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When the Doll Breaks

Theresa Karminski Burke

I remember meeting Marita my freshman year in college. She was cute, like a cheerleader, and had the same dynamic, enthusiastic “rah rah” personality. Marita had boundless energy. She was fun to be around and had a self-assured style. At the same time, she was still very much a little girl. She missed her parents, made frequent phone calls to her siblings, and had a roomful of cherished childhood dolls carefully displayed on her bed pillows and bookshelves.

The first night we met, Marita told me she would remember my name because Theresa was the name of her favorite doll, now a priceless antique. It had been passed down from her great-great-grandmother and was given to Marita when she was a little girl. Marita handed me the doll, a porcelain collector’s dream, gussied up in an ivory silk dress and intricate lace pantaloons. Marita and I became friends instantly and used to share library activities like “scoping” for cute guys behind bookshelves.

One night at a drunken fraternity party, Marita found herself having sex with her boyfriend. The details were quite foggy. She didn’t remember taking her clothes off, but woke up naked next to the young sophomore. When Marita discovered she was pregnant, she had an abortion immediately and never told a soul, except her boyfriend and her roommate.

When Marita told me about her abortion years later, she explained that her roommate Ruth had taken her to the clinic. Ruth had an abortion as a senior in high school and told Marita it was no big deal. Abortion was common on campus. Lots of girls had them.

After the abortion, Marita’s personality changed. She became irritable and began drinking all the time. She skipped classes on a regular basis, preferring to sleep in and snooze off each hung-over depression. Her attitude was cynical and negative, and she wasn’t much fun to be around. At that time, I didn’t understand what Marita was going through. But there were signs.

One night we gathered at Marita’s dorm for a party. We were drinking beers when Marita’s boyfriend jumped up and shouted, “It’s time for Baby Soccer!” There was a grand applause, reminiscent of the inauguration of gladiator games. Marita brought out several doll heads which had been decapitated from their torsos, rolling them along with her hockey stick for the grand entrance. Everyone started kicking the baby heads around the

room in a frenzy of glee and hysteric. They all cheered while gulping drinks and devouring chips.

As the pastime continued, the aggression toward the baby heads became more severe. One girl picked up a doll head and started gouging out its eyes with a dart. Everyone cackled with delight. Ruth began ripping out shreds of another doll’s hair while burning its plastic cheeks with her cigarette. This sparked her boyfriend’s imagination. He grabbed another doll from the shelf and put the hot ember of his cigarette between the doll’s legs, then ripped them off, leaving only a melted and scarred-looking vagina hole. Ruth threw her doll head on the floor, stamping hard on its skull. They continued to kick the baby heads around the room in a hostile display of rage fused with amusement.

I learned that this had become a favorite game in the dorm. My reaction to this symbolic abuse was a sickening feeling in my stomach. I witnessed this traumatic play, unaware at the time of the psychic release of collective tension this game was providing. Desensitized to the authenticity of the game, I laughed along with the others, silently recalling all the “baby in a blender” jokes which proliferated among my friends.

As I picked up one of the doll heads, I was overcome with a vague familiarity. My heart skipped a beat when I identified the doll as “Theresa,” the porcelain antique which had once been Marita’s prized possession. Her face was cracked, smashed, and splintered, a jigsaw of fractured pieces-nearly unrecognizable. Where the head had been torn from the body there were razor-sharp claws of fragmented china.

Suddenly I felt a genuine, aching grief. I feared that at any minute I might burst into tears. What had happened to this doll “Theresa,” passed down through generations of female history within Marita’s family? How did this happen? What had happened to my friend?

The trauma was still very much a mystery to me-but I knew that something inside Marita had also been crushed. The desecration was reflected quite ostensibly in the face of her broken doll. I waited nearly a decade to discover the answer to my questions. Learning that Marita had suffered an abortion made everything crystal clear.

My heart skipped a beat when I identified the doll as “Theresa,” the porcelain antique that had once been Marita’s prized possession.

