

Men and Abortion

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By HLI Staff | October 27, 2021

Many people think that abortion is just a “woman’s issue.” But they don’t understand that it affects the father as well, for he too loses a child. Further, the man often experiences the same types of emotions that a woman experiences after the loss of a child. And though very little research has been done on post-abortive men, the fact that post-abortive ministries now usually include services for men are evidence that men hurt too.

Today, we want to discuss some key points on how abortion affects men and offer resources to help men suffering after losing a child to abortion.

Men Suffer after Abortion

Though not nearly as much research has been done on abortion’s effects on men as on women, considerable evidence shows that abortion often negatively affects men’s mental health and that a large proportion of men regret their partner’s abortion weeks or even years after.

A 2016 article by CareNet examining how abortion negatively affects men states:

We know there is pain. We know he wants to overcome. But it's a lonely secret accompanied by repressed feelings. He doesn't think he is supposed to talk about the experience. He has fears and doubts. His capacity is diminished. He is suspicious of judgment by the church and God. He reasons there are few options for healing so he remains silent.

Many men remain silent about the pain caused by abortion because society tells us that abortion is a “women’s issue” and that men should have no say in the matter. Further, many say that abortion should be a decision the woman makes because the baby is in her body, thereby leaving out the father altogether.

This leads to the father feeling helpless and alone. Regardless of whether he initially agreed with the abortion, he may soon find that he regrets the decision.



PATH—Post-Abortion Treatment and Healing—is a “community that offers hope and healing to women and men who have been negatively impacted by abortion.” It states on its site:

According to research by Bradley Mattes in “Men and Abortion: An Overview,” more than thirty million men are struggling to cope with the loss of their children through abortion. Many participated in the decision to abort and assisted their partners in doing so. Several even pressured their partners into having an abortion. Sadly, some watched helplessly as their unborn child was aborted in spite of their pleas to give their baby life.

”Men do not always recognize the symptoms they experience as having their roots in an abortion decision—but scratch the surface and you will see it.... They may struggle to make commitments, to be emotionally present to their current wives and children, to embrace their role as spiritual and moral leader in the home... deep down they know they compromised that authority when they aborted their son or daughter in the past.” ~Kevin Burke

The symptoms men experience are as varied as the ones women experience. According to PATH:

Perhaps the most consistent and evident symptom in men due to loss of a child from abortion is anger, accompanied by grief, shame, guilt and remorse. Feelings of profound hopelessness and helplessness are common. Abortion rewrites the rules of masculinity. It leaves him wounded and confused. Failed relationships are often caused by abortion.

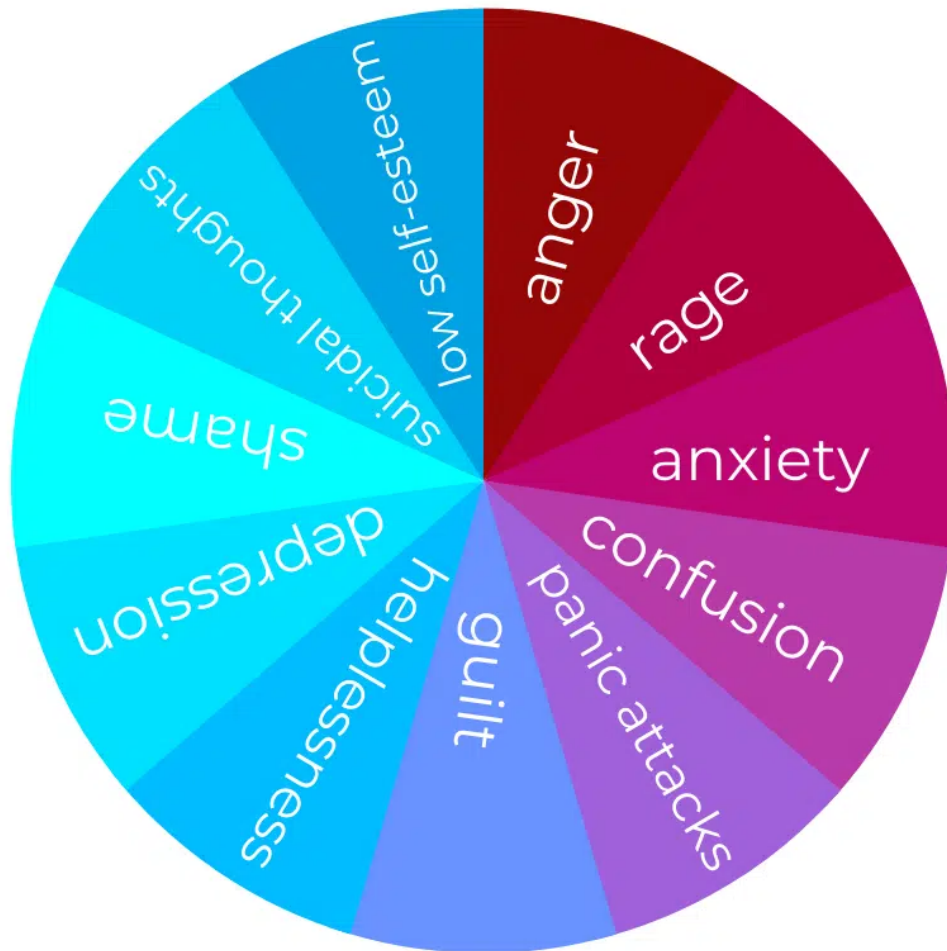
PATH continues, saying that the man may:

