

# 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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## Introduction to This Booklet

We are thankful you have found this *Support After Abortion* booklet. No matter how long it's been since your abortion experience, the need for healing is very real. Abortion may be a hard topic for you to speak about with people who have not been in your shoes or do not believe in the trauma you have experienced. On top of that, it may be challenging to identify or process what you are feeling because you did not physically experience the abortion. You are not alone. Many men who have had an abortion experience have suffered like you. But know also that many men have experienced healing or are on the path to healing after abortion. And you can heal too.

Every abortion experience is unique. What was your experience? You may have agreed with or coerced your partner, accompanied or abandoned her, reacted proactively or passively, or discovered only later that she had aborted your child. Whatever your involvement or lack of involvement, you can heal from the shame, anger, grief, or guilt that you may have carried through a greater understanding and acceptance of the impact of abortion in your life.

Every man's emotional response and how he thinks about his role in an abortion is different. Even if the abortion experience is not recent, you may still have negative thoughts that surface from time to time. Men often experience misplaced anger sometimes years and decades later. Perhaps you have had thoughts like:

“I did what I thought was right at the time, but . . .”

“I wasn’t given a say in the decision, but . . .”

“I want to stop thinking about what I didn’t do, but . . .”

“I want to move forward with my life, but . . .”

If you’ve had any thoughts like these, please be open to what this booklet can offer you: *keys for healing and hope*. These keys will open up healing to areas in your life that you may not have thought were impacted by your abortion involvement. Will it take courage, commitment, and openness? Yes. Will it possibly change your life? Yes!

We’d like to add a mention here that we have received invaluable contributions and critiques while writing this booklet from the Men’s Task Force at **Support After Abortion**—a wonderful organization that champions healing for all those impacted by abortion. Their contact information is on the back cover of this booklet. These men have either personally experienced abortion themselves and/or counseled men who have been involved in one or more abortions. They shared with us their perspectives about men who have suffered—some for decades—from their abortion experience and about those men who learned that support was available and the benefits of starting the healing process much sooner.

As not everyone is looking for the support offered through personal or group counseling—and perhaps that’s you—this booklet will hopefully meet you where you are now and offer you some ideas to move forward in your healing.

A lot of information at once is not always helpful. Therefore, each key is broken down into two parts and followed by action steps to help you personalize and reflect on what you have read.

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We think you will find encouragement in the stories of men who have been involved in an abortion decision and are now on their own path to healing.

Don't feel the need to rush through each key in one sitting. Take your time. Take a break if you need to: watch a movie, exercise, or distract yourself somehow. Stay with each key until you feel you are ready to move on. One key builds upon the next, so it's best to read through them in order. Revisit any of the six keys as often as you feel the need to do so. You are on your own individual journey.

A suggestion we'd like to offer is that you write down your thoughts through this journey. Use your phone, laptop, tablet, or buy a notebook. There are also blank pages at the back of this booklet you can use.

Our thoughts are with all who seek support with their abortion experience through the keys offered in these pages.

*The Word Among Us Partners*  
& *Support After Abortion*

# Key One

## Acknowledge Where You Are Now

*“To be successful, you’ve got to be honest with yourself.”*

—Vince Lombardi

It’s time to dig in. If you haven’t read through the introduction yet, we encourage you to take a few minutes and do so. It is beneficial in navigating as well as understanding why each reflection is called a key.

### Step 1

Think back to the times you’ve been asked, “How are you?” Did you respond “Fine” or “Never been better,” even if that’s far from the truth? These are safe answers that don’t require much from us. After being involved in an abortion, it can be hard to admit that we are not fine. You may even wonder if it’s OK to talk about it. Many men have been told for many years they have no choice and no voice in an abortion decision.

**Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now** is inviting you to stop and check in with yourself by asking, “How am I really doing with my abortion experience?” Now is the time to admit your true feelings. Don’t deny them. Identifying and acknowledging where you are is a crucial key to working through your abortion experience. Many overlook this critical step.

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Right now, you might be ready—perhaps for the first time—to look at how the abortion(s) impacted you. On the other hand, you may be feeling intimidated or hesitant to start because you know it will be a painful exercise. Perhaps you want to skip it because you’ve been discouraged from acknowledging or sharing your feelings in the past. Or it could be that you don’t see the value in acknowledging your emotions. Remember, this process is at your pace. Take it as slow as you need to but don’t give up. Acknowledging where you are is a step that you won’t regret.

This exercise is no small feat, and if you’ve picked up this booklet, you certainly have great strength in you. Go at your own pace. Everyone’s needs are different. Try to remember that on the other side of your pain is healing. Keep your hope alive and keep pushing forward. The reward far outweighs the pain.