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Those who study childhood trauma have documented many examples where children work through a traumatic event by recreating aspects of their trauma through playful games, stories and art. Child therapists will often observe children playing with puppets and doll houses to get a sense of what is going on in their minds and families. It can be easier to express an emotional conflict by acting it out through a puppet figure—rather than putting oneself through subjective introspection.

As with my classmates and the game of “Baby Soccer,” adults too can engage in symbolic reenactment of a trauma under the disguise of games, art, music, humor, and other amusements. This type of play provided an outlet for grief by replacing it with socially acceptable acts of “baby hatred.”

Marita’s battered doll reflected the abuse of a little girl—ravaged, disfigured, assaulted and burned. “Baby Soccer” was a sadistic “acting out” of unconscious repressed abortion trauma. A baby haunting her unconscious had become the target to be annihilated. Her battered doll’s head was a symbol of this conflict.

It is no surprise that this traumatic play so quickly became an amusement for all to enjoy. Like Marita, many of the young women and men drawn into this game had also lost children to abortion. Many others had lost sisters or brothers to abortion. “Baby Soccer” provided a symbolic means to mock, belittle, and display mastery over the babies who were never allowed to be born but who still haunted their memories.

As the group’s enthusiasm for this game demonstrated, the acting out of post-abortion trauma can be contagious. This is especially the case when so many have had a direct experience with abortion. Worse, this attempt to belittle and master babies through play reinforced and internalized attitudes and behaviors of aggression and hostility against babies.

If the college authorities had seen students beating up and defacing an effigy of a black person, or a symbol of Jewish heritage, would they not have felt compelled to intervene against this frightful and shocking symbolism? But what is said about the intolerance and contempt displayed for babies? It is unlikely that there will ever be a word uttered.

Collective guilt and trauma have the capacity to disguise massive injustice. The offensiveness of “Baby Soccer” was made socially acceptable because it concealed this display of aggression behind the mask of a “humorously irreverent” diversion, so everyone laughed.

We have all learned to snicker at sick jokes and engage in scapegoating because these things give us momentary relief from the tension of unsettled issues. In this case, we were laughing with the nervous giggle of an entire culture that has been traumatized by the abortion of tens of millions of babies. The sheer magnitude of it all is too much to grasp. So it must be trivialized, reduced to laughter and scorn, or else we will all be crushed by the horror of it all.

That is why the belittling of children is all around us. Themes of abortion-related guilt, rage and anger are pervasive in modern music, art and films. “Evil child” movies, like *Alien* and *The*

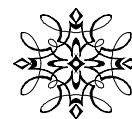
Omen, reflect the demonization of children. The “evil baby” is our worst nightmare—something society must destroy before it destroys us.

This is just one of many ways that our culture has been ravaged by the haunting memory of aborted

children. Far too many women and men have tried to contain and control this horror through aggression and the rejection of nurturing instincts. They have allowed life-giving, tender, and loving ways to be replaced with mockery, violence, and destruction.

These are the truths recorded for all to see in the broken face of Marita’s cherished doll. It was a shattered face. It was the mirror image of Marita’s own fractured self.

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Abortion Trauma and Child Abuse

Theresa Karminski Burke and David C. Reardon

Experts agree that during the past 25 years the rate of child abuse has increased dramatically. Between 1976 and 1987 alone, there was a 330% increase in reported cases of child abuse. While a portion of this increase is due to better reporting, experts agree that these figures reflect a real trend toward ever higher rates of abuse.

These figures clearly contradict the pro-abortionists' claim that abortion of "unwanted children" prevents child abuse. Ignoring the obvious illogic of this argument--which suggests that killing children is better than beating them--there is not a single scientific study that supports this theory. Instead, there is a clear statistical association between increased rates of abortion and increased rates of child abuse. Indeed, statistical and clinical research support not only an association, but a causal connection between abortion and subsequent child abuse.¹

These academic studies, like all research, can be criticized as insufficient to prove that abortion causes child abuse. But these conclusions are also supported by the personal testimonies of women and men who have reported a direct correlation between their unresolved post-abortion feelings and subsequent patterns of emotional or physical abuse of their living children.

