

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 Five

Walking in Confidence and Hope

“Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny.” —C. S. Lewis

Key 4: Moving through Grief opened the door to help you release some of your grief and sorrow. You did this by acknowledging, accepting, connecting, and adapting to your life today. Of course, it is also important to remember that grief looks different for everyone.

Step 1.

Confidence is believing in yourself. Having *hope* is believing that a positive outcome is possible. Take a few moments to check on your *confidence* and *hope* levels. How many “light bulb” moments have you experienced since you began this booklet? Transformation does not have to be a drastic change—it is often as subtle as a different way of thinking. Take a moment to write down any shifts or other ways of thinking you have become aware of. A challenge for some men with an abortion experience is how to continue to walk in confidence and hope for continued healing. This may include you, which is why this key will lay out a *plan* to find and keep your confidence and hope.

Recognizing Your Thoughts. Try thinking of nothing for just a few minutes, and you'll see that it's virtually impossible to do so. Thoughts roll in and out of our minds all the time—good, bad, and indifferent.

It is especially important as you continue your healing process to be aware of your thoughts and decide which ones to entertain and which ones to reject. That's because not everything that pops into your head will further your journey of healing. While it's unnecessary to completely stop our thoughts, it is important to recognize negative thoughts and discard them.

Pausing throughout Your Day. A helpful way to protect the ground you have gained in your healing is to begin to take short breaks throughout your day and ask yourself, "What have I been thinking?" Be sure to look for encouraging or motivating thoughts—not just the negative ones.

Thoughts That Steal Hope. The more you become conscious of your thought patterns, the easier it will be to acknowledge the discouraging thoughts that often arise from your subconscious and steer you off course: thoughts that cause you pain, sadness, guilt, shame, or are negative or self-defeating. Those thoughts may rush in and overwhelm you if you are not aware of them. Then there are the "what if" thoughts about your child and your abortion experience. These can flow out of regret for your decisions. It's important to grieve the "what if" thoughts and lost potential and opportunities for both you and your child, but it's not healthy to stay there.

Many people in various support programs have found power in accepting the things outside their control and the things they cannot change. There is relief in allowing this

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concept to travel from your head to your heart. It is also helpful to remind yourself that you cannot control other people's thoughts or actions.

You might want to write down any extremes in your thought patterns, noting when you had them, what was happening at that moment, and where you were. You might also include why you gave them your time and consideration, how powerful they were, and why they were so hard to resist.

Under a Microscope. When you catch one of these stray discouraging thoughts—as well as the situations that trigger them—your next job is to examine it. Ask yourself, “Is it true? Does it mesh with the truths about what I now believe about identity and self-worth? What feelings does it evoke?”

Get Out. If the thought doesn't belong in your mind, send it away by choosing to replace it with a **positive thought**. Perhaps reread some of the quotes at the beginning of each key or recall some of your strengths—they are numerous. Then watch the unhelpful thought—the lie—lose its power over you.

By frequently examining his thoughts, a man healing from an abortion experience can keep himself from getting derailed by distractions and lesser concerns. These lead him away from the fullness of life that he wants for himself and others.

Yes You Can! Isn't it encouraging that you really can walk in confidence and hope? It takes time and practice to be aware of your thoughts. But know that you are up for this new way of thinking.

Actions

- Reflect on some of the ways you are walking in confidence and hope.
- Consider sharing them with someone who knew how you were feeling.

Mark's Story

I'd been divorced from my wife for a few months when I met Charlotte. She was stranded on the side of the road with a flat tire, and I was her "knight in shining armor." Within six months, I moved into her place and committed to making this relationship work. I didn't intend to get married again, but I certainly didn't share that with Charlotte. I had been hurt once, and that was enough.

But a few years into our relationship, I was hurt again. Charlotte had an abortion without telling me. She went with a friend to terminate my child's life. She told me days after it happened. I screamed at her, "You've killed my child. What right did you have?" Deep down, I had wanted to have a child with Charlotte. But once again, I hadn't expressed what I wanted.

I knew I could never forgive Charlotte. How could I when she had given me no say in the abortion decision? I certainly didn't have any legal rights. I called myself "a victim of abortion." Needing some space from Charlotte, I moved out. At first, I felt numb about the whole experience. Still, it didn't take long for the flood gates to open: the grief, pain, guilt, and shame that I'd stood by and did nothing to save my child.

