup>6</sup> Heather, quoted in Ellison, *Healing the Hurt that Won’t Heal*, p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> Post-Abortive Woman, Name Withheld for Privacy, Personal Interview with Author, 2020

<sup>8</sup> Tina, quoted in Ellison, *Healing the Hurt that Won’t Heal*, p. 59.

“My abortion was in May, and in December I went home and I was very put off because my older sister was pregnant. I didn’t really know what was going on inside of me, I just knew I didn’t want to be around her. I couldn’t put it together at that time. It was later, I was talking to my mom on the phone and I said, ‘My baby would have been born at that time.’ That was the beginning of my grieving.”<sup>9</sup>

The aftereffects of abortion are many and varied. Often, women struggle with shame, grief they don’t understand, fear of others finding out and passing judgment, inability to bond with other children, anger, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, nightmares, flashbacks, some even turn to suicide.

Abortion harms women deeply, but few share about their abortion or the pain it has caused them because they are afraid of being judged and condemned. If you know that a friend, family member, or acquaintance has had an abortion, you have both a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in her life and a responsibility to reach out to her. You may be the only person who knows about her abortion. A counselor at a pregnancy resource center who has led Bible studies and retreats for post-abortive women estimated that 25% of the women who come to her clinic for resources have never told anyone about their abortion before. If you know about a friend’s abortion, you need to reach out to her because it’s unlikely that anyone else will.

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**REMEMBER:**

If you know about a friend’s abortion, you need to reach out to her because it’s unlikely that anyone else will.

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<sup>9</sup> Post-Abortive Woman, Name Withheld for Privacy, Personal Interview with Author, 2020 (And so throughout the remainder of this resource, unless otherwise noted)



## What Resources Are Available to Post-Abortive Women?

There are many resources available to women who are hurting from abortion. A good place to start looking for resources in your area is your local pregnancy resource center. (There are different names used by centers, such as “crisis pregnancy center,” or “women’s resource center” or “women’s clinic,” but the important thing is to find a center that is life-affirming. Find a center that offers resources for pregnant women with no abortion services or referrals for abortion services.) Many of these centers offer Bible studies or counseling for post-abortive women.

I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with both Deeper Still and Rachel’s Vineyard (links below). Both are national ministries with chapters operating across the country. They host weekend retreats for post-abortive women and men. Deeper Still is a protestant retreat ministry and Rachel’s Vineyard is a Catholic retreat ministry. I would recommend pointing a man or woman to the retreat ministry with which they will be most comfortable.

To find the healing retreats and pregnancy resource centers in your area, see the links at JFA’s “Healing After Abortion” page ([www.jfaweb.org/healing-after-abortion](http://www.jfaweb.org/healing-after-abortion)) or call the JFA office a 316-683-6426 and ask to speak with a trainer. With both pregnancy resource centers and healing retreats, I suggest you do the research to find the most relevant resources for your friend rather than sending her to a web page to figure it out for herself.

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### PRACTICAL NEXT STEP: KNOW YOUR LOCAL RESOURCES

Find healing retreat chapters in your area. If you can, get brochures for your local chapters and carry them in your purse or glove box.

Deeper Still Retreats: [deeperstill.org](http://deeperstill.org)

Rachel’s Vineyard Retreats: [rachelsvineyard.org](http://rachelsvineyard.org)

Visit your local pregnancy resource center and ask if they offer resources for healing after abortion. Ask for brochures for their post-abortion ministry and carry those in your purse or glove box as well.

Find Your Local Pregnancy Resource Center: [optionline.org](http://optionline.org)

For Help from a JFA Trainer, Call 316-683-6426.

Find Links to Resources: [jfaweb.org/healing-after-abortion](http://jfaweb.org/healing-after-abortion)

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Here are three important ways these kinds of Bible studies and retreats help women and men to heal from abortion.

### ***Bible Studies and Retreats Help Women Realize They Are Not Alone.***

All too often, women feel alone after abortion. As two post-abortive women shared, one incredibly healing aspect of bible studies and retreats is that they help women to realize they are not alone.

