

# *The Post-Abortion Review*

Vol. 9, No. 4

Elliot Institute, PO Box 7348, Springfield, IL 62791

Oct.-Dec. 2001

## **An Introduction to Forbidden Grief**

Theresa Burke with David C. Reardon

As a young graduate student, I was assigned to lead a weekly support group for women with eating disorders. It was there that I first observed how abortion is a *forbidden grief*.

It all began with Debbie. She cautiously and fearfully confided to the group that she was having flashbacks to an abortion that had happened several years earlier. She was also having recurring nightmares involving a baby.

These intrusive memories were bad enough. Her anxiety was made worse, however, by her ex-husband. He would phone and leave messages on her answering machine, calling her a "murderer," describing the abortion in vivid and horrifying detail. Debbie found this extremely disturbing not only for herself but for her three children who would often hear the incoming message.

After these phone calls Debbie would become quite agitated. On numerous occasions she became suicidal and engaged in borderline cutting behaviors. She repeatedly cut her wrists with a razor blade and often ended up in the emergency room of the local hospital. Debbie had always struggled with weight issues, but her eating disorder became full-blown after the abortion. She was severely anorexic.

Her story sparked a series of confessions within the group. Beth Ann said she knew how Debbie felt because she, too, had undergone an abortion. "It would kill me if someone kept reminding me about it. It's something I try to forget about. Your husband is a horrible man," Beth Ann said with contempt.

Diane immediately jumped in with an irritated hiss. "---- him! We have a right to control our bodies and decide if we want their ----- interfering with our bodies. To hell with him!"

The other women were silent.

"Diane, you seem quite angry," I observed. "Has anyone hurt you like that?"

Diane dismissed the idea with explicit certainty. "Nobody hurts me!" she stated. "Especially men! That's why I had my abortion, so the ----- couldn't screw with me and mess up my life. And you know what? It was the best thing I ever did. Taking control of your life is nothing to feel guilty over and ---- anyone who tries to tell me to feel otherwise. ---- them all!"

At that moment, Judith, obviously very upset, got up and left the room. As Judith closed the door, Sarah, normally quiet and reserved, politely asked Diane to watch her mouth. She told her that her relentless use of the f-word was probably offensive to some and it showed a lack of class.

Diane quickly retorted, "---- you, ya prude! You guys are all a bunch of ----- prigs."

I began to feel quite inadequate and wondered how to proceed with the meeting, which at that moment felt like a battleship rapidly sinking in the sea as a volley of torpedoes struck its hull.

Week after week we had discussed very emotional issues: mothers, fathers, problem relationships, family dynamics, dependency, divorce, self-esteem, stress, assertiveness, sexual conflicts, lesbianism, depression, and a gamut of other anxiety-producing issues. But never had I seen a subject create such severe hostility, fear, and pain among the members of our group. The meeting was becoming as volatile as an erupting volcano as the group members began to vent their toxic feelings through verbal attacks on each other. I just wanted the meeting to end. I couldn't wait to get home.

Suddenly, Lasheera, who usually just sat back and observed the others, chimed in. "Calm down! Everybody chill!" The white around her dark eyes flashed out from a black complexion like shimmering rays of light, signaling a cease-fire. "Do you like my new sweater?" she asked with sincere curiosity.

We ended the meeting early that night.

### **Don't Ask, Don't Tell**

When I got home I called Judith, who had walked out of the meeting, to make sure she was okay. Judith said she was sorry for leaving so abruptly, but then added, "I hate the subject of abortion and wish that we could focus on eating disorders instead."

I asked her if she, too, had experienced an abortion. After a prolonged silence, she murmured, "It was a long time ago. I really don't want to talk about it."

The events of that evening weighed on my mind for the entire

---

**Never had I seen a topic  
create such severe fear  
and pain in our group.**

---

week. Our group discussion had not even remotely helped any of these women to address their tremendous anxiety about their past abortions. We had only scratched the surface.

Six out of the eight women in our group had undergone abortions. The other two had been sexually molested as children. The common denominator in their histories was a traumatic event, abortion or sexual molestation, which some were not even able to verbalize. If their feelings about their abortions were that powerful, I wanted to know more about them. Unexpressed emotions are key issues in the treatment of eating disorders. Because women with eating disorders are overwhelmingly concerned with image and pleasing others, they often deny and repress their real feelings.

