

SUPPORT

AFTER ABORTION



KEYS TO HOPE AND HEALING FOR MEN

A joint resource from *The Word Among Us Partners*
& *Support After Abortion*.

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Key Three

Freedom from Anger through Forgiveness

“He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.” —Martin Luther King Jr.

Key 2: You Are Not Alone opened the door to sharing your abortion story. By choosing to be vulnerable, you came to the realization that you are not alone and that other men have walked in your shoes. You were also invited to take some time just for yourself, which hopefully you did. **Key 3: Freedom from Anger through Forgiveness** includes three steps, so take your time going through it!

Step 1

Did you circle “anger” in the “Common Feelings Following Abortion” box in **Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now?** Would you say you are more prone to anger since your abortion experience? Many men respond with anger and may not realize there’s a connection to the abortion. One man shared, “After my abortion experience, I had violent outbursts of anger that frightened me. And I didn’t know why.”

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Anger is personal for everyone, and it's not always easy to put the feelings it gives into words. It is very often the result of being displeased over outside things that we cannot control. For example, we may not like other people's actions towards us, events that happen around us, or a host of different situations outside of ourselves that we cannot change.

Often, we can hold onto things that have already happened. We can become resentful or embroiled in anger over the past. This anger can cause us to snap or lash out at others or ourselves.

Sometimes, after an abortion experience, a man can resent himself, his partner, family members, friends, or healthcare providers. This anger can show itself in many ways and destroy relationships, his way of life, and his peace of mind.

Have you ever done something fueled by anger and immediately regretted it? Anger can cause you to react or act out in ways that you usually wouldn't. It can cause you to hurt yourself or others. The actions that hurt you are known as self-destructive behaviors. These can look like dangerous and addictive behaviors such as excessive drinking, drug use, gambling, pornography, unwanted sexual behaviors, or seemingly everyday behaviors like road rage. In these cases, the primary person you are hurting through these self-destructive behaviors is yourself. This anger only punishes you, whether you are aware of it or not.

Sometimes, the easiest anger to hold on to is when we feel justified. When people hurt us for no reason or events happen that cause us real pain, we can let anger become the master over us. This anger can reign over our lives, and our self-destructive behaviors can become habits. Perhaps you're angry as a result of your abortion experience and find you are letting anger control a lot of your decisions.

Countless men have come to understand that *the only sure way to get rid of anger is forgiveness*. This concept may seem contrary to what you are feeling, but forgiveness is transforming for those willing to accept it. Forgiveness can be for yourself, your child's mother, family members, or health-care providers.

While it may seem easier to point your finger in blame, the way *through anger to peace* is through surrendering to *forgiveness*. It is a straightforward action, and it is important to know that you don't always have to *feel* like forgiving. But the act of forgiveness is necessary to healing. We are not in control of everything, but we can let go of our anger through forgiveness.

Countless men have come to understand that *the only sure way to get rid of anger is forgiveness*.

Actions

- Write down any thoughts from what you've just read on anger.
- What went through your mind when you read the word "forgive"?
- On another page, write the names of those you are angry with. You'll refer to this list in the next step.

Rick's Story

My mom was in high school when she had me. My grandmother helped raise me until I was about ten and we moved out on our own. After that, my single mom struggled to provide for my younger sister and me. We didn't have many things that other kids enjoyed, and she struggled to make ends meet.

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I saw firsthand how hard it was for my mom, so having an abortion was the obvious answer when my girlfriend, Jenn, got pregnant during our senior year in high school. Jenn was so scared to tell her parents, or really anyone, and I couldn't imagine parenting a child like my mom had done. Our decision was mutual—we acted quickly and drove to a clinic, miles from home, where no one would know us. I thought we took care of our problem.

Immediately, everything was different. Jenn began avoiding me in the school hallways. She started volleyball, and I started baseball. I reached out to her, but she stopped answering or returning my calls. We never spoke to each other again.

I put thoughts of Jenn and the abortion behind me after high school, and I got certified as an HVAC technician. I threw myself into long hours of work, but I was angry. I nearly lost my job because of an almost violent encounter with a customer.

