

healing the HURT

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do you feel ALONE

WITH THE MEMORY
OF AN ABORTION YOU
CHOSE TO HAVE?

If so, you're actually *not* alone! Thirty-three percent of American women have an abortion at some point, but hardly any of them ever talk about it.

The reason is simple. Many women who choose abortion go against their own sense of right and wrong, and this makes them feel guilty. That guilt stops them from talking about it or getting the emotional help they deserve.

.....
*33% of American
women have an abortion
at some point in their lives*
.....

THE TRAUMA OF

Professional counselors tell us that many women are not able to . . .


- . . . process the painful thoughts and feelings of grief—that arise from an abortion.
- . . . identify, much less grieve, the loss.
- . . . come to peace with God, their faith, their pregnancy and abortion choices.

Does any of this describe you?

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

Relief is the most common reason for an abortion. As time goes on, you may have regrets. There are some possible reasons:

- You have no external evidence of the loss or other memorabilia.
- You may not believe you should be allowed to suffer.
- There was no memorial service.



For any or all of these reasons, you may not feel that your grief is justified, so you end up repressing your feelings of sadness, shame and anger. You just don't want to talk about it! But years later, when you undergo another significant loss or become pregnant again, an intense grief may catch you by surprise. You'll wonder, *Why am I having such a horrible reaction to this? Am I losing my grip?*

SIGNS OF STRESS

If this happens to you, you might be exhibiting symptoms of emotional or psychological stress related to your abortion. These can include:

- **Guilt** from violating your own sense of morality
- **Self-destructive behaviors** such as eating disorders, alcohol and/or substance abuse, abusive relationships, promiscuity
- **Re-experiencing events related to the abortion:** memories or nightmares involving lost or dismembered babies
- **Anxiety** that leads to headaches, dizziness, pounding heart, abdominal cramps, muscle tightness, difficulty sleeping
- **Psychological numbing:** Your unconscious vow never to let anything hurt this badly again hampers your ability to enjoy an emotional, intimate relationship.

- **Depression**, which reveals itself in uncontrollable crying, poor self-care, mood disturbances, loss of normal social interaction, or suicide
- **Preoccupation with becoming pregnant** or replacing the baby you aborted
- **Anxiety** over fertility and childbirth, or feeling punished by not letting you become pregnant
- **Trouble in bonding** with your other children, or being overprotective or feeling detached
- **Anniversary reactions:** an increase in grief on the anniversary of the abortion, the



THE PATH TO

When you finally recognize
with a past abortion, co

Remember the Pain

The first step toward heal
formed by months or ye
painful emotions connect
your feelings have been
painful to deal with, they
infection, affecting your
simplest way to access th
supportive environment
abortion experience.

Accept Forgiveness

If you hold any kind of sp
will come only when you
struggle with the feeling
in God's eyes, you may t
try to "prove yourself" b
to forgive you.

Or, you may know in your *mind* that God can forgive any sin, but you can't accept it in your *heart*, because you cannot forgive yourself. Here are three things we must all understand:

1. **Your debt is paid.** The Bible clearly teaches that God has already made provision for your forgiveness: He accepts Jesus' death as full payment for any and all sins we commit. Do not let your guilty emotions still demand that you pay the debt yourself.
2. **God is near.** When we accept responsibility for our choices and openly express our sorrow to God, He is ready and waiting to draw us back into intimacy with Him.
3. **Consequences are not the same as punishment.** A consequence of abortion might be infertility, but this is not a punishment from God. He is as grieved as we are about the losses brought on by our choices. Although we all live with the consequences of our choices, Jesus literally accepted the death sentence for our sins. He took the punishment so we don't have to.

.....
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.....

Identify and Release

Perhaps you resist verbally *with the rage inside me*. The paradox is this: Until you release the anger you feel about your

Grieve the Loss

The need to grieve a pregnancy loss is for good reason. But you may not know of a child when I was the

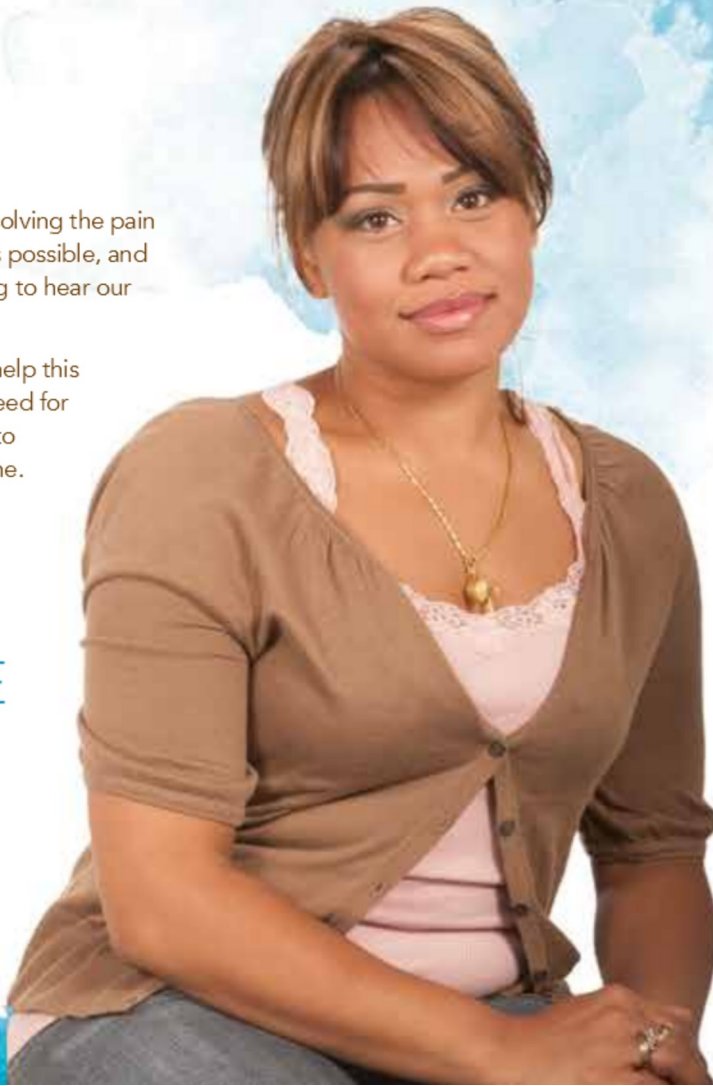
Some ways to work through the loss of a baby as a real individual are to create a memorial for your child, and even to have a funeral. Many pregnancy resources are available where you can walk this

TAKE HOPE!

A lot of women feel hopeless about ever resolving the pain connected with their abortion. But healing is possible, and God is as close as the air we breathe, waiting to hear our whispered cries for help.

Thousands of women will seek and receive help this year; you can be one of them. There is no need for you to continue grieving silently. Reach out to someone who understands. You are *not* alone.

reach out . . .
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RECOMMENDATIONS

If you'd like to learn more, click on Resources on the right.

Author Note

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