For example, one woman described feelings of intense rage whenever her newborn baby cried: "I did not understand why her crying would make me so angry. She was the most beautiful baby, and had such a placid personality. What I didn't realize then was that I hated my daughter for being able to do all these things that my lost [aborted] baby would never be able to do."²

The reasons for child abuse are complex, and can't be fully dealt with here. But clearly, if abortion contributes to feelings of depression, self-hatred, anxiety and anger among mothers and fathers, not to mention patterns of substance abuse, their children will pay a price.

Fatal Abuse

In some instances, abortion can lead to complete emotional breakdowns with tragic results. For example, Renee Nicely of New Jersey experienced a "psychotic episode" the day after her abortion which resulted in the beating death of her 3-year-old son, Shawn. She told the court psychiatrist that she "knew that abortion was wrong" and "I should be punished for the abortion." The psychiatrist who was the prosecution's expert

witness testified that the killing was clearly related to Renee's psychological reaction to her abortion. Unfortunately, the victim of her rage and self-hatred was her own son.³

A similar tragedy occurred just one week after Donna Fleming's second abortion. Depressed and distraught, Donna "heard voices" in her head and tried to kill herself and her two sons by jumping off a bridge in Long Beach, California. Donna and her five-year old son were rescued; her two-year-old son died. Subsequently, Donna claimed she tried to kill herself and her other children in order to reunite her family.⁴

There is no reason to believe that these are isolated cases. Indeed, in the years to come it may be shown that post-abortion trauma was a major cause of the dramatic rise of child abuse cases in the last two decades.

Sadly, in years to come it may be shown that post-abortion trauma was a major cause of the dramatic rise in child abuse cases in the last two decades.

Psychiatrist Philip Ney, M.D., a clinical professor at the University of British Columbia, has done by far the most research into understanding the link between abortion and subsequent child abuse. Most of his analysis, and that of others examining this issue, has focused on the role of abortion in disrupting bonding with later

children; weakening of maternal instincts; reduced inhibitions against violence, particularly toward children; and heightened levels of anger, rage, and depression. It is probable that all these factors have contributed toward increased levels of child abuse following legalized abortion.

In this article, we will attempt to expand on the work of Dr. Ney and others by examining in greater detail compulsive behaviors and intrusive thoughts related to child abuse that can serve as a *traumatic reenactment* of abortion.

Why Reenact Trauma?

Traumatic experiences are by definition overwhelming experiences that are simply "too much" for a person to handle or understand. The ordinary response to a trauma is to banish the experience from one's mind--to run away from it, hide it, or repress it. On one level, trauma victims simply want to forget and put their horrible experience behind them forever.

In conflict with this avoidance reaction, however, is the equally powerful human need to understand our experiences and find meaning in them. Thus, while a person may consciously choose to avoid thinking about the traumatic experience, their

subconscious insists on calling attention to the trauma. Their subconscious knows that an unresolved trauma is unfinished business. In order to be conquered, the horror of their traumatic event must be exposed, proclaimed, and understood.

This tension between the need to hide a trauma and the need to expose it is at the heart of many of the psychological symptoms of post-abortion trauma. *Symbolic reenactment* is one of the ways that the subconscious seeks to simultaneously satisfy both of these needs: the need to expose trauma and the need to hide it. Reenactment allows the person to expose the trauma with the hope that its exposure will eventually lead to understanding and mastery over the trauma. At the same time, because the trauma is reenacted behind a *symbolic* mask, the essence of the trauma it is still concealed and protected. In other words, reenactment allows the person to call for help while disguising the areas that need help.

As trauma specialist Judith Lewis Herman, M.D., has observed, symbolic reenactment of a trauma serves to “simultaneously call attention to the existence of an unspeakable secret and deflect attention from it. This is most apparent in the way traumatized people alternate between feeling numb and reliving the event. The dialectic of trauma gives rise to complicated, sometimes uncanny alterations of consciousness.... It results in the protean, dramatic, and often bizarre symptoms....”⁵

A Day Care Nightmare

For women who have been traumatized by abortion, acts of child abuse are a natural symbol for reenactment of unresolved abortion issues. For example, Rhonda was plagued with guilt and shame for having aborted five children. She believed that God wanted her make up for her past by giving love to children who needed someone to care for them. She tried to meet this obligation by starting a full-time day care career in her home.