- Turn to alcohol and drugs to dull the pain of feeling he participated in or was too “weak” to prevent the death of his unborn baby.
- Become a workaholic to avoid contact with other people or in a desperate effort to succeed in a crucial aspect of his life.
- Or, he may be unable to hold a job due to his inability to handle decision making.
- Have dysfunctional future relationships with women. This lack of control regarding a critical, life-impacting decision often generates considerable resentment and mistrust towards women.
- Suffer from other forms of sexual dysfunction such as impotency and addiction to pornography and masturbation.
- Experience sleeplessness, panic attacks, poor coping skills.

The Piedmont Women’s Center recognizes that abortion affects men as well. It claims

that the most common emotional and psychological symptoms experienced by men months or even years after the abortion include anger, rage, anxiety, confusion, low self-esteem, helplessness, suicidal thoughts, panic attacks, depression, guilt, and shame.

ABORTION'S EFFECTS ON MEN



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Further, the father may have difficulty holding a job, or conversely he may throw himself into his work to the detriment of any personal relationships. He may have sleep problems. He may abuse drugs or alcohol. He may have problems with trust or commitment. He may become overly aggressive. The list is endless.

It is clear that men suffer greatly when they realize they have lost a child.

Pro-Choice Sociologist Finds 1 in 20 Who Go to the Clinic Severely

Affected

In “Abortion Clinics and Waiting Room Men: Sociological Insights,” Arthur B. Shostak, emeritus professor of sociology at Drexel University and the first social scientist to publish a study on the effects of abortion on men, wrote together with two co-authors:

While one would not know this from media and social science neglect, about 600,000 men (male partners in ill-timed and unwanted pregnancies) accompanied a client to her abortion appointment last year (about half of all abortion-seeking women generally have a man sitting by in the clinic or doctor’s waiting room).

He told Adam Voiland in a *U.S. News* interview, “I would say that 90 percent of men consider the day of an abortion to be one of the most stressful of their lives,” and about 5% will suffer from mental scarring as a result of their partner’s abortions.

Anecdotal Evidence of Men’s Post-Abortive Trauma

A burgeoning “lost fatherhood” movement has become involved in pro-life activism, with post-abortive men carrying signs at the annual March for Life proclaiming *I Regret Lost Fatherhood*. “Men don’t like to admit they have a problem, but there are a lot of guys out there who are really hurting,” explained Bruce Mulligan, a hospital administrator from Minnesota who struggles with the emotional impact of the abortion he and his wife decided to undergo decades ago.





Dr. Vincent Rue, a psychologist who has years of experience observing abortion's effects on men, spoke at a "Reclaiming Fatherhood" conference. In 1996, he wrote in an article called "The Effects of Abortion on Men":

Men do grieve following abortion, but they are more likely to deny their grief or internalize their feelings of loss rather than openly express them.... A guilt-ridden, tormented male does not easily love or accept love. His preoccupation with his partner, his denial of himself and his relentless feelings of post-abortion emptiness can nullify even the best of intentions.

Those facts remain as true today as they were then, though we now see that more organizations and counseling clinics are willing to address men's anguish and help them navigate life after losing a child to abortion. In a 2015 article entitled "Fatherhood Lost: How Abortion Affects Men," Eric Metaxas quoted a father who had lost a child to abortion. He states: "Hardly a day goes by that I don't shudder and almost weep again for the murder I helped bring about.... My actions, despite my confession and repentance before [God], continue to rob much of the joy from my life."

Metaxas then posits the question about why men suffer so much. He answers it by saying:

It's partly because they're hard-wired to protect and care for their children. And on a gut level, these men know they have violated the moral law. A law that says it's wrong to kill. They recognize that they behaved in a less than manly way by doing nothing while their child's mother aborted their baby—or worse, by coercing the child's mother and paying the abortionist.