“It’s helpful to go to a group, whether a Bible study or retreat, because you spend all this time feeling alone, like you’re the only one, and hearing other people’s stories is so helpful. Even though our stories were very, very different in how we ended up having the abortion, the aftereffects were very, very similar.”

“You (the post abortive woman) spend so much time thinking, all these women are proud of their abortions. And when you’re alone with yourself you feel like you’re the only one who’s not processing this right and so when you are in a group and others are sharing their similar feelings, it is really helpful.”

### ***Bible Studies and Retreats Offer Women an Opportunity to Process Their Abortion Experience.***

Many women bottle up their abortion experiences and shove them aside. They avoid thinking about them as much as possible. Contrary to this tendency, they need to process the experience in order to heal. As one post-abortive woman noted, these Bible studies and retreats are set up to facilitate that:

“Have you ever gotten a song stuck in your head and you can’t get it out of your head until you’ve heard the whole song? That’s what it reminds me of. You have to process the whole story before you can get it out of your head. To go through a post-abortive Bible study helps you to sing the whole song, then you’re able to let it go.”

### ***Bible Studies and Retreats Create a Safe Place to Grieve.***

Women often feel a need to grieve over the loss of their child but are confused by that feeling. After all, everyone around them is telling them that they made a choice that was “right for them.” If abortion was the right choice why would they grieve? Post-abortive Bible studies and retreats give women permission to grieve and help them to do so in a healthy way.

Here’s what four post-abortive women shared about grieving:

“There’s a grieving that’s confusing. You can’t grieve something you don’t call life.”

“Someone who has had an abortion, even if they feel loss and grief, don’t feel like they have a right to it. So [we need to] give them permission to grieve.”

“Within the church, the biggest mistake that’s made is the focus on forgiveness—which is important—but there is no emphasis on the grieving side. Let people know that it’s normal to feel grief and let yourself express that.”

“Women need to grieve. They need to get out of the vacuum of ‘I had an abortion’ and grieve also for all the things that led them there.”

Post-abortion ministries are designed to meet women and men where they are at and walk them through a healing journey. They help women climb over many hurdles to discover healing and peace. Nevertheless, for many post-abortive women, the most difficult hurdle they have to overcome is simply showing up at the bible study or retreat for the first time.<sup>10</sup>

## Be a Bridge

Post-abortive women and men don’t often seek help or resources on their own. They need someone to connect them to those resources. They need someone to take their hand and help them climb over the giant mountain that showing up at the Bible study for the first time or attending the retreat can be. This is where you come in. You don’t need to be a professional counselor. You don’t need to know a lot about post-abortion trauma. You just need a willing and compassionate heart. Your role is not to walk your friend or family member all the way through her healing journey, though hopefully you will continue to be there for her. Your role is to be a bridge between her and the resources she needs.

Here’s how one post-abortive woman described this:

“People who are post-abortive do not often seek help. Everybody is relational. It usually takes one person to bridge the gap between the person and help.”

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<sup>10</sup> Many men and women in our churches and communities struggle with grief after miscarriage. In a culture that devalues unborn children and accepts abortion, grieving a miscarriage is difficult. Too often the response to a grieving parent who has lost a child to miscarriage is unsympathetic. If a five-year-old died, no one would tell her parents, “You can have another one.” No one would say, “You’re young. Just try again.” And yet these are the very things that are far too commonly said to parents grieving after miscarriage. If our churches become a safe and healthy place to grieve after a miscarriage, we will be one step closer to being a safe place to grieve after abortion.

## Initiating the Conversation

The hardest part is starting the conversation. Depending on your situation, there are a few different ways you might approach the subject. In some cases, you may know about the abortion because she told you about it herself. In other cases you may have learned about the abortion through someone else and the woman herself isn't even aware that you know. There may be times when you merely suspect that a friend or family member has had an abortion, but you don't know for sure. You will likely want to handle each of these situations differently so let's spend time discussing each one.

### *She Told Me About Her Abortion a While Ago*

Note one post-abortive woman's experience:

"I was attending a Bible Study and one night I hung around until everyone else was gone. I didn't intend to tell her [the bible study leader] about the abortion...I ended up telling her everything and when I left I was horrified that I had told her all that and I was hesitant to go back the next week. But what she did was she reached out to me and invited me to talk a little bit more and that was huge. It wasn't intentionally gonna be a test but it did kind of end up being a test. The way I saw it was that they knew all this about me but they still want me to be around."

