

Abortion Pro and Con List Abortion-Vulnerable Activity

Materials Required:

- Plain sheet of Paper and Pen
- Copy of the “Common Issues of Post-Abortive Women” List

Outline of Activity:

This activity allows us to outline other aspects of abortion that the client may not have considered that will be sent home with them.

Complete the following with the Abortion-Vulnerable Client:

Fold the paper in half and then open it back up

Put a line down the middle of the sheet of paper

On the right side, write “Pros” at the top of the column.

On the left side, write “Cons” at the top of the column

Next, ask the client what the “pros” are (good reasons) for choosing abortion.

Record these responses under the “Pros” column using **printed** handwriting. Encourage her to think about this but don’t give her answers. It needs to be what she is thinking at that moment.

Ask the client what the “Cons” are (bad reasons) for choosing abortion. Print those answers under the Con column heading.

Then give her the “*Common Issues of Post-Abortive People*” sheet. Review each item quietly and calmly, asking her what issue should go under on the Pros and Cons list. Let them think that through. Add the first words from the list either of the pro and/or con column – (i.e., Con – guilt, anxiety, etc.).

Results:

The cons list is typically longer than the pros list which provides an incredible “visual” on the negative aspects of abortion. Give both the list and the “Common Issues” sheet to the client to take home. This activity works WONDERFULLY with men who are always so very visual.

Common Issues of Post-Abortive People

By Sydna Massé, CEO & Founder, Ramah International

Abortion trauma has many “faces” depending on the variables surrounding the abortion situation and the time since making this choice. Rarely does the post-abortive person suffer everything and *other symptoms may not even be included in the following list*. Here are just a few common issues:

Anger – Anger is a tool used to combat depression. Anger offsets mourning. Anger can be felt – either directly or indirectly – towards anyone involved in the abortion decision. It can be projected on others as well – i.e., children, spouse, etc.

Alcohol and Drug Use – Drugs and alcohol are used as tranquilizers to offset painful memories of the abortion. They can calm anxiety and promote sleep. Sadly, the overuse of these elements can lead to other problems at a mental and physical level.

Anniversary Reminders – This “anniversary” can be the aborted child’s due date, or the date of the abortion. On these dates, the post-abortive can feel horrible for no apparent reason. Many never understand their emotions are related to their abortion experience.

Anxiety (i.e., anxiety attacks) - Many individuals state that after their abortion they started feeling tense and could not relax. Some outline physical reactions like dizziness, pounding heart, upset stomach, headaches. They may worry about the future, struggle to concentrate and not be able to sleep. Often, they don’t understand the source of anxiety.

Avoiding Children or Pregnant Women – It is common for post-abortive people to avoid children, especially pregnant women or children that would have been around the age of their aborted child. This avoidance can include skipping baby showers, avoiding the baby aisle at the grocery store, walking around the block to avoid a playground, or making excuses to escape events that include children or pregnant women.

Depression - Everyone is sad occasionally. After abortion, gloomy feelings can make the person feel hopeless and unlovable. They may cry uncontrollably for no reason and/or feel like they are going crazy. Perhaps they can’t eat or sleep or eat too much and sleep all day. The things they used to enjoy are avoided.

Eating disorders. Episodes of anorexia or bulimia is common for post-abortive people. Some get fat or thin to avoid anyone wanting them sexually as that could lead to another pregnancy. Eating is also something an individual can personally regulate when their life feels beyond their control.

Experiencing the Abortion Again – A post-abortive person can be suddenly transported back to the abortion clinic and re-experience their abortion. Memories can be triggered by simple sounds heard during the abortion procedure – like a vacuum cleaner or a dentist drill. For those who endured medical abortions, it can be the sound of a toilet flushing. Yearly pap tests can

also resurrect these memories. Others experience ongoing nightmares involving children, perhaps in pain. They can even have the same nightmare repeatedly.

Fear that Their Children Will Die – Some post-abortive people live in fear that children they had before or after the abortion could easily die. This fright can lead these parents to *overprotect* their children at an unhealthy level.

Fear of Infertility – Many women worry about being able to get pregnant again. Many fear they have aborted the only child they will ever have. Others suspect the abortion could have mutilated their body in some way.

Feeling “Numb” – To avoid painful thoughts after abortion, many post-abortive people work to shut off their emotions. That could mean abandoning friendships and family, particularly if they remind them of the abortion experience. When someone shuts down emotionally, they don’t feel sorrow or joy. Many turn to drugs or alcohol to assist in numbing these memories that result in guilt or anxiety.

Guilt – A mother’s heart is genetically designed to “protect their child at all costs.” Abortion short-circuits that basic human instinct. That can lead to feelings of guilt. A common guilty reaction after abortion could be that the individual believes future bad events happen because they “deserve it” for making this choice.

Self-Punishing Behaviors - Some may cut themselves, hoping to release pain. Others remain in abusive relationships feeling they “deserve” the abuse.

Thoughts of suicide – Some post-abortive people get so sad that they think it would be easier to die than continue living. Others miss their lost child so much that they want to join them to hold them at last.

Wanting to get pregnant again – It is normal to want to get pregnant again as soon as possible after any pregnancy loss. Most do so out of a desire to make sure they can still have a baby. Others hope to “replace” the life that was lost during the abortion. This is often referred to as an “atonement” pregnancy.

Unable to Bond with Present or Future Children – If the post-abortive person has children before or after the abortion, these family members can be a constant reminder of the person they aborted. This pain can result in the person distancing themselves emotionally or even abandoning the children, believing they are disqualified to be a parent.