This is accomplished by binding their emotions and anxieties up in ritual behaviors. Their eating disorders are a battle over food, which is really a surrogate enemy—a symbol of negative feelings like grief, tension, anger, frustration, boredom, and fear.

In this sense, an eating disorder can serve to distract a person from other problems that he or she cannot confront. I knew it was quite reasonable to suspect that abortion trauma could be disguised through eating disorders. As Sarah later explained:

I am never hungry when I binge . . . I eat because I am full.  
Full of anger, hurt, sadness and loneliness. I throw up  
because that is the way I empty myself of those feelings.

Getting in touch with such feelings is fundamental to recovery. However, this can be a tricky process because any discussion of these unwanted emotions generates tremendous resistance, denial, and fear.

The issue of abortion was clearly a threatening topic for our group. Those who could speak about it could only do so by angrily blaming others. In subsequent discussions, all six women indicated that their abortions were perhaps the most difficult decisions they had ever made. At the same time, however, they denied that their abortions had any significant effect on their lives. This “no big deal” claim, however, was in striking contrast to the intense emotions and avoidance behavior that I had observed. Clearly, a lot of unexplored and unresolved feelings were being denied, repressed, or suppressed.

Unfortunately, however, I was not permitted at that time to delve more deeply into my group’s obvious difficulties with past abortions. When I shared my assessment with my supervisor, a

psychiatrist, he became irritated and defensive. He emphatically told me that I had no business prying into people’s abortions. I pointed out that it was Debbie who had raised the issue because of her flashbacks. He insisted that Debbie’s flashbacks were a psychotic reaction caused by a medication she was taking.

I questioned this and pointed out that her abortion had been a very traumatic experience and her flashbacks sounded more like post-traumatic stress disorder. When I suggested it might be helpful for her to talk about it, the psychiatrist looked me straight in the eye and said, “This is a support group for eating disorders . . . not abortion.” He firmly instructed me not to bring up the subject again.

Despite the discouraging comments of my supervisor, this experience sparked my interest in treating post-abortion grief and trauma. In the years since, I have worked with well over two thousand women who have struggled with post-

abortion issues and have taught scores of therapists around the country how to treat post-abortion issues.

At the time I began this work, there were very few resources available to help therapists, much less the general public, understand the painful and confusing processes of grief which may follow an abortion. As a result, many women and men suffer in silence, in complete numbness, or with the frightening and bewildering feeling that they are going crazy. Grief following an abortion can be extremely complicated and can be experienced on all levels of the personality. For many women, the source of their distress may go unrecognized, unspoken, and unnamed.

The symptoms I and others have observed vary widely between individuals. Despite the diversity of emotional and behavioral reactions, however, these symptoms are all rooted in the experience of abortion. For many, it is primarily an issue of unresolved grief. For many other women, it is a traumatic event which has disordered their coping skills and distorted their lives and behavior in dramatic and even bizarre ways.

As I look back at this incident with my group, I can now see how this cast of characters is representative of our society at large. They show us why our culture is woefully unprepared to voice, accept, or even respect post-abortion grief. All of the characters in this mini-drama represent reasons why post-abortion healing is made more difficult than it needs to be.

First, there was Debbie. She bravely tried to share her feelings, but quickly saw that this just upset everyone. She ended up apologizing and feeling guilty because she had disrupted the

---

## **My supervisor told me I had no business prying into people’s abortions.**

---

The Post-Abortion Review is the quarterly journal of the Elliot Institute, ISSN 1083-9496. The Elliot Institute was founded in 1988 to perform original research and education on the impact of abortion on women, men, siblings, and society. The suggested annual donation for a subscription is \$20. Contributions to the Elliot Institute, a nonprofit, 501(c)3 corporation, are tax-deductible. For more information, visit our web site at [www.afterabortion.org](http://www.afterabortion.org).