After an abortion experience, many men have tried to hide or repress their feelings or thoughts. These feelings can be different for everyone—they could include guilt, shame, despair, or a combination of all of these. Everyone is unique. For some, these feelings may feel too overwhelming, and it may seem like addressing them will just dredge up the past. However, while feelings may lessen over time, they won’t just go away. They may always be just under the surface. Refusing to face feelings surrounding a loss such as through abortion can lead to unhealthy behaviors, as you will read about in Christopher’s story (on page 10).

Every man experiences a range of thoughts and feelings. They may get weaker or stronger when you are having memories of your abortion experience. You may find that certain dates, places, or people are triggers of these memories. If you find yourself becoming overwhelmed, reach out to **Support After Abortion** listed on the back of this booklet.

Now it's time to take a pen or pencil to begin the first action part of this key.

### Common Feelings Following Abortion

- |              |               |                 |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| • Anger      | • Guilt       | • Despair       |
| • Relief     | • Fear        | • Numbness      |
| • Shame      | • Self-hatred | • Powerlessness |
| • Depression | • Optimism    | • Failure       |
| • Loneliness | • Regret      | • Exhaustion    |

### Actions

- Circle the feelings you have experienced.
- Add others not listed that come to mind.
- Highlight or put an \*asterisk by your three strongest emotions.

The emotions you've just acknowledged are real and valid. They are part of where you are right now. Healing can truly begin when we are honest about where we are today. This level of self-honesty may trigger anger, and it's okay to express that in a healthy way. But also give yourself permission to cry, especially if you haven't done so before. Crying is very healing.

If you're thinking, "I don't know what I'm feeling," that is also an authentic and common experience. You've started the healing process! Other men have become numb and don't know what they are feeling. They just know something isn't right. Be patient with yourself and read over the "Common Feelings Following Abortion" box again. Emotions come and go, and you may identify with some of these in time.

### Christopher's Story

Sometimes life is predictable. You can see the good and the bad coming. But there's no way I was prepared for what happened—being involved in an abortion. Or should I say, making sure an abortion happened. Because the truth is, I pressured my girlfriend into having one.

I was living on my own, just three years out of high school and working two jobs to afford my apartment. My friend introduced me to Ginny. We dated for about six months when I asked her to move in. It was fast, but we were in love. Ten months later, when she told me about her positive pregnancy test, I was filled with fear and panic. I blamed her for the pregnancy and refused to listen to her or what she wanted. She wanted to keep the baby, but I thought I knew what we had to do.

Without her knowing, I made an appointment at an abortion clinic I found online. It was easier than I thought—I just needed her information and insurance. I told her that if she wanted us to stay together, she had to get an abortion. I know it hurt her, but in my mind, it was the only option.

I dropped off Ginny at the clinic and drove around the area, listening to music and biding my time until I could pick her up a few hours later. Once we got home, she cried uncontrollably and wouldn't talk to me, but all I felt was a massive weight off my shoulders. I knew it was the end of our relationship. Three weeks later, Ginny moved out, and I put the whole thing behind me.

That is, until about two years later, when I was on Facebook. I got a suggestion about “people you may know.” There was Ginny. With a little digging, I found out she had a newborn son. Suddenly, my world came crashing down on me as I thought,

“That could have been my son.” I felt waves of guilt, shame, and enormous regret. I hated myself for forcing Ginny to abort our child. I didn’t know what to do with all the overwhelming feelings. I did the only thing I could think of to escape the stress—I bought a bottle of vodka, and downed it. And I kept doing that for the next five years.

It wasn’t until I landed in Alcoholics Anonymous that I started to process and work through my past. I can’t undo it—but I also can’t shut the door on it. It took a lot of work with my sponsor and other men in the program, but now I can be of service to others and be there for another man if he’s gone through something similar.

## **What Did You Think?**

- What did you take away from Christopher’s story?
- Are there any similarities with your story?

## **Step 2**

Have you ever had a thought, and then moments later you couldn’t remember what it was or what you were thinking at all? That’s why it’s helpful to get into the habit of taking notes. You’re going to have a lot of thoughts, and some of them will be powerful. You will not want to forget them!

No one will see what you write unless you choose to share it. You can be 100 percent real and honest. This includes any negative self-thoughts like *I can’t move forward*, *I won’t heal*, or *I can’t forgive myself*. There is no right or wrong way to write



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your thoughts. It's all about what you want to express. It's a good idea to date each entry.

The very act of writing things down may help you become aware of the impact of the abortion on your life. Together with reflection and meditation, it is a profound and impactful tool. As you write things down, some emotions may come to mind that perhaps were hidden in your subconscious. Writing can also

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be beneficial if you're feeling numb or finding it hard to acknowledge your emotions.

When you write, try to put your phone on silent and find some personal space. It might be at the office, in your den at home, or even in the garage, in the backyard, or in a shed.

The important thing is that it's a place you feel comfortable.

These notes will be an excellent record of the transformation that will take place in your life in the coming days and weeks.