Many women feel intense shame about their abortion and avoid telling others about it. If she does let her guard down for some reason and tell you, she may then pull back from the relationship because she fears your judgement. You now know her deepest, darkest secret and she fears that you see her differently than you used to.

For these reasons, if someone has shared with you about her abortion, you should take the initiative to reach back out to her. Don't expect her to bring it up again. Be proactive. You might say something like, *"When we were talking the other day, you mentioned that you had an abortion in your past. I just want you to know that doesn't change the way I see you. If you want to talk, I would love to be a listening ear."*

Here's another way you might bring up the topic: *"When we were talking the other day, you mentioned that you had an abortion in your past. I just want you to know that I care about you and that doesn't change what I think about you. I have heard women talk about how difficult their abortion was for them and how they experienced a lot of painful aftereffects, so I was wondering, how are you doing?"*

Two post-abortive women I interviewed emphasized the importance of taking initiative:

"Sometimes we assume that if they want to talk about it they will bring it up but often they are waiting for you to bring it up to see if you really care."

“If someone does share that secret with you and then doesn’t bring it up again, I think it’s important to reach out at least one more time and tell them it doesn’t change anything, that if they need to talk, you would love to listen.”

### ***She Just Told Me About Her Abortion***

What if a woman shares with you about her abortion experience unexpectedly? Four of the women I interviewed shared suggestions:

“A woman or man will open a window and then close it real quick. You have got to walk through that window and take their hand. As soon as they open that window and confess the abortion, take opportunity.”

“I blurted out, I’ve had an abortion and she [my friend] was just awesome. She walked over to me and held me and I just sobbed. After I said, ‘I’ve had an abortion,’ I couldn’t say anything. The dam broke loose and I just needed to cry. My friend just held me and let me cry.”

“If someone brings up their abortion, that is a cry for help.”

“Just be sensitive to open the door so [she] can elaborate.”

If someone tells you that she has had an abortion, you might simply respond by saying, “I’ve heard that is really hard for women. How are you doing?” Make it clear that you are not judging her and that her decision has not made you love her less. Ask questions that show how much you care and that open the door for further conversation.

I want to underscore again that it is often important to take initiative to bring the topic up again later and just remind her that you care and that her abortion has not changed the way you see her.

### ***She Doesn’t Know that I Know.***

In some cases she may not know that you know about her abortion. Maybe someone else told you that she had an abortion. Maybe you overheard a conversation. Maybe you don’t know for sure, but you suspect that she has abortion in her past. There are a couple of different routes you could go in these situations and depending on your relationship with her, one may be better than the others.

You could try talking about post-abortive trauma in general. You might say something like, “*I heard a woman speaking about her abortion experience and how deeply she was hurt and how isolated she felt. I have heard that is normal, that abortion is often really difficult for women.*”

You could try to have more of a generic pro-life conversation and say something like, *“One of the reasons I am so passionate about my pro-life position is because of all the women who are hurting because of abortion. It is so sad to see women hurting and despite the fact that some women are proud of their abortion, there are a lot of women who are hurting silently.”*

I was surprised to find that one post-abortive woman I interviewed even suggested being direct:

“If you know someone who has had an abortion, even if you suspect it, I would just ask them, ‘If you haven’t that’s okay, I’m just curious, have you had an abortion in your past.’ Across the board, the women I have asked that to were relieved. If you’re friends with someone and for whatever reason you are wondering, I don’t think it hurts to be direct.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I want to note here that you are the best judge of your friendships and whether the person you know would welcome this kind of direct question. Our general rule of thumb for men, though, is that this question would not be a good question to ask a female friend, however a man might be able to ask another man whether he has lost a child to abortion with good results. And, in general, we don’t suggest asking this of a stranger.

# Continuing the Conversation

Once the conversation is started, where should you go?

Remember that your objective in having this conversation is two-fold: (1) You want to show her that you care about her and that her past does not change the way you see her, and (2) you want to connect her to resources that will help her find healing.

