

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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Made and printed in the United States of America

Key Four

Moving through Grief

“Embrace your grief. For there, your soul will grow.”
—Carl Jung

Key 3: Freedom from Anger through Forgiveness opened the door to acknowledging areas of anger and releasing anger through the choice of forgiveness. You asked yourself if you had forgiven yourself for your abortion involvement. Many emotions may have come up for you—from anger to sadness to relief. **Key 4: Moving through Grief** will once again bring up many emotions. As with the previous keys, take your time when going through this key.

While you may have worked through the previous three keys on your own, it is suggested that you go through this key with a friend or support group. If you don't have anyone in your life you feel comfortable working through this with, reach out to a **Support After Abortion** staff member to walk through this key with you.

Step 1

What Is Grief?

“Grief is a feeling of deep sorrow and sadness. Grief is painful and emotionally exhausting. Grief can leave a person feeling empty and numb. And grief is normal after a loss.”

—Alcoholics Anonymous

Time Out: *Every man—including you—moves through his grief differently. If you find yourself struggling with grief (about your child or any loss) or feel stuck, it would be vital for you to seek professional help. Support After Abortion can connect you to a local resource.*

A loss we need to grieve can be from a number of sources. It can be the loss of your reputation, or a place to live. It can be the relocation of a family member or friend, the end of a relationship, or the passing of a loved one.

After an abortion experience, a man may immediately grieve the loss of his child. But commonly, it occurs weeks, months, or even years later—perhaps because it didn’t impact him then, or he distracted himself from the pain with work or other activities.

If you’re reading this and you haven’t experienced grief over your abortion, don’t close this booklet just yet. Try to think broader. Perhaps you are grieving the loss of a relationship as the result of the abortion. Whatever you’re feeling right now, you’re not alone—there are many other men who have felt this same way or have been in a similar situation. As you continue

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with this key, you may find the following steps helpful for processing the loss.

We will look at four steps in the grieving process: acknowledge, accept, connect, and adapt.

It is first necessary to *acknowledge* where you are with the loss in order to move through grief. Acknowledging the loss of a child and any other related losses will allow you to express how your grief is making you feel. It is a crucial step to experiencing peace amidst your pain and grief. You will show strength by not avoiding these feelings or *sweeping them under the rug*. In **Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now**, you were encouraged to identify your emotions. These feelings might now include deeper feelings such as feelings of emptiness, remorse, or vulnerability.

- Take a moment to ask yourself, “Where am I with acknowledging the loss of my child?”
- Take a moment to ask yourself, “Where am I with acknowledging any other losses I experienced (like the end of a relationship)?”

The next step in coping with grief is to *accept* the loss of your child to abortion. One of life’s hard truths is that we cannot change our reality, however much we may want to. It is not easy, but it is important to stay in the present. This doesn’t mean you cannot be sad or feel hopeless, but it means that you embrace the truth about what happened and live in the present moment.

- Take a moment to ask yourself, “Where am I with accepting the loss?”

Actions

- Reflect or talk through how you are doing in acknowledging and accepting your loss.
- Make some notes about acknowledging and accepting your loss.

Tim's Story

It was six weeks before my last deployment as a US Marine when my wife Susan told me, "Tim, I think I'm pregnant." I couldn't believe what she was telling me. We already had three sons who were seven, four, and almost two.

All I could focus on were my fears. Thoughts were running through my head like tornadoes: *How would Susan manage with another child while I was gone? How would we afford a fourth child?* We got a home pregnancy test and when we both saw it was positive, I asked her if she wanted to end it. Relief came over her, and she sobbed, "Yes. I can't have another. I'm sorry. I just can't do it." In my mind, that was the end of the discussion. Abortion was a woman's right, and I agreed with that.

I made the appointment, booked two nights at a hotel, and arranged for babysitters. I told everyone we were getting away before I was deployed. Susan needed those few days away to recover physically. But she wouldn't talk about it. And to be honest, I didn't want to talk about it either.

When I came home from deployment, my impatience turned to anger, isolation from buddies increased, and Susan and I began drifting apart. Once called the "fun couple" by our friends, there was less laughter between us at what the kids did, less intimacy,

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and no date nights. The years passed, and we threw ourselves into kids' activities and into our jobs.