### Actions

- Make notes of why you are working through this booklet.
- Think about what you have found helpful about **Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now.**

## Points to Review

- I need to be aware of what I'm thinking and feeling.
- Self-honesty is an important key that will lead me to experience hope and healing.

## Final Thought and Meditation

In this key, you may have discovered some challenging or painful emotions. Great job persevering. Until you have time to begin the second key, keep your eyes on your goal of healing and why you are going through this process. Recall some of the things you've discovered about yourself. You are stronger than you know.

*“You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” —C. S. Lewis*

## What's Next?

You've taken the first step in healing. **Key 2: You Are Not Alone** will help you begin working through what you've identified. Stay the course.

## Key Two

### You Are Not Alone

*“One of the most important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone.” —Anonymous*

**Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now** opened the door to acknowledging your feelings and encouraged you to begin writing things down. Now, after going through that door, you’re ready to pick up the next key: **You Are Not Alone**.

Quick question: Did you circle the emotion “loneliness” on the “Common Feelings Following Abortion” box?

#### Step 1

Have you had any of these thoughts: *I’ll keep it to myself, I’ll tough it out, It’s my problem, Don’t risk their judgment, or What if people knew my abortion story?* There’s a quote by an anonymous writer that says, “Even in a crowd, you are alone inside your own head.” Sometimes loneliness has nothing to do with a person’s present circumstances and everything to do with how they perceive them. It has nothing to do with how many people they have surrounding them or how many likes or followers they have on social media.

There are two great synonyms for the word “alone”: unaccompanied and disconnected. Maybe that defines how you’ve felt since the abortion. However, the truth is that you are not alone in your abortion experience, and you are not alone in feeling lonely. Countless men were shocked by the devastating effects of abortion on their emotions. They, and perhaps you, were unprepared for what they felt or continue to feel. And many times, there was an immediate feeling in the gut that something was different.

Without hesitating, some men choose to process their emotions by sharing their abortion story with a trusted friend or a counselor. Others—and they are the majority—find it incredibly difficult to share their experience. It could be because of shame, fear of people’s judgment, or fear of rejection. Whatever the reason, they choose to keep their abortion story a secret.

For any man in this last group, it takes courage to share about his involvement in an abortion. The thought of opening up and being vulnerable can cause him to feel overwhelmingly anxious or even scared. It may take several attempts to make a phone call or keep an appointment.

Sharing what you have experienced since your abortion involvement in a safe environment can be essential to experiencing that **You Are Not Alone**.

If that’s you, sharing what you have experienced since your abortion involvement in a safe environment can be essential to experiencing that **You Are Not Alone**. Many men have found it to be freeing. It can be an enormous relief. Once you take that step, you will find yourself less frozen in your pain. You may be able to move forward more easily.

### Actions

- Recall a time where you felt alone. What steps did you take to help ease your loneliness?
- When have you said to a family member or friend, “I’m here for you; you’re not alone?” What was their response? How did that make you feel?

### George’s Story

It was in our plan to have children. But Suzanna’s first pregnancy was just the wrong timing. We had been married for only two years when we found out she was pregnant. We were both focused on our careers and doing some traveling before we became parents. We’d both been so ambitious—something we recognized in each other when we first started dating.

I was open, however, to change that plan. I became excited at the thought of fatherhood and shared that with Suzanna. She let me know, in no uncertain terms, that she was in no way open to keeping the baby. She became very emotional about her decision. I remember her telling me, “It’s my body. It’s my choice. You don’t have a say.”

I didn’t want to be the bad guy, so I bought into everything she threw at me. I quickly found myself thinking, “She’s right. I have to be supportive.” But in my heart, I felt alone, powerless, robbed of any say, and already grieving the loss of my child.

I loved Suzanna and supported her in her decision. I drove her to the clinic and sat in my car. The silence that followed in the car ride back and weeks that followed was deafening. Life went on for both of us, but we never talked about it again.

In the years that followed, we had two sons and a daughter, in that order. While I never forgot my first child, thoughts rarely surfaced during those busy years raising three children. I suppose I stuffed them down. Occasionally, one would slip out and I'd have "what if" thoughts—would he/she love sports like me, or favor Suzanna's delight in cooking foreign dishes or even be married now and have children?

It was only recently, when our daughter became pregnant while at college, that Suzanna and I talked about our abortion. She shared her secret feelings of regret and sadness, and I shared mine. I shared my regret that I'd not tried harder to protect her and our child. It was the first time we were completely open and honest with each other about it. That honesty deepened our relationship. After that, we found an incredible amount of healing together during counseling, during which we actually named our child.

I'm happy to say that our daughter kept her child. Suzanna and I are proud grandparents to a very fun and strong-willed granddaughter—we're so lucky.

## **What Did You Think?**

- What did you take away from George's story?
- Can you relate to any of his personal struggles?