How can we do both of these things well?

## *Ask Questions*

When you ask questions, you communicate that you care and are willing to listen to her. Through questions, you can open the door for her to share more.

Here are some questions that might be helpful to ask:

- How are you doing?
- Did the abortion happen a long time ago or was it fairly recent?
- Did you have support at that time?
- Have you been able to share this with anyone else?
- Have you had any physical complications or side effects?
- What kind of effect has that had on your life?
- Is there anything that I can do?
- Do you just need a shoulder to cry on or is there another practical way I can help you?

Two post-abortive women I interviewed highlighted the importance of questions like these:

“Christians can make the mistake of focusing only on the emotional and spiritual side effects but there is a very real physical side to it [abortion] and asking [about] that shows that you really care about the wellbeing of the person.”

“Compassion is so important because there’s such a fear of condemnation. Just that gentleness and compassion and wanting to listen.”

## *Reflect Her Feelings Back to Her*

When she shares something with you, reflect her feelings back to her. You may not agree with the decisions she made and the lifestyle choices that led to the abortion but you can sympathize with the

confusion she felt and the pain that drove her. You can sympathize with the pain she has experienced since the abortion.

It is possible that a woman might respond in anger and say, “Who are you to judge me?” If that happens, respond by saying, “I’m not judging you. I love you and I want to be here for you no matter what.”

The difficult thing about asking questions is that you have to be okay with the answer. If you ask, “How are you doing?” and she says “I’m fine,” you have to be able to accept that. Depending on the situation and your relationship, you may or may not want to try to dig a little. In a lot of cases though, if she isn’t ready, she may just become more resistant.

On the other hand, she might say “I’m not doing well” or “It’s been really hard!” In that case, you have the opportunity to be of further help.

### ***Connect Her to Resources***

You don’t have to become a professional counselor or an expert in post-abortion trauma in order to help your friend. You can connect her with resources. As two post-abortive women noted, this was essential for their healing:

“It was 20 years before I heard anyone talk about healing being available. There were 8 to 10 years where I was involved in Christian circles and no one ever said anything about healing. Until I heard those words, ‘It’s possible to heal,’ my perspective was, there’s no point in going for help...”

“When I talk to people who have found healing, one of the most common comments I hear is, ‘I really never thought this kind of freedom was available.’ That tells me that most people don’t feel like it’s possible to feel better so just being able to introduce that concept [can help a woman find healing].”

Many women believe that God may be able to heal other people but not them. For this reason, it may take time for your friend or family member to receive the idea that healing is possible for her. Don’t give up! Keep reminding her that God loves her and that He is Jehovah Rapha—the God who heals (Exodus 15:26).

Here are two good questions to transition into a conversation about resources:

- “Would you like to talk to someone who’s been through what you have been through?”
- “Have you ever sought any kind of healing?”



Hopefully at this point it will be natural to share about the resources in your geographical area. It is likely that she has never heard about the resources that are available so make sure you have done your homework and are prepared to answer at least some of her questions. Ideally, try to have a business card or brochure. If she is interested but still seems hesitant and has a lot of questions, say, “Those are great questions. Why don’t I call right now and ask?” Call the bible study leader or retreat coordinator or pregnancy resource center and ask all of her questions. Do everything you can to remove every barrier that stands in the way of her attending the bible study or retreat, even if that barrier is a simple phone call.

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### **PRACTICAL NEXT STEP: KEEP YOUR LOCAL RESOURCES HANDY**

Make a note on your smart phone with resources in your local area so you’re ready to share them at any time. Keep physical brochures and business cards for your local pregnancy resource center and the other resources in your area in your purse or glove compartment. See **“What Resources Are Available to Post-Abortive Women?”** (page 5) for help finding resources.

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A number of the women I interviewed talked about how you can best share resources with a post-abortive woman:

“You just have to love them to the resource. You have to love them in there. Have your resources ready so that you can give those resources out and let them know that it’s safe. It’s a safe resource. It’s not a resource that is going to leave them by the wayside. It’s a resource that’s going to walk them through. They’ve been let down before.”