While Rhonda was attempting to master her psychic trauma by giving love to children, the eight children under her care literally exhausted her. By the end of the day she frequently became irritable and anxious. Rhonda reported that she occasionally lost her temper with the toddlers and would find herself hitting or shaking them in a rage of fury and frustration. After these violent outbursts, Rhonda would shrink into a corner and cry, convinced that she was a horrible person.

By placing herself in a stressful situation with young toddlers, Rhonda recreated her feelings of helplessness and incompetence with children, themes that were dominant in her choices to abort. Her repeated loss of control with the children confirmed her feelings of self-hatred and disgust. The resulting ritual patterns of child abuse, followed by shame, guilt, and grief, mirrored her abortion experiences with complete emotional accuracy.

Reenactment Through Intrusive Thoughts

Dianne, another patient seeking post-abortion counseling, also had a daycare business. She watched infants in her home. Dianne reported disturbing intrusive thoughts about pulling the babies’ arms out of their sockets. She felt a compelling desire to grab the infants’ little arms and disconnect their limbs. Such thoughts caused excessive anxiety and horrific grief. Each time Dianne was confronted with these traumatic thoughts, she was overcome with horror and sadness. Each intrusive episode confirmed that she was a disgusting person and filled her heart with sickening grief.

Fortunately, on the anniversary date of her abortion Dianne finally recognized the connection between her abortion and the intrusive thoughts. In a searing moment, the truth of what was happening to her cut through her soul, and she wept with grief over her loss. Fortunately, Dianne sought help to deal with the long-repressed trauma, and all the unwelcome intrusive thoughts have ceased.

Intrusive thoughts like Dianne’s are a common experience for trauma victims. Once an intrusive thought comes, it can be very hard to put it out of the mind. Afterwards, people may wonder: “Where in the world did that image come from?” Like dreams and fantasies, intrusive thoughts often contain complex symbols of the trauma. With abortion trauma, intrusive thoughts about harming children may also include symbols

of the abortion procedure itself. Kathy related the following story:

I love my kids. There is nothing I wouldn't do for them. They are everything in the world to me. But I get these horrible thoughts that just mortify me. It's hard to even talk about. I might be standing at the kitchen counter making dinner and I'll think about poisoning their food. I imagine them reacting to the poison and I have to rush them to the hospital. I go crazy with guilt and shame. Then I imagine that the doctors discover that I did it on purpose. They call my husband and tell him that I shouldn't have the children... that I tried to kill them. These thoughts just jump into my head. They are so crazy... I can't believe I think such thoughts. It makes me hate myself.

Kathy first entered counseling for panic attacks. She began reporting these types of thoughts each week with tremendous distress. It was hard for Kathy to even talk about them without crying. As we reviewed her life, I was hardly surprised that a saline abortion was in her past. She visibly shook when she talked about it. When I asked her how a saline abortion works, she described the procedure as a “*poisoning*” of the fetus.

All of Kathy’s symptoms developed after her abortion. Through

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- Kathy

these intrusive thoughts, Kathy continually relived the emotional experience of her abortion. Each episode clustered around hurting or killing her living children and the shameful aftermath. Her mourning had become complicated and was surfacing through these disturbing fantasies.

Kathy is one of the gentlest, most soft-spoken women I have ever met. I know it was enormously difficult for her to experience such horrendous thoughts. I am happy to say that these impressions, which had plagued her for years, ended after she had done grief work related to her abortion.

Emily's case is similar. She experienced an abortion twelve years before getting married. Afterward, she refused to allow herself to think about it or grieve what she had lost. This "stuffing away" of emotions worked fine until she began to have children.

Emily's first flashback hit her violently when she had her first ultrasound while pregnant with a "wanted" child. As time went on, she would get frequent intrusive thoughts concerning her abortion when looking at the faces of her babies. After a time, she also began to experience habitual, obsessive, and scary thoughts about hurting her children. She imagined stabbing her children with a knife one by one, suffocating them with pillows, and strangling them.