## **Step 2**

I'm sure many of us have watched a YouTube video, Facebook post or news story of someone doing an act of kindness for another person. As the story evolves, you may have learned they were

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prompted to serve by remembering when they received support in their own personal time of need. Having empathy, or walking in another's shoes, is why many men—who themselves have had one or more abortion experiences—are now counselors or volunteers. They know the suffering of other men because they have been there themselves. These men are ready and able to speak with you when you're ready to speak with them. For information on these resources, see the back of this booklet.

If you haven't shared your struggles—or haven't told your complete story—it might be time to identify why. Remember, the goal is to know in your heart and mind that you are not alone. If you are an analytical person, you might find it helpful to make two columns on a piece of paper. At the top of the first column, write, "Reasons I Should Share My Story," and on the other, "Reasons I Shouldn't Share My Story." Then brainstorm and fill in the columns. Your answers will become clear.

Sharing a story for the first time can be emotional. Releasing the tension held for months or years is healthy though. Don't rehearse it before you speak. It's OK to say, "I don't know where to start." If you want to tell someone but know you just can't do it face-to-face, consider a phone call, talking with an online support group, or writing your story out and reading it to someone you can trust. The point here is to get it *out* that first time.

There is so much power in bringing your abortion journey into the light with someone you trust and who will respect and keep all that you share confidential. It gets this truth into the open: "Yes, my abortion experience has impacted me, and I need help." Does someone you trust to share your story with come to mind?

Loneliness has tentacles like a jellyfish, and it's an emotion that some men find difficult to admit. You may have found that it

zaps your energy and motivation or causes confusion or depression. It can affect your confidence, impact your social life, or cause fear of entering or keeping up with relationships. Sadly, the list goes on to also include substance abuse or activities that will numb your suffering.

It's essential to take time to take care of yourself, especially if you have a demanding work schedule, busy home life, or both. Consider asking yourself:

- Am I eating a diet that will keep my body healthy?
- Am I getting regular exercise?
- Am I getting enough sleep?
- Is there an activity that I could do with a good friend?
- What project or hobby is waiting for me to pick it up?

## Actions

- Prioritize the bullets above, choose one, and begin to make progress on it.
- Write a note to yourself that reads, "I am NOT alone!" Display it somewhere like on a bathroom mirror or on your laptop or phone background.
- Make notes of *anything* directly or indirectly related to this key.

## Points to Review

- Sharing my story is crucial because it shows me that I am not alone and allows someone to accompany me on my healing journey.



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- It is critical to be *kind to myself* and take care of my mind and body.

## Final Thought and Meditation

I'd like to leave some encouraging words from Bill, a man who has walked in your shoes: "One of the best decisions I've made was sharing about my abortion story. Looking back, I realize it was crucial to being able to process my emotions."

*"You are not alone in this. As brothers we will stand, and we'll hold your hand."* —Mumford and Sons

## What's Next?

Loneliness is powerful, but it is not always based on the truth. You are not alone in your experience. **Key 3: Freedom from Anger through Forgiveness** will address another powerful emotion you may experience over the abortion—anger.

## Key Three

### Freedom from Anger through Forgiveness

*“He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.” —Martin Luther King Jr.*

**Key 2: You Are Not Alone** opened the door to sharing your abortion story. By choosing to be vulnerable, you came to the realization that you are not alone and that other men have walked in your shoes. You were also invited to take some time just for yourself, which hopefully you did. **Key 3: Freedom from Anger through Forgiveness** includes three steps, so take your time going through it!

#### Step 1

Did you circle “anger” in the “Common Feelings Following Abortion” box in **Key 1: Acknowledge Where You Are Now?** Would you say you are more prone to anger since your abortion experience? Many men respond with anger and may not realize there’s a connection to the abortion. One man shared, “After my abortion experience, I had violent outbursts of anger that frightened me. And I didn’t know why.”

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Anger is personal for everyone, and it's not always easy to put the feelings it gives into words. It is very often the result of being displeased over outside things that we cannot control. For example, we may not like other people's actions towards us, events that happen around us, or a host of different situations outside of ourselves that we cannot change.

Often, we can hold onto things that have already happened. We can become resentful or embroiled in anger over the past. This anger can cause us to snap or lash out at others or ourselves.

Sometimes, after an abortion experience, a man can resent himself, his partner, family members, friends, or healthcare providers. This anger can show itself in many ways and destroy relationships, his way of life, and his peace of mind.

Have you ever done something fueled by anger and immediately regretted it? Anger can cause you to react or act out in ways that you usually wouldn't. It can cause you to hurt yourself or others. The actions that hurt you are known as self-destructive behaviors. These can look like dangerous and addictive behaviors such as excessive drinking, drug use, gambling, pornography, unwanted sexual behaviors, or seemingly everyday behaviors like road rage. In these cases, the primary person you are hurting through these self-destructive behaviors is yourself. This anger only punishes you, whether you are aware of it or not.