The wake-up call to my anger came after getting pulled over for a charge of reckless driving and going to court. I asked myself, "Why am I always so angry? I don't want to hurt anyone." I read articles online about controlling anger. But I knew I needed more.

My answer came when a customer canceled a maintenance appointment for his air conditioning unit. I had worked with him before, and we were on friendly terms. He told me he had to reschedule because he led a men's after-abortion support group and had double-booked himself. It didn't occur to me that abortion was at the root of my anger.

After the light bulb went on, I asked him if I could join him, and my healing journey started! Together with him and other men, I began working through unresolved issues related to my abortion involvement: anger, regret, and self-loathing. When I

admitted to finding it difficult to forgive myself for taking the life of my child, I found I wasn't alone as other men had struggled too. Their encouragement got me to the point of beginning to say, "I forgive myself." I'd suggest such a group to any man open to support about their abortion involvement. It takes courage and the swallowing of pride to do so. All I can say is, "I'm not the angry man I once was."

What Did You Think?

- What did you take away from Rick's story?
- What can you relate to?

Step 2

Forgiveness is a necessary key to experiencing freedom from anger and inner peace. It is also essential to help you move on with your life. It removes the reason for the anger surrounding your abortion experience by lessening the grip that the action and those involved in it have on you.

It's easy to make excuses not to forgive, especially if you're experiencing a lot of self-justified anger. Any man who has been deeply hurt by others involved in the abortion experience could say, "I could never forgive her," "he doesn't deserve my forgiveness," or "I'm waiting for an apology." If you have negative thoughts like these about one or more people involved in your abortion story, including yourself, you are not alone. Other men have struggled with offering forgiveness. If that's you, perhaps you will find it helpful to know what forgiveness is and what it isn't.

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First of all, forgiveness is a choice: it is something you do. It is an action, not a feeling—a letting-go of negative emotions towards others and perhaps self-hatred and self-condemnation toward yourself.

Forgiveness has nothing to do with how you feel. Remember, it is a choice you make. Don't wait for your feelings to change, because that may never happen. You can choose to forgive even while feeling angry, resentful, or cheated. Forgiving doesn't mean denying or justifying the actions of others. Or, in the case of yourself, it doesn't mean that you don't accept responsibility for your role and are shifting the blame. It does mean that you relinquish the hold that anger has on you.

It's really important to understand that the choice to forgive is for your benefit and your peace of mind. You may never have the chance to forgive someone in person, but you can let go for yourself.

Actions

- Refer to the list of people that you wrote down that you are angry with.
- Find a quiet place and do the following:
 - Read each person's name outloud and choose to give them the gift of your forgiveness by saying, "I forgive you _____ (name the person) for _____ (name their action)."
 - Let all the unforgiveness in your heart go.
 - Sit quietly and reflect.
 - Be grateful that you had the strength to forgive or to begin to forgive.

Step 3

Once you've forgiven the people on your list, you've taken a really important step toward healing. There may still be one, or more, people you find it impossible to forgive. If there is someone you can't seem to forgive, seek support from someone who knows your story. Together, try to take the first step in forgiving. Remember, it's a choice, not a feeling. It can be helpful and healing to write a letter (that you won't send to the person) expressing your anger and other emotions.

Forgiving yourself is possible. As with forgiving others, it is a decision.

Your anger may be so intense and your hurt so deep that you may need to forgive that person more than once to experience complete freedom. Like all forms of recovery, it is a process. There is no defined starting or stopping point.

Up until now, we have focused on forgiving those who have hurt us. Now let's revisit the question: *Have you forgiven yourself for your abortion experience and other actions related to it?* Perhaps you've never thought of or known the importance of forgiving yourself.

Having read the question above, what comes to mind first? Take a few moments to process that. Now, write it and any other thoughts or feelings that come to mind in a notebook.

Let us assure you, forgiving yourself is possible. As with forgiving others, it is a decision. It's not denying your abortion experience. It is a gift that every person deserves to receive and one that your child would want you to give yourself.

For men who've been able to forgive themselves, they have experienced relief and serenity.

