

## THE PAIN OF ABORTION

*Abortion Grief Counselling Association  
(AGCA)*

**‘I felt totally helpless. I was a failure ... How could I resist when everyone was just trying to (help) me? ... and they were the only source of support I had.’<sup>1</sup>**

‘I wasn’t told that having an abortion would create an unbelievable self-hatred that would consume me and lead to distrust, suspicion and the utter inability to care about myself or others – including my four children. I wasn’t told that hearing babies cry would trigger such anger that I wouldn’t be able to be around babies at all.

‘I wasn’t told that it would become impossible to look at my own eyes in the mirror. Or that my confidence would be so shaken that I would become unable to make important life decisions. My self-hatred kept me from pursuing my goal of becoming a registered nurse. I didn’t think I deserved success.

‘I wasn’t told that I would come to hate all those who advised me to have my abortions, because they were my accomplices in the murder of my babies. I wasn’t told that having an abortion with my husband’s consent would end up causing me to hate the father of my children, or that I would be unable to sustain ANY satisfying, lasting, fulfilling relationships.

‘I wasn’t told that I could become suicidal in the Fall of every year, when both of my babies should have been born. I wasn’t told that, on the birthdays of my living children, I would remember the two for whom I would never make a birthday cake or that, on Mothers’ Day, I would remember the two who would never send me a card or that, every Christmas, I would remember the two for whom there would never be any presents.

‘My abortions were supposed to be a “quick-fix” for my problems, but they didn’t tell me there would be no “quick-fix” for my regrets.

‘I had gone to my pastor before both abortions. He said that the babies were “just blobs”, too, so when I went afterwards and asked why I felt so dirty, he said, “God forgives.”. I asked God to forgive me and my pastor said that He did. But I didn’t feel forgiven. I still felt unclean and undeserving.

‘I went to a psychiatric hospital and they gave me shock treatments. It didn’t help.

‘The nightmares continued. I became a workaholic; work didn’t help. I became a compulsive eater; food didn’t help. I became anorexic, as a form of self-punishment. That came close to killing me; I had two strokes.

‘I tried alcohol; it only helped temporarily. The torment would still be there when I woke up. That effort to escape the pain only lasted two months.’<sup>2</sup>

**Judith**

**“ ... The first few years after the abortion were fine ... Then when I had my first baby I went into shock. It suddenly hit me that this was a baby ... I had panic attacks and five years of really bad illness and thinking I would die ... I went to the doctor every month and, although the abortion was on my records, he didn't see it was the cause.”** Alice did not realise the cause either, and just thought she was ill. It was her mother who eventually suggested that the illness and attacks might be due to the abortion ... **“In the last few years I've had counselling (for the abortion), which finished about two years ago and, since then – for the first time – I've lived a normal life.”**<sup>3</sup>

*Alice*

**‘I was a very open-minded, pro-choice feminist (but after my abortion) I hated myself and Jim so much that I could no longer keep it inside. I was very pathetic, instigating fights between us.’**<sup>1</sup>

*Carol*

‘I haven't been able to sleep for three months ... I eat and I feel sick; I am constantly arguing with my husband, my mother, my in-laws and my brother. What upsets me most, however – and the reason I have come to see *you* – is the fact that I am treating my three-year-old boy badly. Yet, I love him and I do not want to hurt him. I must be cured straight away, because I fear that I am on the edge of madness. I have terrible dreams, which afterwards I cannot remember. I wake up suddenly and I switch on the light. I often sleep with the light on. I shiver and I am cold. I am off sick at work. I feel as if I am going mad and I cannot bear making my little boy suffer any more. He has seen me change and I feel myself that I have changed. If, in the past, I felt very little pleasure from making love with my husband, now I feel none at all. In fact, I find it physically revolting. I feel that he is far away from me – that everybody is. I have the feeling that, at any moment, some terrible disaster is going to happen to me. I sense a catastrophe around the corner and I am afraid of going out by myself.’<sup>4</sup>

‘I started a job in a hospital but, after a couple of months, I had to leave work, as the clinical environment kept triggering memories of my abortions and I had become unable to function.

‘I crawled into my GP's office sobbing, barely able to walk or speak. As I told her of my feelings, I encountered a wall of disbelief. I was scoffed at: “But your abortions were over 15 years ago!” I watched as she struggled to find the sympathy she felt she should show. It is hard enough to talk about your abortions, let alone having to cope with denial on the part of the practitioner.’

*Melisa*

‘It's so hard to put into words how the abortion affected me. I became a tramp and slept with anyone and everyone. I engaged in unprotected sex and, each month when I wasn't pregnant, I would go into a deep depression. I was rebellious. I wanted my parents to see what I had become. I dropped out of college. I tried suicide, but I didn't have the guts to slit my wrists or blow my brains out. I couldn't get my hands on sleeping pills, so I resorted to over-the-counter sleep aids and booze.

‘When that failed, I then tried to make relationships work with me – any man. I was driven with a need to have a child and knew, if I was married, my parents couldn’t do anything about it.’<sup>2</sup>

*Nancy*

‘Within 60 days I was in what I now call the 3D’s – Drugs, Daring and Death – and that is where I remained for three years. I was doing drugs constantly – 24 hours a day. I never went straight. I went to church stoned. I went to my job stoned. I also ruined my career.

‘I was living on the edge of a daring life. I was the guy you saw on the ski slopes coming down missing the trees, doing flips and hitting those ski-jumps at 90 miles per hour. I was driving fast, and drinking and driving, because I had lost my self-worth. I had everything bottled up within me. I was waiting for life to be snatched from me because it had lost its meaning, and I wanted to die to atone for the one I had allowed to be taken.’<sup>5</sup>

‘Within a month of the abortion, my hair started turning grey. I almost lost my part-time job because I cried so often at work. When I drove the car I was frequently blinded by tears and had several minor accidents, any one of which could have been serious. I often had thoughts of killing myself and my children.’<sup>6</sup>

#### **References**

<sup>1</sup>David C. Reardon “*Aborted Women, Silent No More*” Loyola University Press, Chicago 1987.

<sup>2</sup>Extract from “Post-Abortion Review”, Elliot Institute, PO Box 7348, Springfield, IL. 62791, USA.

<sup>3</sup>1994 UK Parliamentary Report by the Commission of Inquiry into the Operation and Consequences of The Abortion Act.

<sup>4</sup>Extract taken from *Post-Abortion Syndrome: its wide ramifications* edited by Dr. Peter Doherty, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>5</sup>Healing Visions Conference VII, National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing, Milwaukee, WI, June 1993, testimony of Pete Palmer.

<sup>6</sup>An extract of a letter to the Editor of *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 26 May, 1984.

#### **Disclaimer**

Many of the comments contained in this brochure are general in nature and anyone intending to apply the information to practical circumstances should independently verify their interpretation and the information applicability to their particular circumstances.

#### **For further information**

#### **Contact**

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