Sometimes, the easiest anger to hold on to is when we feel justified. When people hurt us for no reason or events happen that cause us real pain, we can let anger become the master over us. This anger can reign over our lives, and our self-destructive behaviors can become habits. Perhaps you're angry as a result of your abortion experience and find you are letting anger control a lot of your decisions.

Countless men have come to understand that *the only sure way to get rid of anger is through forgiveness*. This concept may seem contrary to what you are feeling, but forgiveness is transforming for those willing to accept it. Forgiveness can be for yourself, your child's mother, family members, or healthcare providers.

Countless men have come to understand that *the only sure way to get rid of anger is through forgiveness*.

While it may seem easier to point your finger in blame, the way *through anger to peace* is through surrendering to *forgiveness*. It is a straightforward action, and it is important to know that you don't always have to *feel* like forgiving. But the act of forgiveness is necessary to healing. We are not in control of everything, but we can let go of our anger through forgiveness.

## Actions

- Write down any thoughts from what you've just read on anger.
- What went through your mind when you read the word "forgive"?
- On another page, write the names of those you are angry with. You'll refer to this list in the next step.

## Rick's Story

My mom was in high school when she had me. My grandmother helped raise me until I was about ten and we moved out on our own. After that, my single mom struggled to provide for my younger sister and me. We didn't have many things that other kids enjoyed, and she struggled to make ends meet.

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I saw firsthand how hard it was for my mom, so having an abortion was the obvious answer when my girlfriend, Jenn, got pregnant during our senior year in high school. Jenn was so scared to tell her parents, or really anyone, and I couldn't imagine parenting a child like my mom had done. Our decision was mutual—we acted quickly and drove to a clinic, miles from home, where no one would know us. I thought we took care of our problem.

Immediately, everything was different. Jenn began avoiding me in the school hallways. She started volleyball, and I started baseball. I reached out to her, but she stopped answering or returning my calls. We never spoke to each other again.

I put thoughts of Jenn and the abortion behind me after high school, and I got certified as an HVAC technician. I threw myself into long hours of work, but I was angry. I nearly lost my job because of an almost violent encounter with a customer.

The wake-up call to my anger came after getting pulled over for a charge of reckless driving and going to court. I asked myself, "Why am I always so angry? I don't want to hurt anyone." I read articles online about controlling anger. But I knew I needed more.

My answer came when a customer canceled a maintenance appointment for his air conditioning unit. I had worked with him before, and we were on friendly terms. He told me he had to reschedule because he led a men's after-abortion support group and had double-booked himself. It didn't occur to me that abortion was at the root of my anger.

After the light bulb went on, I asked him if I could join him, and my healing journey started! Together with him and other men, I began working through unresolved issues related to my abortion involvement: anger, regret, and self-loathing. When I

admitted to finding it difficult to forgive myself for taking the life of my child, I found I wasn't alone as other men had struggled too. Their encouragement got me to the point of beginning to say, "I forgive myself." I'd suggest such a group to any man open to support about their abortion involvement. It takes courage and the swallowing of pride to do so. All I can say is, "I'm not the angry man I once was."

## **What Did You Think?**

- What did you take away from Rick's story?
- What can you relate to?

## **Step 2**

Forgiveness is a necessary key to experiencing freedom from anger and inner peace. It is also essential to help you move on with your life. It removes the reason for the anger surrounding your abortion experience by lessening the grip that the action and those involved in it have on you.

It's easy to make excuses not to forgive, especially if you're experiencing a lot of self-justified anger. Any man who has been deeply hurt by others involved in the abortion experience could say, "I could never forgive her," "he doesn't deserve my forgiveness," or "I'm waiting for an apology." If you have negative thoughts like these about one or more people involved in your abortion story, including yourself, you are not alone. Other men have struggled with offering forgiveness. If that's you, perhaps you will find it helpful to know what forgiveness is and what it isn't.

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First of all, forgiveness is a choice: it is something you do. It is an action, not a feeling—a letting-go of negative emotions towards others and perhaps self-hatred and self-condemnation toward yourself.

Forgiveness has nothing to do with how you feel. Remember, it is a choice you make. Don't wait for your feelings to change, because that may never happen. You can choose to forgive even while feeling angry, resentful, or cheated. Forgiving doesn't mean denying or justifying the actions of others. Or, in the case of yourself, it doesn't mean that you don't accept responsibility for your role and are shifting the blame. It does mean that you relinquish the hold that anger has on you.

It's really important to understand that the choice to forgive is for your benefit and your peace of mind. You may never have the chance to forgive someone in person, but you can let go for yourself.