I always worried about our marriage and who I had become. I also began to wonder if Susan's abortion was the root cause of our problems. It was no secret that a lot of our challenges began after that decision was made. Taking the bull by the horns, I met with my buddy Kevin and shared my abortion story. He urged me to begin talking to Susan. I didn't do that, but I wrote her a note that read, "I love you, and I want to talk about us."

I was nervous about doing it, but shared with Susan everything that had been going on in me for too many years: regret, shame, self-loathing. She didn't respond but went to bed. The next morning, I found her sobbing in the kitchen. I hugged her, and it all poured out of her. That was the beginning of the healing of both our lives, enormously helped by some after-abortion counseling.

What Did You Think?

- What did you take away from Tim's Story?
- Why was identifying his loss healing for Tim?

Step 2

This step begins with two important thoughts. First, the pain of grief that a man experiences for days, weeks, months, or years after an abortion experience will lessen. Second, pain triggered by a movie, a TV commercial, or attending a birthday or wedding of someone around the age of his child, will also lessen.

Some men have chosen to express love for their child by finding ways to *connect* with the loss by honoring their child either alone, with a friend, or with the mother of their child if they are still in each other's lives and it wouldn't cause more harm to include them. For others, they have heard about doing this, but it just wasn't anything they wanted to do. Perhaps they were even advised that it wouldn't be helpful to their healing. Many counselors have found that connecting with the loss of a child is vital to having closure over the loss.

Honoring Your Child

There are different ways to honor your child. Choosing a name for your child is something some men have found helpful. Think of what name you would like to give your child. You could even chat with a friend about your favorite names. After deciding upon a name, take a moment to say to your child, "I'm naming you ____."

Another suggestion would be to write a letter to your child. Only you will see it, unless and until you decide to share it. Write whatever is on your heart. Or perhaps give your favorite charity a gift or plant a tree in the child's honor—whatever brings you peace, comfort, and joy as you think about your child.

A Memorial Moment: With the support of another person they trust, some men have found it comforting to plan a memorial moment dedicated to their child. At a meaningful place—the woods, beach, or scenic overlook—he names his child and acknowledges his loss. The moment is symbolic and incredibly important.

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The fourth point to coping with grief is to *adapt* to the loss of your child to abortion. Connecting with your grief and honoring your child doesn't mean that you will forget your child. Adapting your thought patterns, entering fully into the flow of your life, and having a caring concern for others does not mean you will forget your child. The love you have for your child won't lessen—if anything, your new inner calm and ways of thinking will help your feelings toward your child to grow deeper.

A counselor who had an abortion experience illustrates how he views his grief: “It wasn't until I went through an abortion healing program that I found out how much healing I needed. Grief is hard. It's not an easy process to go through. Grief is one thing you can't go over, under, or around. You must go through.”

Actions

- Make some notes of your thoughts about this key.
- Make a plan to meet up with a friend (or friends) to do something fun—a movie, meal, hike, or any other positive activity you enjoy!

Points to Review

- Grief is a natural response to my loss. Everyone grieves differently; there is no right or wrong way for me to grieve.
- The four points for lessening grief's pain are to: acknowledge, accept, connect, and adapt.

Final Thought and Meditation

This may have been a hard key for you to work through. But be encouraged by the following quotes.

“Grief is like a ball of string. You start at one end and wind. Then the ball slips through your fingers and rolls across the floor. Some of your work is undone, but not all. You pick it up and start over again, but you never have to begin again at the string’s end. The ball never completely unwinds. You’ve made some progress.” —Anonymous

“Grief never ends, but it changes. It’s a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith. . . . It is the price of love.” —Anonymous

What’s Next?

Moving through grief is a lifelong process. **Key 5: Walking in Confidence and Hope** will give you positive steps to reframe negative thoughts that are common.

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

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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

Start Your Support Here

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

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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844-289-HOPE (4673)

<https://www.supportafterabortion.com>

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\$5.99

ISBN 978-1-59325-593-0



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