Men Undergo Physiological Changes during Partners' Pregnancies

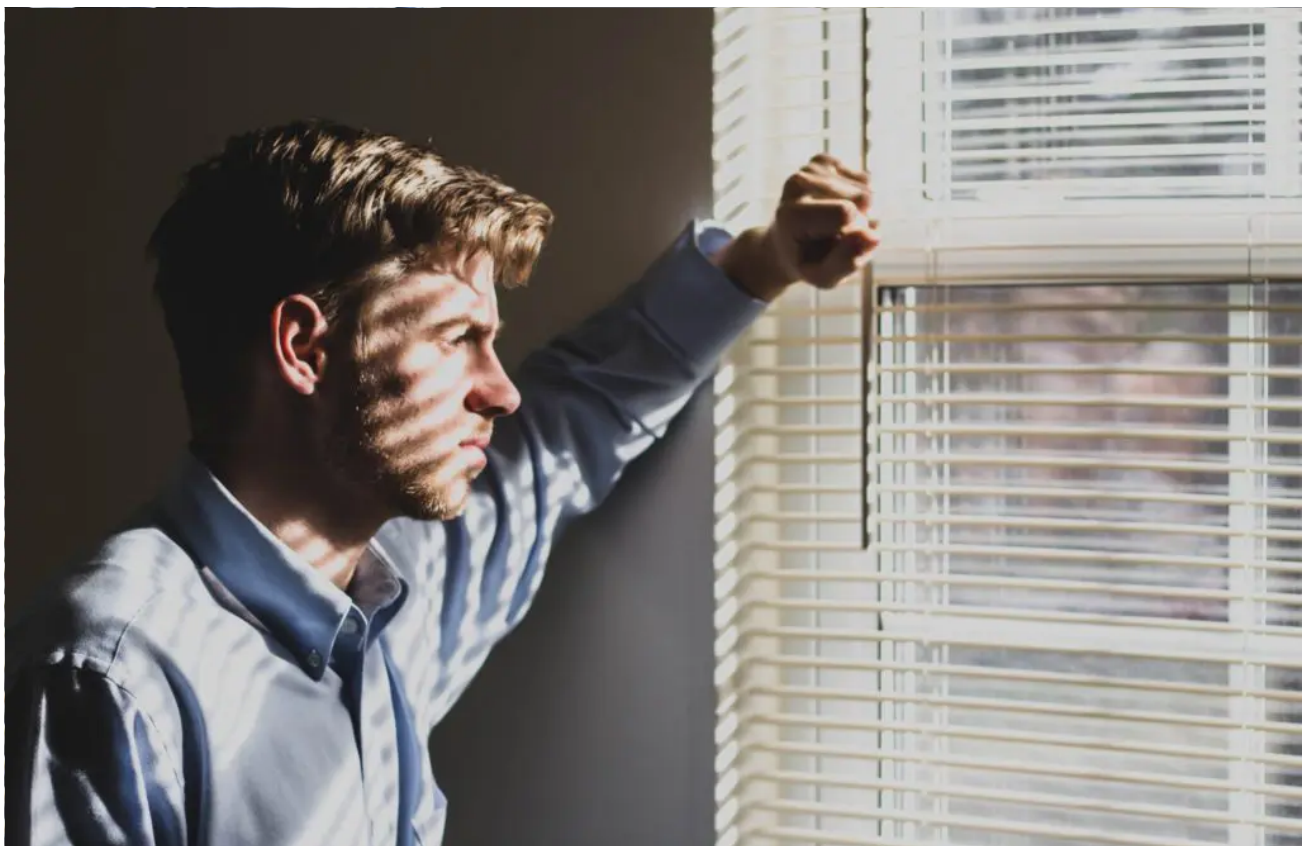
The post-abortive trauma of many men may lie not only in psychological factors, but in physiological ones, as men's bodies prepare for births that never occur.

In "The Making of a Modern Dad," an article published many years ago in *Psychology Today* but that is still relevant now, Douglas Carlton Abrams writes:

Research shows that men go through significant hormonal changes alongside their pregnant partners, changes most likely initiated by their partner's pregnancy and ones that even cause some men to experience pregnancy-like symptoms such as nausea and weight gain. It seems increasingly clear that just as nature prepares women to be committed moms, it prepares men to be devoted dads.... There may be actual physiological signals exchanged between partners in close contact, such as the transmission of pheromones.

Abrams stated that two studies reported that about "90% of men experience at least one pregnancy-related symptom" when living with a pregnant partner, and that "the fact that men also experience hormone changes suggests it is more than empathy that causes many of them to feel their partner's pain."

It's as if men's bodies know that they have become a dad and react accordingly. So not only do men feel fatherhood on a psychological level, but they feel it on a physiological level as well.



Resources for Post-Abortive Men

With increasing evidence that men can suffer greatly from abortion, organizations and

groups want them to know there is help out there.

- The Silent No More Awareness Campaign offers post-abortive groups and counseling.
- Rachel's Vineyard offers help and retreats for men.
- Focus on the Family also has post-abortion counseling for men.

In addition, there are also many local groups that offer counseling. A quick Internet search will help you find them.

If you are a man who has lost a child to abortion, please know that you are not alone. There are many organizations staffed with people who understand your grief. They will help you as you learn to forgive your partner or former partner and yourself. They want you to know that you can heal, and they urge you to seek help.

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