### Actions

- Refer to the list of people that you wrote down that you are angry with.
- Find a quiet place and do the following:
  - Read each person's name outloud and choose to give them the gift of your forgiveness by saying, "I forgive you \_\_\_\_\_ (name the person) for \_\_\_\_\_ (name their action)."
  - Let all the unforgiveness in your heart go.
  - Sit quietly and reflect.
  - Be grateful that you had the strength to forgive or to begin to forgive.

## Step 3

Once you've forgiven the people on your list, you've taken a really important step toward healing. There may still be one, or more, people you find it impossible to forgive. If there is someone you can't seem to forgive, seek support from someone who knows your story. Together, try to take the first step in forgiving. Remember, it's a choice, not a feeling. It can be helpful and healing to write a letter (that you won't send to the person) expressing your anger and other emotions.

Forgiving yourself is possible. As with forgiving others, it is a decision.

Your anger may be so intense and your hurt so deep that you may need to forgive that person more than once to experience complete freedom. Like all forms of recovery, it is a process. There is no defined starting or stopping point.

Up until now, we have focused on forgiving those who have hurt us. Now let's revisit the question: *Have you forgiven yourself for your abortion experience and other actions related to it?* Perhaps you've never thought of or known the importance of forgiving yourself.

Having read the question above, what comes to mind first? Take a few moments to process that. Now, write it and any other thoughts or feelings that come to mind in a notebook.

Let us assure you, forgiving yourself is possible. As with forgiving others, it is a decision. It's not denying your abortion experience. It is a gift that every person deserves to receive and one that your child would want you to give yourself.

For men who've been able to forgive themselves, they have experienced relief and serenity.



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For some men, forgiving themselves happens over time. A counselor shared this powerful example about a man we'll call Blake, whose abortion experience was twelve years ago: "Blake would often say, 'I can't forgive myself.' The regret, self-hatred, and self-loathing over what he had been involved in was paralyzing him. But slowly, over time, he would say, 'I'm beginning to forgive myself.' Blake has still not entirely forgiven himself and still battles differing emotions. But he has allowed himself to take that first and most challenging step of beginning the process."

The action for this step will give you some suggestions to forgive yourself. Repeat them whenever you feel a need.

### Actions

- Alone or with a friend, say aloud, "I forgive myself for my abortion experience(s)" and \_\_\_\_\_ (mention anything else)." You may not be able to forgive yourself or others for everything—start small if you need to.
- When standing in front of a mirror and getting ready for the day, say, "I've given myself the gift of forgiveness."

### Points to Review

- Freedom from my anger is through forgiveness, which is a choice.
- Forgiveness is not based on my feelings.
- Forgiveness is the key to my serenity and a vital key to my hope and healing.

## Final Thought and Meditation

If you search for forgiveness quotes online, you'll be amazed at how many there are! Read the following and reflect on what they mean to you.

*“Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.” —Anonymous*

*“Holding onto resentment is like letting someone live rent-free in your head.” —Ann Landers*

## What's Next?

Forgiveness is a process. But it is essential to take that first step. **Key 4: Moving through Grief** will help you through grief—not around it. As you will see, that is an important and powerful distinction. You may want to review this with a friend or support member at **Support After Abortion** listed on the back of this booklet.

## 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. Contact information is at the back of this booklet.

## 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,

## **Support After Abortion**

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.

## 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 following story 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.

## Key Six

### Giving Hope to Others

You have now used five keys to open doors to further your own hope and healing. Now you are about to take up **Key 6: Giving Hope to Others**. As you will see, your story and your experience can be the key to helping other men start their own healing journey.

#### Step 1

Here's a story about sharing hope and healing which may make you smile. (Adapted from *The Star Thrower*, by Loren Eiseley)

A man took his morning walk along a beach when he noticed hundreds of starfish washed up just above the waterline. He didn't think much about it until, a little further along, he saw a young boy throwing the starfish one at a time back into the ocean. "Why are you doing that?" he asked, somewhat cynically. "Because," said the boy, "I want them to have the chance to live." "Oh, don't waste your time, there are so many, you won't make any difference," the man said. But the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and with a big swing of his arm, tossed it back into the ocean. Then turning to the man, he said, "It made a difference to that one." The man stopped, thought, and joined the

boy tossing starfish into the ocean. Others saw what they were doing and soon joined in too.

### Questions Following the Starfish Story

- What are you taking away from this story?
- How did the boy's response, "It made a difference to that one," make you feel?

It is such a great feeling when we realize our words or actions have made a difference in someone's life. Think of some ways you've been touched by another's thoughtfulness and how others have been touched by your words or actions.

Just like the boy throwing back starfish into the ocean, you have an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life—one person at a time.

Often, opportunities to make a difference in someone's life come in unexpected ways. Remember how it was mentioned in the second key how other men know something of what you were feeling because they had walked in your path? Well, you may find opportunities to *pay it forward* by saying, "I know how you feel; I've been there—you're not alone," to a man who opens up to you about his abortion story.