“Just those words of ‘Jesus loves you and wants to heal you from this.’ I had never even entertained that thought. Just hearing that healing is available because I think there really is this assumption that is reinforced by your own guilt and shame and the enemy that however you’re feeling is what you deserve so just suck it up and deal with it. So just hearing those words, ‘Jesus loves you. You don’t have to suffer for the rest of your life.’ That may be the first time someone realizes that reaching out for help

might be worth it. My perspective was there's no point in going for help until I heard those words, 'It is possible to heal.'"

"I knew there were pregnancy centers around but I thought they were there to help women not have abortions and so I thought they wouldn't want to help me. Just being able to point out that pregnancy centers care about men and women who have had abortions and they want to help you heal."

"[The post-abortive woman's] first response will [likely] be, 'I'm okay. I'm good,' so say, 'I just wanted to check in on you and see how you are doing. I heard about this great class that is led by wonderful leaders who are post-abortive. There's no judgment. There's no condemnation.'"

Make sure that the conversation ends in such a way that she feels safe and comfortable talking to you about it again. Say something like, "If you ever want to talk, I'm here to listen."

## Things to Avoid

Avoid downplaying the sin of abortion or the guilt and shame she is feeling. We may find ourselves accidentally downplaying the sin of abortion out of a genuine desire to help women find healing. This is dangerous. Women and men who have chosen abortion need to feel guilt. They need to come to grips with the reality that they participated in the killing of their child because it is only when we recognize our sin that we can repent of it and find forgiveness and healing in Christ.<sup>12</sup>

It is also important that we do not downplay her feelings of grief. Two post-abortive women I interviewed discussed how people can inadvertently turn encouragements to accept forgiveness into a dismissal:

“I told two pastors and their response was really kinda to just give me a pat on the shoulder and say, ‘Well you’re forgiven so don’t worry about it.’ My interpretation was ‘Yeah you’re forgiven but the way you’re feeling is the way you should feel and you’re going to deal with this for the rest of your life.’”

“Just a couple of people knew that I had had an abortion and none of these people talked about any sort of healing. They said things like, ‘Well, if you ask for forgiveness you’re okay,’ or ‘everybody makes mistakes.’”

It is true that Jesus will forgive her if she repents and asks, but it can sound dismissive to say, “You’ve asked for forgiveness so you’re okay.” She does need to be encouraged to remember Christ’s forgiveness, but she also needs you to validate her feelings of grief.

Don’t brush past her need to grieve. She lost her child. That is a very real and very painful loss. She needs time and permission to grieve for her child. Many women know exactly how old their child would be. Even years later they can still tell you both their due date and the date of their abortion. Don’t forget her need to grieve. Encourage her to engage in a healthy grieving process. Offer your support and understanding even if it takes a long time.

When I interviewed post-abortive women, I asked, “What kinds of questions would be unhelpful? What should we avoid asking?” Although the ladies I talked to did not give me a list of questions that we should not ask, two gave me general guidelines:

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<sup>12</sup> I am not intending to make any claim here about the level of culpability for any particular woman who has had an abortion. The point I am making here is that whatever the woman’s level of participation, she needs the freedom and encouragement to process her feelings as the facts of what the unborn is and what abortion does to him become more apparent.

“I don’t think it’s so much things you shouldn’t ask but more the way you ask them. Watch your tone and verbiage. It’s more how you are asking the question than that there’s a bad question to ask.”

“Don’t go fishing for details. Let the details come out naturally.”

## Things to Remember

Unfortunately, it is hard to predict how this kind of conversation will go. If you are loving, gentle and gracious in your approach, most of the time the conversation will go well. Nevertheless, it is always possible that she will shut the conversation down or that she will be angry with you because she feels you were insinuating that what she did was wrong. If either of these happens, remember that you have planted a seed of showing concern for her. Pray for her and continue to be her friend.

Drastic changes in a woman’s lifestyle or personality are often warning signs. Even if you have reached out in the past, they may indicate that you need to reach out again, as two post-abortive women I interviewed emphasized:

“If you see a change--more depressed, they were outgoing, now they never leave the house, drugs, drinking, any difference, you need to reach out and be more persistent.”