Emily is a wonderful and devoted mother, yet she could not escape intrusive thoughts about death and killing. As time went on, they became more elaborate and more real. Emily could not figure out why this was happening to her. She was appalled that she was even capable of such hideous thoughts. She certainly had no intentions of ever carrying them out. But her destructive thoughts were like starving rabid animals, hounding, scratching, and gnawing at her conscience. They left her feeling bewildered, crazy, and ashamed. She desperately yearned to silence these dangerous beasts in her mind. Fortunately, all these symptoms were alleviated after Emily had done grief work related to her abortion.

Conclusion

The firsthand testimonies of women, combined with therapists' case studies and even media reports of criminal cases involving child abuse or child homicide, conclusively demonstrate that abortion trauma can create or aggravate tendencies toward child abuse. While most women who experience intrusive thoughts about harming their children are probably able to resist these impulses, the fact that these destructive thoughts occur at all is alarming both for the sake of their children and themselves. If even a small fraction of the millions of abortions performed each year lead to abuse of subsequent children, whether in homes or in daycare, this problem should be of grave concern to us all.

Theresa Karminski Burke, Ph.D., is a psychotherapist. The case studies presented in this article are excerpted from her forthcoming book, Forbidden Grief. © 1997 Theresa Karminski Burke. David C. Reardon, Ph.D., is a biomedical ethicist and the director of the Elliot Institute.

NOTES

1. Ney, P. Fung, T., Wickett, A.R., "Relationship Between Induced Abortion and Child Abuse and Neglect: Four Studies," *Pre- and Perinatal Psychology Journal* 8(1):43-63 Fall 1993; Benedict, M., White, R., and Cornely, P., "Maternal Perinatal Risk Factors and Child Abuse" *Child Abuse and Neglect* 9:217-224 (1985); Lewis, E., "Two Hidden Predisposing Factors in Child Abuse," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 3:327-330 (1979); Ney, P., "Relationship Between Abortion and Child Abuse," *Canadian J. Psychiatry* 24:610-620(1979).
2. Reardon, D., *Aborted Women, Silent No More* (Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1987) 130.
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Book explores link between abortion and child abuse

Pioneer Publishing has just announced the release of a new book by Dr. Philip Ney, a well-known researcher whose studies have established a strong link between post-abortion trauma and child abuse.

Deeply Damaged: An Explanation for the Profound Problems Arising from Aborting Babies and Abusing Children, is a culmination of Dr. Ney's years of research. His data has revealed that those who were abused as children are more likely to have abortions, and conversely, that those who have abortions are more likely to abuse their living children. He believes that child abuse, surviving abortion, and having an abortion all cause "deep damage" to a person.

Deeply Damaged discusses Dr. Ney's theory of human development and the ways we are all bound to each other. Dr. Ney believes that by inflicting damage through abortion and/or child abuse on one person, we are damaging the whole of society. Thus, abortion and child abuse effect not only the parents and the child, but also their siblings, the doctors involved, the government, and the legal system. Abortion—and the resulting abuse—harms not only the child, but society as well.

The book is available for \$19.95 from Pioneer Publishing, P.O. Box 27103, 750 Goldstream Ave., Victoria, B.C., V9B 5S4, Canada. Orders can be faxed to (250) 391-1841.

Secret Births

Stephanie Clark was only looking for a pair of her daughter's pants when she opened the closet door. Imagine her surprise at finding a tiny newborn baby nestled in a blanket. "I screamed in surprise," she later told reporters. "I called 911. They said, 'Whose baby is it?' I said, 'I have no idea.'"

It turned out that the baby was her grandson, Navorn. Her 17-year-old daughter Shanta had concealed her pregnancy and secretly given birth to her baby boy in her home on September 21, 1997. She had hidden the baby in her bedroom closet whenever she left for school. It was 17 days after the birth before the startled grandmother first met her grandson.

After being charged with neglect, Shanta was given custody of Navorn on the condition that she move into a home for young mothers. The 16-year-old father of the child came forward seeking to establish paternity and to strengthen his relationship with Shanta, which he described as previously an "on again, off again" romance.