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For some men, forgiving themselves happens over time. A counselor shared this powerful example about a man we'll call Blake, whose abortion experience was twelve years ago: "Blake would often say, 'I can't forgive myself.' The regret, self-hatred, and self-loathing over what he had been involved in was paralyzing him. But slowly, over time, he would say, 'I'm beginning to forgive myself.' Blake has still not entirely forgiven himself and still battles differing emotions. But he has allowed himself to take that first and most challenging step of beginning the process."

The action for this step will give you some suggestions to forgive yourself. Repeat them whenever you feel a need.

Actions

- Alone or with a friend, say aloud, "I forgive myself for my abortion experience(s)" and _____ (mention anything else)." You may not be able to forgive yourself or others for everything—start small if you need to.
- When standing in front of a mirror and getting ready for the day, say, "I've given myself the gift of forgiveness."

Points to Review

- Freedom from my anger is through forgiveness, which is a choice.
- Forgiveness is not based on my feelings.
- Forgiveness is the key to my serenity and a vital key to my hope and healing.

Final Thought and Meditation

If you search for forgiveness quotes online, you'll be amazed at how many there are! Read the following and reflect on what they mean to you.

“Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.” —Anonymous

“Holding onto resentment is like letting someone live rent-free in your head.” —Ann Landers

What's Next?

Forgiveness is a process. But it is essential to take that first step. **Key 4: Moving through Grief** will help you through grief—not around it. As you will see, that is an important and powerful distinction. You may want to review this with a friend or support member at **Support After Abortion** listed on the back of this booklet.

Start Your Support Here

Support After Abortion (SAA)

844-289-HOPE (4673)

supportafterabortion.com

National Agencies

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

212-870-3400

www.aa.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

818-773-9999

www.na.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-7233

www.thehotline.org

National Human Trafficking Hotline

888-373-7888

Text 2 337 733

www.humantraffickinghotline.org

Support After Abortion

Co-Dependents Anonymous

888-444-2359

www.coda.org

RAINN: Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network

800-656-4673

www.rainn.org

National Alliance on Mental Health

800-950-6264

www.nami.org

Grief Resource Network

828-726-9554

www.griefresourcenetwork.com-crisis-center/hotlines

Grief Anonymous

www.griefanonymous.com

American Pregnancy Helpline—Miscarriages

866-942-6466

www.thehelpline.org

Crisis Text Line

Text 74174

www.crisistextline.org

Faith Based Agencies

Project Rachel: Hope After Abortion
888-456-HOPE (4673)
www.hopeafterabortion.org

Esperanza Posaborto
888-456-HOPE (4673)
www.esperanzaposaborto.org

Rachel's Vineyard Ministries
877-HOPE-4-ME
www.rachelsvineyard.org

Lumina/Hope & Healing After Abortion
877-586-4621
www.postabortionhelp.com

Project Joseph
469-720-2273 (CARE)
healing@projectjosephdallas.org

Men and Abortion
513-729-3600
www.menandabortion.net

Online Support

Abortion Changes You
www.abortionchangesyou.com

Support After Abortion

Prayer Lines

Christian Broadcasting Network with the 700 Club

Prayer Line

800-700-7000

www.1.cbn.com

Joy FM Prayer Line

877-800-7729

www.florida.thejoyfm.com

Trinity Broadcasting Network Prayer Line

888-731-1000

www.tbn.org

Daystar Prayer Line

800-329-0029

Bethel Church Prayer Line

530-255-2066

www.bethel.com/ministries/healing-rooms/

Breakthrough Prayer Line

800-424-8644

Life Outreach International Prayer Line

800-947-5433

www.lifetoday.org

Start Your Support Here

Morris Cerullo Prayer Line

866-756-4200

www.mcwe.com

Crossroads Prayer Line

866-273-4444

www.crossroads.ca

Family Broadcasting Corporation Prayer Line

800-365-3732

www.familybroadcastingcorporation.com

Notes Pages

Notes Pages

There Is Support After Abortion

If you are a man that has been affected by an abortion experience, this booklet can help you. You are not alone in how you are feeling right now. Many men have been affected by abortion and have gone through a range of emotions and differing experiences and are now on the path to hope and healing. You will find their stories and the steps they took in this booklet.

If you want to speak to someone right now, contact **Support After Abortion**. Our staff is here to help you and provide you with compassionate care that leads to healing and restoration.

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<https://www.supportafterabortion.com>

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