One man, Justin, had an opportunity to give hope and encouragement while having a drink with a friend. Suddenly, his friend said, "Please stop Justin. What I've got to say may shock you. But I've got to tell someone: five years ago, I took my girlfriend for an abortion." Another man, Kurt, was waiting for a delayed flight at an airport. When he eventually boarded, a man with whom he had briefly spoken, sat next to him. By the end of the

flight, the man had shared how he felt about not being included in the decision to abort his child.

For each man that either Justin or Kurt encountered, his abortion story was his *dark secret*. They hadn't told anyone because of reasons that you know only too well. They didn't know that healing moves forward with sharing their story with a trusted friend—or even a stranger. In recovery programs the phrase “You're as sick as your secrets” is used often. And it truly applies here.

But now, you hold a key that could change a life. You know that no man needs to suffer alone. You can be there for them—in person or through social media. You know **Support After Abortion** staff can provide them with people and resources to begin processing their emotions. And you can even give a copy of this booklet to them.

You don't have to talk about your abortion journey if you're not ready. It is crucial to make sure you don't cause further harm to yourself and others. You'll know when the time is right for you. Someone initially may just need a friend who understands—listening may be the best thing you can do!

## **Actions**

- Recall some of the ways you have been touched by another's thoughtfulness. You might even want to send a text or make a phone call to thank someone. By reaching out in this way, you could make their day!
- Is there anyone you know suffering from an abortion decision that you could support by your understanding and compassionate listening?

### Larry's Story

Life was definitely good in my teens and early twenties. I spent my time doing what I loved—chasing adrenaline with extreme sports like mountain biking, marathons, and triathlons. I also had a job I enjoyed with a landscaping company. I could be outside, and the pay was good. Oh, I had the usual worries over getting more money and wanting to impress women, but my life was relatively carefree.

But that changed dramatically when Cheryl, who I'd been dating almost a year, announced she was pregnant. This being her second pregnancy, she knew her options, and we talked about them. She told me that if she kept the child I would need to be involved in its life.

In my late twenties, commitment, fatherhood, and responsibilities were the last things I wanted. Although we decided together for abortion, there's no doubt that my input tipped the scales. I didn't think for one moment that the abortion would affect our relationship. But once back at her place, she changed her tune saying, "I don't want you in my life anymore. We are done. You are all about you." No amount of trying to convince her in the coming weeks with flowers and a piece of jewelry softened her. She ended things between us.

Life was no longer good. I thought I had made the best decision for me. Still, I had tremendous guilt and shame for disregarding life in the womb—I knew that it wasn't just tissue—and not offering Cheryl support to keep the child. I was full of self-loathing for my utter selfishness. I was frightened at how depressed and suicidal I was becoming. My abortion experience had changed

who I was. Drugs helped numb the pain but didn't help my job performance.

I owe it to my boss, who was prepared to give me a second chance if I went to a drug recovery program. There, I met Paul, who shared why he started using drugs—his own involvement in an abortion. We've been friends now for ten years.

Together we got involved in an after-abortion support program for men—I never knew those existed—and I began working through my unresolved thoughts and feelings. Hearing the men's stories helped me identify and acknowledge other emotions and how I needed to forgive myself. Together with Paul, I now often share my story with other men. I just want them to have hope and to know they are not alone in their pain. Life is once again good, and it gets better the more I am able to give hope to others.

## **What Did You Think?**

- What did you take away from Larry's story?
- What are some things you related to?

## **Step 2**

Just like you read in Larry's story, many men begin sharing their stories in small groups to give others hope that they are not alone. In small support groups, the confidentiality of "What is shared here, stays here" is always stressed. But outside of that arena, if sharing your story with friends, ask them to respect your confidence by not mentioning it to others. It's your story to communicate with each person who is trusted to hear it.



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You'll know when you're ready to begin telling your story. Be willing to be vulnerable and to be yourself. There is no right or wrong way to share. You'll know what to say and how much to say.

This brings me to an important question that you may or may not feel ready to consider. If you are not prepared to answer it, do not put pressure on yourself. The question is:

- *Who is there that should know about your abortion involvement?* Perhaps your current spouse or partner, or a family member?

Take a moment to think about this question. Perhaps make a list of the names of people who come to mind. Consider how you would want to approach them. You could seek input about doing this from a trusted friend or counselor. Remember: if this thought makes you feel uncomfortable, then perhaps now is not the time to move on it.

If you're invited to share your story with a broader audience, you may well be revealing others' stories. Your story is their story too. While it is vitally important to share the truth of your story to the best of your ability, it is equally important to think of the other people in your story. It can be a good idea to not use real names, for example, so as not to damage someone else.

Another point: if accepting an invitation to share beyond a small support group setting, you ought to mention it ahead of time to anyone involved in your abortion story if you are in contact with them currently.