“Suicide and drugs are huge outcomes of abortion so we need to ask, ‘Are you okay? Can I help?’ They are not going to ask. I attempted suicide twice. I never asked for help.”

## What About My Friend Who Does Not Regret Her Abortion?

It is difficult to know what to say to a friend or loved one who does not regret her abortion. Some women may even seem proud of their abortion.

It is important to understand that everyone processes their abortion experience differently. In order to cope with the pain they are feeling, some women flaunt their abortion. Sydna Masse, the founder of Ramah International, a ministry that seeks to help men and women heal after abortion, shared that after her abortion, she began advocating for abortion rights. She did so because she felt tremendous grief but she thought that being around other people who also had abortions in their past and who believed that abortion was justifiable might help. It didn't. Eventually Sydna stopped advocating for abortion because it only reminded her of her pain.

Like Sydna, it may take time for your friend or loved one to admit that they are in pain. Don't give up on her. Keep loving her. Keep reaching out to her and make sure that she knows that you aren't judging her and that you are a safe person to come to if she ever needs to talk.

# Suggestions for Making Any Conversation about Abortion Helpful to a Post-Abortive Person

Many pastors are concerned about bringing up the issue of abortion in their churches because they are worried about hurting the post-abortive women and men in their congregations. Many Christians also worry about talking about this issue because we don't want to further hurt someone who is already suffering. While it is true that conversations about abortion can be hurtful to post-abortive women and men, they don't have to be. In fact, if done well, conversations about abortion can actually help post-abortive men and women find healing and help others avoid the same terrible mistake.

In any conversation about abortion, it is helpful to imagine that a post-abortive woman is standing there listening. How would the knowledge that she is listening change the way you speak about this issue?

Something to keep in mind is that there are two sides to any argument about the abortion issue. There is the relational side and the intellectual side. When someone says, for example, that abortion should be legal because of poverty, it is easy to jump straight into arguing that poverty doesn't justify abortion. We need to remember however, that there is a relational side to this argument. Poverty is terrible. Many people are suffering because of poverty. We agree that poverty is tragic. When you give attention to both the relational and the intellectual sides of this discussion, any conversation becomes an opportunity for a woman to be open about her experience with abortion because she can see that you genuinely care about people who are actually facing these difficult things.

If you are interested in learning to talk about abortion in a way that balances the relational and intellectual sides of this discussion, go to [www.jfaweb.org/calendar](http://www.jfaweb.org/calendar) and sign up for one of Justice For All's upcoming training events. We would love to equip you to create life-changing conversations about unplanned pregnancy and abortion.

# Navigating an Abortion-Wounded World

Here is some advice from two different post-abortive women:

“People don’t realize how common it is. Chances are, someone you know has been involved in this [i.e. abortion]. It’s common but no one really talks about it so we don’t realize how common it is. Which is why we need to be careful how we talk about this because if you talk about it judgmentally and someone who is post-abortive is standing there, you have just marked yourself as a very unsafe person.”

“Be aware that we who have been involved in it [i.e. abortion] are kind of all over the place and the way you talk about it is really gonna impact what people think about you and whether they will be willing to reach out for help.”

Hopefully, you have gained some insight into how to reach into the life of those who are hurting from an abortion and have also gained a greater understanding of the seriousness of post-abortion trauma. As you talk about abortion in general, allow this information to inform your conversation. You never know when you may be talking to someone who is post-abortive. The way you speak about the abortion issue may determine whether or not she seeks help.

Finally, please pass this information on. Seek to inform others, especially those within your Christian community. Remember the heartbreaking testimony of one woman I interviewed:

“It was 20 years before I heard anyone talk about healing being available. There were 8 to 10 years where I was involved in Christian circles and no one ever said anything about healing.”

May it never be said of your church or mine that it was ten years before a woman heard the good news of Jesus Christ applied to this all too often hidden sin: “healing after abortion is possible.”

What makes this possibility a reality? It may be you, stepping out with trust that Christ will work through you to bring the healing only He can. Let us pray for help to take a next step for His sake and for the sake of those close to us who are suffering.



kindling affection for the forgotten  
beginning with women in distress,  
the smallest humans on earth,  
and those who differ  
in appearance or belief

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