

This Page:
Abortion

- | Post-Abortion Syndrome
- | Handicapped Children

Mind Games Survival Course Manual



Table of Contents

Abortion

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III. Post-Abortion Syndrome

A. *Description*

After having an abortion, many women feel a sense of relief at having avoided the stress and responsibility of pregnancy and a baby, but abortions eventually cause serious emotional damage in millions of women.

The American Psychiatric Association has identified abortion as one of the stressor events that can trigger post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Many of us associate PTSD with Vietnam Veterans suffering from the effects of the war; but post-abortion syndrome (PAS) is a form of PTSD that affects women who have had abortions.

The death of a child is one of the biggest stress points a person can experience in life. Post-abortion syndrome is the emotional stress of not grieving, of not letting oneself feel the pain and suffering that is part of a loss. To be emotionally healthy, we all have to grieve through our losses; but what do you do when society tells you there's nothing to grieve about? If a woman does not recognize her need to grieve for her baby, or if she does not allow it to occur, that emotional pain is going to go *somewhere*. Frequently, following a woman's abortion, she goes into what one CPC counselor described as "self-destruct mode": getting pregnant again, having an affair, punishing herself, and generally showing all the variations that severe depression can take.

2. *Guilt*

Depending on how stressed a woman is, PAS can show up within weeks or months of the abortion, or she can have a delayed reaction to it, typically seven to eight years later. Women experiencing post-abortion syndrome generally feel a confusing and overwhelming sense of guilt. One study reported that 92 percent of women who have had an abortion feel guilt. {2} One woman who is now involved in a post-abortion healing group reports

that after her abortion, the memory haunted her. She heard this little voice in her head: "Abortion, abortion; you're a terrible, awful person." For many women, the guilt and shame is expressed through a deep anger--at the doctors and abortion counselors for hurting her and her baby, at her husband, boyfriend, or parents for pressuring her into an abortion, and at herself for getting pregnant and having the abortion.

3. *Denial*

Many women dealing with the effects of abortion spend a great deal of emotional energy denying the death and denying that what they did was wrong. A woman uses denial to keep herself from coming face to face with the fact that her child was killed and she allowed it to happen. One young woman pleaded with my sister not to leave her alone the day she had an abortion. This hurting teen tried to keep her feelings at bay as she spent the afternoon telling dead baby jokes.

4. *Abortion Procedures*--The trauma of post-abortion syndrome is more easily understood when we consider various procedures.

1. *Dilation and curettage (D&C)*. The doctor dilates the cervix and uses a hoe-like instrument to cut the baby's body to pieces and scrape the uterine wall. The body pieces and contents of the uterus are then pulled through the cervix.
2. *Suction*. The doctor inserts a vacuum tube, using a special medical device many times more powerful than a home vacuum cleaner, through the cervix into the uterus, tearing the live baby and the placenta into pieces. These pieces are sucked into a jar or bucket.
3. *Saline*. A strong salt solution is injected through the mother's abdominal wall into the amniotic fluid in the uterus. The salt burns the baby's skin as it absorbs the solution, and the baby also swallows the salt, causing internal poisoning and burning. The baby, in great pain, thrashes around, which is painful to the mother. She goes into labor and expels a shriveled, burned baby. Some babies are born alive after a saline abortion.
4. *Prostaglandin*. This chemical, a hormone, is injected or applied to the uterus, causing it to contract violently. It is a painful abortion for the mother, forcing the baby out prematurely.
5. *Dilation and evacuation (D&E)*. The doctor dilates the mother's cervix and uses a forceps to crush the baby's head and pull out body parts.

>Hysterotomy. This is no different from a C-section, where the mother's abdomen is opened surgically to pull the baby out. Since the baby is usually alive, the abortionist has to then find a way to kill the baby. (Obviously not used very often)

6. *Dilation and Extraction (D&X)*. This procedure is known in the

media as the "partial birth abortion." The doctor dilates the mother's cervix and pulls the baby's body out except for the head. Leaving the head inside the mother's body, s/he uses the point of a scissors to make a wound at the base of the baby's skull, then opens the scissors to make the opening larger. A vacuum tube is then inserted into the baby's skull to suction out the brain to be used in fetal tissue research. The baby must be alive at the time the brain matter is harvested, to be used for research purposes. With the brain gone, the head collapses and is pulled out of the mother's body more easily.

5. *What women need to do*

Abortion is not an eraser to rub out a mistake or an inconvenience. It has more than one victim; women as well as their babies are victims of abortions. It is essential that a woman grieve for her baby and face her role in the baby's death; in fact, women who allow themselves to grieve and understand their need to grieve are not likely to experience post-abortion syndrome. But even more essential is that women who have had abortions accept that there really has been a death, that abortion is sin, and that the Lord Jesus Christ's death covered *every* wrong they have ever done. No sin--not even abortion--is greater than the power of His blood, and He offers total forgiveness and cleansing to everyone who will come to Him in faith.

4. **Handicapped children**

Sometimes prenatal tests reveal that a baby is sick or handicapped. There's no doubt about it, raising a handicapped child is painful and hard. Is it ever right to abort a child whose life will be less than perfect?

A. *A hard question*

We need to ask ourselves, does the child deserve to die because of his handicap or illness? Life is hard, both for the handicapped person and for his parents. But it is significant that no organization of parents of mentally retarded children has ever endorsed abortion.

2. *Voices of experience*

Some people honestly believe that it is better to abort a handicapped child than to let him or her experience the difficult life ahead. Dr. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General of the United States, performed thousands of pediatric surgeries on handicapped children. He remarks that disability and unhappiness do not necessarily go together. Some of the unhappiest children he has known had full mental and physical faculties, and some of the happiest youngsters have borne very difficult burdens. {4} Life is a lot harder for people with disabilities, but this writer can tell you personally that there is a precious side to it as well. I have lived most of my life with a physical handicap, but it hasn't stopped me from experiencing a fierce joy from living life to the fullest of the abilities I do have. I can honestly rejoice in my broken body because it is that very brokenness and weakness that makes it easier for others to see the power and glory of my Lord in me, because His power is perfected in weakness.

3. *Suffering, pain, and the eternal perspective*

Often, parents abort children with defects because they don't want to face the certain suffering and pain that comes with caring for a handicapped individual. By aborting the child, they believe they are aborting the trouble. But as we discussed earlier, there is no way to avoid the consequences of abortion: the need to grieve, the guilt, the anger, the depression.

What if a baby is going to die anyway? Anencephalic babies, babies born without brains, have no hope of living any length of time. I think we need to look at the larger picture, one that includes God and His purposes for our lives. When a tragedy like this occurs, we can know that it is only happening because He has a reason behind it. God's will for us is not that we live easy lives, but that we are changed into the image of Jesus. He wants us to be holy, not comfortable. The pain of difficult circumstances is often His chosen method to grow godliness in us and in the lives of those touched by the tragedy of a child's handicap. When it is a matter of life and death, as abortion is, it is not our place to avoid the pain.

Not all abortions are performed as a matter of convenience. Some are performed in very hard cases, such as handicap, rape, or incest. But again, we need to back off and look at things from an eternal perspective. God is the One who gives life, and only He has the right to take it away. Every person, born or unborn, is a precious soul made by God, in His image. Every life is a sacred trust from God we need to celebrate and protect.

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[Table of Contents](#)



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