That said, are you ready to begin thinking about *paying it forward*? Have you ever thought of the positive impact you could

have on another man's life? It is such a privilege to bring hope to another person. It will further your own healing.

Isn't it incredible to think that your story could be the key to open a door for another's healing? You'll be amazed at how opportunities will come to share your experience. Remember the stories of Justin, Kurt, Larry, or the boy tossing starfish back into the ocean? They were changing one life at a time. And we're confident that when the time is right, you will be too!

## **Actions**

- Take a picture of the resources and support organizations starting on page 55. Then you'll have it at your fingertips ready to pass onto others.
- Think of where you can share a PDF or print copy of this booklet for others to view.

## **Points to Review**

- I can change one life at a time for any man suffering with his abortion story. Because he knows that I've walked the same path, I will assure him that he's not alone.
- There are different platforms on which to share my abortion journey.

### Final Thought and Meditation

*“Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it’s having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it’s our greatest measure of courage.”—Brené Brown*

*“Start where you are. Use what you have.  
Do what you can.”—Arthur Ashe*

### There Is More for You

Please don’t think of this as the final key. That’s because we hear the rattling of many other keys that will open more and more doors for you on your healing journey in the coming days, weeks, months, and years. Perhaps you will find them in the resources listed at the back of this booklet. You’ll know what they are. Please pick these keys up for yourself and share them with other men recovering from an abortion decision.

# Start Your Support Here

Support After Abortion (SAA)

844-289-HOPE (4673)

[supportafterabortion.com](http://supportafterabortion.com)

## **National Agencies**

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

212-870-3400

[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

818-773-9999

[www.na.org](http://www.na.org)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-7233

[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)

National Human Trafficking Hotline

888-373-7888

Text 233733

[www.humantraffickinghotline.org](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org)

## **Support After Abortion**

**Co-Dependents Anonymous**

888-444-2359

[www.coda.org](http://www.coda.org)

**RAINN: Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network**

800-656-4673

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

**National Alliance on Mental Health**

800-950-6264

[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

**Grief Resource Network**

828-726-9554

[www.griefresourcenetwork.com-crisis-center/hotlines](http://www.griefresourcenetwork.com-crisis-center/hotlines)

**Grief Anonymous**

[www.griefanonymous.com](http://www.griefanonymous.com)

**American Pregnancy Helpline—Miscarriages**

866-942-6466

**Crisis Text Line**

Text 741741

[www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

## **Faith-Based Agencies**

Project Rachel Ministry  
888-456-HOPE (4673)  
[www.hopeafterabortion.org](http://www.hopeafterabortion.org)

Ministerio Proyecto Raquel  
888-456-HOPE (4673)  
[www.esperanzaposaborto.org](http://www.esperanzaposaborto.org)

Rachel's Vineyard Ministry  
Toll-Free retreat information: 877 HOPE 4 ME (877-467-3463)  
[www.rachelsvineyard.org](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org)

Lumina/Hope & Healing After Abortion  
877-586-4621  
[www.postabortionhelp.org](http://www.postabortionhelp.org)

Project Joseph  
469-720-2273 (CARE)  
[healing@projectjosephdallas.org](mailto:healing@projectjosephdallas.org)

Men and Abortion  
513-729-3600  
[www.menandabortion.net](http://www.menandabortion.net)

## **Online Support**

Abortion Changes You  
[www.abortionchangesyou.com](http://www.abortionchangesyou.com)

## **Support After Abortion**

### **Prayer Lines**

Christian Broadcasting Network with the 700 Club

Prayer Line

800-700-7000

[www1.cbn.com/700club](http://www1.cbn.com/700club)

Joy FM Prayer Line

877-800-7729

[www.florida.thejoyfm.com](http://www.florida.thejoyfm.com)

Trinity Broadcasting Network Prayer Line

888-731-1000

[www.tbn.org](http://www.tbn.org)

Daystar Prayer Line

800-329-0029

Bethel Church Prayer Line

530-255-2066

[www.bethel.com/ministries/healing-rooms](http://www.bethel.com/ministries/healing-rooms)

Breakthrough Prayer Line

800-424-8644

Life Outreach International Prayer Line

800-947-5433

[www.lifetoday.org](http://www.lifetoday.org)

## Start Your Support Here

**Morris Cerullo Prayer Line**

866-756-4200

[www.mcwe.com](http://www.mcwe.com)

**Crossroads Prayer Line**

866-273-4444

[www.crossroads.ca](http://www.crossroads.ca)

**Family Broadcasting Corporation Prayer Line**

800-365-3732

[www.familybroadcastingcorporation.com](http://www.familybroadcastingcorporation.com)



## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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## Support After Abortion

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# 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.

## SUPPORT

»» AFTER ABORTION

**SUPPORT AFTER ABORTION**

844-289-HOPE (4673)

[www.supportafterabortion.com](http://www.supportafterabortion.com)

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