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Concentrating at work was challenging. I slept and ate more, and I lost motivation to dress well or take care of myself. My angry outbursts when I met up with family and friends confused and worried me. I hated the changes in myself. But I didn't know where to turn for help, believing that abortion was a woman's issue, and that as a man, I somehow didn't matter. But some articles on the internet informed me that a man's pain from abortion is real—not lesser or greater than a woman's—just different.

That gave me some hope that I wasn't just going crazy or on the verge of a breakdown. There was a root to my changed behavior. I pursued finding help but it wasn't easy to find. Eventually—again online—I found a counselor who was open to having phone consultations. I just couldn't do face-to-face initially. Week after week over the phone I shared more and more about my abortion story and what was going on with me. Then came a time when I said, “Can we actually meet? I'm ready.”

After months of meeting one-on-one with my counselor, he posed the question, “Is there anyone you need to forgive?” I knew there was. We talked about forgiving Charlotte, not face-to-face but in my heart. He also encouraged me to share my story with a small group of other men suffering from abortion. I'm still a work in progress and wonder if I'll ever father a child. But in my heart, I know I've forgiven Charlotte, and that gives me peace.

What Did You Think?

- What are you taking away from Mark's Story?
- What steps did he take that helped him?

Step 2

Now we're taking a step further, from thoughts to memories. There is a difference between the two. Memories are more long-term than thoughts and are based on events that happened in the past. Memory is stored information that we can recall.

A man may have many stored memories surrounding his abortion journey: the day he learned of the pregnancy; the conversations surrounding the decision to terminate the life of his child; the anxiety in finding money to pay the health providers; and the days, weeks, months, and years following.

These memories can keep him from being able to walk in confidence and hope. Sometimes the memories replay like a video, zapping his peace of mind and robbing him of sleep. These memories are like chains that can hold him back from moving on and living with confidence and hope.

If painful memories like these come frequently to you or are impacting your quality of life, or if you are experiencing nightmares related to your memories, please seek help from a professional. These are painful but common symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and must be handled in cooperation with a healthcare provider. If new memories surface—which is part of the healing process—don't become despondent. Rather, quickly get support by telling someone. For immediate, real-time support, contact **Support After Abortion**. Contact information is at the back of this booklet.

The story below may help you understand how controlling memories can be.

An elephant trainer was showing a visitor around the zoo. The visitor noticed an enormous elephant with a small chain

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around one ankle. The chain was staked to the ground, and its links were thin. “I’m curious,” said the visitor. “How can such a weak chain hold such a large animal?” The trainer replied, “Well, it doesn’t.” He explained: “When an elephant is born, we place a chain like the one around his ankle. No matter how much the baby elephant pulls, he can’t break the chain or pull out the stake. At some point, he stops trying. By the time he’s fully grown, he’s still being held by that same chain. It’s not the chain that holds him, though. It’s the memory of the chain.”

Question Following the Elephant Story

What are you taking away from this story?

As you can now appreciate, the power to breaking the chains of distressing memories about your abortion experience and moving forward with confidence and hope lies in sharing your story. Hopefully, you have experienced meaningful healing by doing so. Rest assured that many men who have overcome this hurdle and become self-aware now know the value of doing so.

At the beginning of this key, you read that *hope believes that a positive outcome is possible*. Have you seen many positive results since the first key? A remarkable trait of hope is that it has no end. You can believe that you will continue to experience more and more healing from your abortion experience. One man who shared his story said, “I’m encouraged by the thought that there’s no end to my journey of healing.”

What hope requires is courage and perseverance. Allow the memories of transformations to spur you on to seek even more hope in your life. Keep your hope alive by being grateful for

healing you have already received. Congratulate yourself for even the smallest steps forward and remember that healing is a process. Focus on your goals and not on any setbacks or failures, find supportive friends, accept what you can't change, and look for ways to laugh!

Actions

- Answer the question under the elephant story.
- Write down your thoughts about this key.

Points to Review

- I can be chained down by memories of my past that can prevent me from moving forward.
- Knowing what I'm thinking during my day will significantly help me heal from my abortion experience.

Final Thought and Meditation

Your healing is a continuous journey. If you continue to be mindful of your thoughts and stay positive to move forward in your healing, you can be transformed. This transformation is a process, and it begins with thinking about things differently.

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” —Desmond Tutu

What's Next?

Remember that everyone gains confidence and hope at their own pace. Keep taking the steps and actions that will help you along your path to healing. **Key 6: Giving Hope to Others** offers actions to further your healing—helping and connecting with those who are walking the same path as you.

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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<https://www.supportafterabortion.com>

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