

Support After Abortion

Actions

- Journal why you are working through this booklet.
- Journal what you have found helpful about **Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now**.
- Take two to three minutes to recall and be grateful for some of the things in your life.

Points to Review

- I need to be aware of what I'm thinking and feeling.
- Self-honesty is an important key that will lead me to experience hope and healing.

Final Thought and Meditation

In this key, you may have discovered some challenging or painful emotions—well done in persevering. Until you have time to begin the second key, keep your eyes on your goal of healing and why you are going through this process. Recall some of the things you've discovered about yourself. You are stronger than you know.

"I'm growing in self-awareness, and each feeling I have is valid."

What to Expect in the Next Key

You've identified some of your emotions, and this is a huge step toward healing. **Key 2: You Are Not Alone** will help you begin working through the feelings you've identified. Please try to remain hopeful about why you are working through this booklet.

Key 2

You Are Not Alone

You Are! *You are likable and loveable. Spend thirty seconds thinking of three people you enjoy spending time with.*

Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now opened the door to acknowledging your emotions and encouraged you to begin journaling. I hope you didn't skip that key. Why? Because after going through that door, you're ready to pick up the next *key*: **You Are Not Alone.**

Let me ask: Did you circle the emotion *loneliness* on the "Common Feelings Following Abortion" box?

STEP 1

There's a quote by an anonymous writer, "Even in a crowd, you are alone inside your own head." Sometimes loneliness has nothing to do with a person's present circumstances but everything to do with how they perceive them. It has nothing to do with how many people they have surrounding them or how many likes or followers they have on social media.

There are some great synonyms for the word *alone*: being unaccompanied or disconnected. Maybe that defines how

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you've felt since your abortion. However, the truth is that you are not alone in your abortion experience, and you are not alone in feeling lonely. From an aerial perspective, countless women—maybe that includes you—were shocked by the devastating effects of their abortion on their emotions. They, and perhaps you, were unprepared for what they felt.

Sharing what you have experienced since your abortion in a safe environment can be essential to understanding that you are not alone.

Without hesitating, some women choose to process their emotions by sharing their abortion story with a trusted friend or an after-abortion counselor. Others find it incredibly difficult to share their experience for whatever reason—perhaps fear of people's judgments or rejections—and choose to keep their abortion a secret.

For any woman in this last group, it takes courage to share about their abortion. The thought of opening up and being vulnerable can cause them to feel overwhelmingly anxious or scared. It may take several attempts to make a phone call or keep an appointment.

If that's you, sharing what you have experienced since your abortion in a safe environment can be essential to understanding that **You Are Not Alone**. Many women have found it to be freeing. It can be an enormous relief. Your abortion will no longer be an elephant in the room. You will find yourself smiling and less frozen in your pain. You may be able to move forward more easily. And . . . you are worth it. Your story matters.

Actions

- Journal about a time where you felt alone. What steps did you take at the time to help ease your loneliness?
- Recall a time when you said to a family member or friend, “I’m here for you. You’re not alone.” What was their response? How did that make you feel?

Now it’s time to read Lucille’s Hope Story.

Lucille’s Hope Story

As a stylist, I spend all of the day on my feet, so I brushed it off when I started feeling tired. When I began to feel nauseous, I got nervous. I was twenty when I got pregnant from a short-term relationship. As the father was no longer in my life, I had flashbacks to my childhood without my dad, who didn’t seem to want to be there for me.

My current boyfriend, Pete, told me I couldn’t raise a child on my own. I felt stuck, especially as I had no intention of telling my mom or sister. The loneliness was crippling. Having an abortion seemed like my only option to keep my secret.

But then I began to second-guess myself, so by the day of the abortion—June 22—I was really unsure about going. I struggled to get in Pete’s car and wanted him to turn around as we drove up to the clinic. He reminded me of what I wouldn’t be able to do.

As the procedure began, I immediately felt a lot of regrets. Within weeks of my abortion, I had emotions that shocked me: uncontrollable anger, crying suddenly, and overwhelming

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episodes of low self-esteem. When I saw some of my best friends with their babies, I'd feel like a loser because I opted out of raising mine.

I turned to pills after I was given some for a back injury. I found that they numbed my emotional pain but didn't take it away. It only grew. I knew I needed somewhere safe to help me heal from negative emotions that turned to negative behaviors.

I stumbled across a pamphlet for healing after abortion in my doctor's office. A phone call later, and I found a local group in my area. The support offered by after abortion classes played a massive part in identifying and processing emotions and behaviors that were holding me back. After a few months, I felt like all the negative feelings and actions were removed and lifted. I had a more positive outlook on my life and began to look for new, challenging, and exciting opportunities. I've done some fun traveling and plan to open my own salon.

I didn't think it could be true, but healing was possible for me. I'm most grateful that I have serenity in my life today.

What Do You Think?

- What did you take away from Lucille's story?
- Can you relate to any of her personal struggles?

STEP 2

I'm sure many of us have watched a YouTube video or seen a Facebook post or news story of someone doing an act of kindness for another. As the story evolved, you may have learned they were prompted to serve by remembering when they had

received support in their own personal time of need. Having empathy, or walking in another's shoes, is why many wonderful women—who themselves have had one or more abortions—are now counselors. Their hearts go out to suffering women because they have been there. There are many of these women waiting for you when you're ready to speak with them. For information on these resources, see Key 6 Fact Sheet.

If you haven't shared your struggles—or have not told your complete story—consider identifying why. Remember, the goal is to know in your heart and mind that “I am not alone.” If you are a visual person, you might find it helpful to make two columns on paper. At the top of the first column, write “Positive Reasons for Sharing My Story,” and on the other, “Negative Reasons for Sharing My Story.” Then brainstorm and fill in the columns. The answer will become clear.

Sharing a story for the first time often becomes very emotional. It's good that tears flow. The release of tension held for months or years is so very healthy. Please don't let the thought of crying through your story stop you. Don't rehearse it before you speak. It's always okay to say, “I don't know where to start.” If you want to tell someone but know you just can't do it face-to-face with them, consider a phone call, talking with an online support group, or writing your story out and reading it to someone you can trust.

There is so much power in bringing your story into the light with someone you trust and who will respect and keep confidential all that you share. It gets this truth into the open: “Yes, my abortion has impacted me, and I need help.” Does someone you trust come to mind?

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Loneliness has tentacles like a jellyfish. You may have found it zaps your energy and motivation or causes confusion or depression. It can affect your confidence, decrease your appetite for food, impact your social life, or cause a fear of entering into or keeping up with relationships. Sadly, the list goes on to also include substance abuse or activities that will numb your suffering.

It is always important to be kind to yourself and treat yourself like someone you know and love. But now is the time to be extra kind to yourself. It's essential to take time for self-care, especially if you have a busy home life or work schedule. You've been through a lot. Consider asking yourself:

- Do I have any physical problems related to my abortion procedure that I need to get checked out?
- Are there appointments that I need to make to take care of myself. Do I need a haircut, to visit the dentist or eye doctor, or to get a manicure or pedicure?
- Am I eating a diet that will keep my body healthy?
- Am I getting regular exercise?
- Am I getting enough sleep and feeling rested in the morning?
- Is there a favorite restaurant or outdoor activity that I could go to with a good friend?
- What book or hobby is waiting for me to pick it up?

Actions

- Write a note to yourself that reads, "I am NOT alone!" Display it somewhere you will see it, like on a bathroom mirror or on your laptop or phone background.