The media spin on the birth of the "closet baby" Navorn Clark suggested that teenagers can be unaware of their pregnancies for long periods and may engage in denial of reality until it is "too late."

Teenage "denial" is often blamed for late-term abortions. The argument goes that teenagers have trouble confronting the reality of their problem and so fail to seek an earlier, "safer" abortion. Because of this "denial" problem, pro-abortionists argue, we must keep late term abortions available for these "messed up" kids.

Personally, I've never bought this argument. Certainly it is not uncommon for teenage mothers to go through short periods of denial about a pregnancy, desperately hoping that "my period is just late."

But of the thousands of testimonies I have collected, in every case where a teenager had a late-term abortion, not one stated that she didn't realize or couldn't accept that she was pregnant. Instead, they have all indicated that they deliberately concealed their pregnancies in the hope that by the time their parents discovered the truth, it would be "too late" to have an abortion.

Unfortunately, these young women discovered, it is never "too late" to get an abortion in America. Their abortions were either forced or consented to under duress. From this viewpoint, late-term teenage abortions are not due to teenage denial, but rather to parental abuse.

Pro-Abortion Parents

A few years ago, I was a guest on a call-in radio program. A woman called in to declare herself to be on the side of "choice" despite abortion's risks. I asked: "Well, if you are pro-choice, then certainly you would agree that we should have laws to protect young women from being forced into unwanted abortions?"

Without hesitation, the caller confirmed my point, saying, "I've told my daughter that if she ever gets pregnant, she *will* have an abortion. I've done my duty raising her. I'm *not* going to raise her kids, too." This woman was pro-choice for everyone except her daughter. For her daughter, there was only one choice: abortion.

Sadly, many young people grow up with the same understanding of what their parents' demands will be if they ever become pregnant. What are they to do?

Some, like Shanta Clark, will try to conceal the pregnancy all the way through to birth. On a trip some years

years ago I spent a night with a family who had a ten or twelve-year-old adopted daughter. The girl's teenage birthmother had successfully concealed *everything* from her parents. She hid her pregnancy, arranged for the adoption, selected the adoptive parents, and gave birth at a hospital (returning home the same day)--all without her parents ever catching on to the truth.

Indeed, there was still some communication between the biological mother and the adoptive parents, and the adoptive parents believed that the biological grandparents still, to that day, did not know of their granddaughter's birth.

When Options Run Out

Not all teens are as resourceful as this young woman was. Some simply know that they can't or won't abort their children. Others have probably already had an abortion once and were so devastated by it that they will do *anything* to avoid having another.

So they try to get by, one day at a time, concealing the pregnancy and hoping that somehow it will all work out. Sometimes, it does. They reveal the pregnancy after their boyfriend has promised to support them or at a point when their parents no longer feel comfortable forcing an abortion. In other cases, it doesn't work out. The pregnancy is discovered or revealed, and they are still forced to abort.

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In at least a few cases, however, teens are concealing their pregnancies all the way to birth, still hoping to find some last-minute solution. But what happens when the baby is finally born and there is no obvious last-minute solution? They still have a secret to hide! They know their parents' wrath will be no less now that the baby is here than when it was *in utero*. But it is even harder to hide a crying child than a bulging belly. What are they to do? I believe fear of parental rejection or abuse is often the driving force behind babies being abandoned on church steps, in garbage cans, or even on the road side.

Are these babies abandoned in a loveless act of infanticide, or with the prayer that God will deliver them? I suspect that in the vast majority of cases, they are abandoned with a prayer for God's providence, followed by a lifetime of grief and guilt. In at least

some cases, these young women are hiding their pregnancies and abandoning their children because they desperately wanted to *protect* their children from the people who would have forced them to abort.

To extend this analysis one step further, what happens when these confused and frightened young women don't have the time or opportunity to abandon their child? Is it not likely that in the panicked minutes after the birth, when the infant is crying and need to protect her secret overwhelms even her maternal instincts, some of these young mothers desperately seek to muffle their baby's cries under a mound of towels, or pillows, or in the nearest trash bag? Are the resulting deaths due to acts of hate, or acts of panic?

