

MEN GRIEVE TOO

Abortion and Men Forgotten Victims of Choice

Adapted from an article by
Vincent M. Rue, PhD & Cynthia Tellefsen
Institute for Pregnancy Loss, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Does Abortion Affect Men?

How abortion affects men remains largely a story unexamined and untold. In modern abortion practice, gender discrimination is rampant; women may choose, fathers may not. By law, fathers are excluded from participating in the abortion.

Men and the Problem Pregnancy

Prior to a woman aborting her child, there are six scenarios of male involvement:

- He doesn't know she is pregnant and she aborts without his knowledge;
- He knows about the pregnancy but hides his own feelings or beliefs from the woman out of his attempt to "love" her and affirm her rights over her body;
- He pressures her to abort;
- He supports and encourages her decision to abort;
- He opposes the abortion and says so openly; and
- He abandons her physically and emotionally, refusing responsibility for her or any of her choices.

Forgotten Fathers

In the only book on abortion and men, Shostak describes male abortion pain as the loss of fatherhood and a "wound you cannot see or feel, but it exists". (A. Shostak. *Abortion and Men: Lessons, Losses and Love*. NY, Praeger, 1984).

According to Shostak, a man gets an incredible message at the first real evidence of his virility, his partner announces she is pregnant, and he is the father and "we are going to have a \$US180 pregnancy termination". In interviewing 1000 men, Shostak found:

- abortion is a "death experience", and for most men more emotionally trying than they expected;
- the most common post-abortion reaction was helplessness;
- men who are not helped to mourn over an abortion are learning how to be even less involved as nurturing parents in the future; and
- the majority of relationships failed post-abortion.

One sad reality of abortion is that sensitive men hurt the women they love by saying nothing when the word "abortion" is first uttered in the decision-making process.

Desperately wanting to please, these men are rejected because they are judged deficient in their true love for their partners: "How could you say nothing during this crisis and let me just go out and kill our child? Is this all I mean to you?"

According to one such father:

"Things are pretty screwed up when the way you show a woman you love her is by agreeing to abort rather than having a child."

For men who pressure or encourage the women they care about to have an abortion, the test of true feelings emerges later on. Typically, having encouraged the abortion for selfish reasons or out of fear, these men can pay a great emotional price once the reality of what an abortion is sinks in.

Some men are so wounded by their abortion role that they abort their own lives. Dr Rue has treated women whose partners committed suicide because they couldn't escape hearing the relentless little voices that kept saying:

"Daddy, Daddy, please don't let me die".

And for the man who stands up and opposes an abortion, under the law he has now legal recourse and cannot defend his child's right to life. His grief is punctuated with impotency and feelings of helplessness. Words are just not enough to prevent his child's death.

Grief, Guilt and Loss

Men's lives contain greater attachments and are more profoundly affected by fatherhood than is usually assumed. One father whose child died from abortion described his grief this way:

"I wasn't in the room; I wasn't even in the clinic that day. But in my mind, I've been there a million times since. I've been watching, breaking, wanting to rescue you. In my mind I need to be a hero not a killer, the man who didn't flee. But I am not. I am the man I fear I see."

Abortion rewrites the rules of masculinity. While a male is expected to be strong, abortion makes him feel weak. A male is expected to be responsible, yet abortion encourages him to act without concern for the innocent and to destroy any identifiable and undesirable outcomes of his sexual decision-making and/or attachments. A male is expected to protect, but by law he is encouraged to do otherwise.

All humans must grieve a loss or they will in some way be tormented. Typical male grief responses include remaining silent and grieving alone. Men who have experienced abortion death can become traumatised by this significant loss. They may become:

- depressed and/or anxious
- controlling, demanding and directing;
- enraged or hostile when triggering events occur.

Relationships at Risk

A guilt-ridden, tormented male does not easily love or accept love. His guilt may prevent him from seeking compassion, support or affection. In turn, he “forgets” how to reciprocate these feelings. To mask or substitute the need to grieve fosters denial and forces a male to become a “fugitive” from life, loving and healing.

The Price is Too High

Only now are we beginning to see the extent of the harm abortion visits on women, men and the surviving children. It is clear that in addition to the other victims of abortion, men too suffer. They too pay a high price for reproductive “freedom”. They too lose in the high stakes world of reproductive “choice” guided only by self and expediency.

Killing hurts the living too. It knows no gender bias.

For help contact:

Pregnancy Assistance Incorporated
195 Lord Street
East Perth WA 6004

9328 2929