This analysis is complicated even further if the mother had a previous traumatic abortion. In such cases, is it not possible that even the deliberate killing or "putting away" of her born

child is the result of "acting out" a symbolic reenactment of her original abortion trauma?

Loss of Support

Decades ago, most parents were chiefly concerned about a pregnancy revealing to the world that their daughter was not chaste. Today, when schools hand out contraceptives--not just on request, but as part of student assemblies--it appears that many parents are chiefly concerned about avoiding responsibility for helping their daughters to care for their "unwanted" grandchildren.

This is why the solution to teenagers abandoning their newborns or committing acts of infanticide cannot be found in efforts to encourage teens to choose abortion early.

Easy access to abortion is not the solution, it is the *problem*. Abortion is what they are trying so hard to avoid! Whenever it is easy for teens to choose abortion, it will also be easy for teens to be forced into unwanted abortions. It is fear of the latter that is driving women into a corner from which there is no easy escape.

Abortion, infanticide, and child abandonment are acts of fear and despair. They are symptoms of a society that does not embrace young mothers and fathers, but instead subjects them to criticism, abuse, and coercion. The only solution is to offer young women and men unconditional love and life-affirming support. That's hard to do, especially in a society that is so enamored with death.

-DCR



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To Those who Mourn,

When I was seventeen years old I underwent a second trimester, saline abortion. Although I wanted to have my baby, my parents pressured to submit to the abortion. After many hours of labor I gave birth to a dead baby boy. To say that this had a major impact on my life is an understatement.

When I look back at where I have come from—the guilt, the shame, and the grief of abortion—it is with continual amazement. I live my life with a deep joy and gratitude now. Instead of doubting the mercy and goodness of God, I have come to expect it.

It is said that God can bring good out of all things—even the worst of situations. There was a time when I would have found this hard to believe, but I know through personal experience that this is true. God can indeed bring good out of all things if we let Him—even abortion. Through His grace, those who have had abortions can come to find peace, healing, and even joy in their lives.

I know some of you are probably thinking, “but I had more than one abortion,” or “mine was probably worse than hers,” or “nobody forced me to abort,” etc. My answer to you is that the process of healing from abortion isn’t about who you are and what you’ve done, it is about who God is and what *He has done!*

The mercy of God is there for the taking—if you only dare to trust His lead on the journey of healing. His mercy will bring you a new found life, one that is full of peace. I feel this peace because God now lives within me. I no longer feel the need to be perfect, because I know that God loves me in spite of my imperfections—and even because of them. I no longer fear abandonment, for I have learned that He never abandoned me—even after my abortion.

Through my healing I have learned how to have more

compassion and mercy for others. I am careful not to judge, for I know where I have come from and how much I needed compassion and mercy. Through my child lost to abortion, God has taught me about true love, as opposed to the self-centered attachments I always wanted. Through the forgiveness I have been shown by God and others I have learned how to forgive others—and even myself. Because of the love I have found in God, I am less afraid of suffering because I know I am never alone in this life; He is with me.

I won’t lie to you. It was a difficult journey. You must face yourself honestly, and it is frightening to confront the many faults we have. For those of us who are post-abortive, often the very things we have to face are the same fears that caused us to choose abortion in the first place. The paradox is that facing these things—fear of abandonment, self-love, pride, etc.—is the very thing that will set us free from them. No matter how hard the journey, it is never as difficult as what you are living with now.

So, I invite you to begin your journey toward healing, and I pray that you will begin this journey by reaching out to those who can help you. By educating yourself on post-abortion issues, finding support from others who have traveled this road before you, and most important, by putting your trust in God even if you don’t “feel” trustful, you will be able to move toward real healing.

Remember that you are not alone in your feelings. There are reasons for them. There is no room for “politics” or controversy in post-abortion healing. We have lost our children. We must be allowed to grieve for them.

Through healing you will become a better person in spite of your abortion. God through His mercy and love is waiting for you.

I will be praying for you,

Theresa Bonapartis

The Post-Abortion Review

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