This issue has been edited by David C. Reardon, Ph.D., Director of the Elliot Institute. Assistant Editor: Amy R. Sobie. Relevant submissions will be considered for publication but cannot be returned unless accompanied by a SASE. Direct requests for permission to reprint to: Elliot Institute, PO Box 7348, Springfield, IL 62791. © 2001 Elliot Institute, unless otherwise noted.

group's harmony. Sadly, she learned the lesson that friends, families, and therapists often teach those who try to share their emotions about a past abortion: "You're making us uncomfortable. Just stop thinking about it and get on with your life." Society doesn't want to hear about it.

Second, there was Judith. She felt compelled to run away from the discussion. The abortion issue simply struck too close to a secret pain that she didn't want to think or talk about. The problem with this approach was that it required her to expend great amounts of energy trying not to think about it. Despite her efforts to avoid the topic, her pent-up emotions were distorting other aspects of her life.

Third, there was Diane. She was the polar opposite of the withdrawn Judith. She was filled with such rage toward anyone and everyone who had hurt her that she could only feel disgust for those who did not share her rage. Diane's anger was so consuming that she had no time to offer sympathy to others who were also hurting. She barely had time to notice Debbie's personal grief because the mention of abortion had triggered in her an overpowering need to vent her own feelings of anger and blame.

Fourth, there was Lasheera, who graciously and skillfully changed the subject to something quite superficial—her new sweater. She represents those who seek peace through distraction. A temporary calm was restored, but fundamental issues were left unresolved to raise their heads again some other day. Denial was given another opportunity to reestablish itself.

Fifth, there was Debbie's ex-husband. He was unforgiving and emotionally abusive. His condemning and vicious remarks, coupled with her own grief, drove Debbie to despair and suicidal behaviors. Rather than helping her to heal, he fixated on reminding Debbie what a "bad" person she was. He reinforced her fear that she would never be understood or forgiven by others.

Sixth, there was my supervisor. He represents thousands of professional therapists who will compassionately listen to any personal problem—except abortion. Such therapists are always sure that the problem must really be something else, even if the woman insists that the abortion *is* the problem. Their view is that abortion helps women, period.

Seventh, there was me. I wanted to help, but I didn't know how. My heart was in the right place, but the issues were complex, my experience was limited, and I was denied any support from the "powers that be."

These seven characters offer a rough sketch of our society at large. We are either (1) struggling with this forbidden grief, (2) reinforcing the social rules that forbid expression of this grief, or (3) trying to create a more open and healing environment for those women and men who do struggle with post-abortion issues. If you fit into any of these categories, this book is for you.

Whatever your political or moral beliefs about abortion, I hope

that you can approach this issue with an open mind and a compassionate heart. Set aside your political and ideological goals, at least for the moment. Read about the real experiences of women in this book. Don't reject their experiences simply because they do not fit into your vision of women who are liberated and empowered by abortion.

## Ending the Isolation

Abortion is not a panacea. The fact that it has caused so much division and anxiety in our country's political life clearly suggests that it can also cause internal divisions and anxiety in an individual's life. How can it possibly be a perfect solution for *all* women in *all* situations?

Many of the women I have treated knowingly violated their conscience or betrayed their maternal desires because of the pressures they faced. Those pressures were many: abandonment by their partner, poverty, homelessness, violence, lack of education, unemployment, emotional problems, incest, rape, and fetal abnormalities, to name just a few. Many women felt they had "no choice" but to submit to an unwanted abortion.

Some of these women faced immediate feelings of regret and grief. Others stoically denied their feelings for years or even decades, until finally they could no longer avoid the need to understand what they did in the context of who they want to be.

At the other end of the spectrum, I have also counseled women who, at the time of their abortions, had no moral qualms about their choice. It was an easy decision, in accord with all of their beliefs. But even this was no guarantee of future satisfaction with their choice. These women sought me out because some later event in their lives suddenly raised unexpected feelings of confusion or grief.

These women's problems are made even more tragic by the fact that so many have no one to turn to who can help them work through their grief. Many feel isolated and totally alone in their feelings. They are trapped in the mistaken belief that no one can understand their feelings.

One of the reasons I wrote this book is simply to validate the experiences of these millions of women and men. My hope is that *Forbidden Grief* will provide both insight into post-abortion reactions and an explanation of the symptoms which may develop when mourning is inhibited and feelings are repressed.

\*\*\*

*Dr. Theresa Burke is the founder of Rachel's Vineyard post-abortion ministries, which can be reached at 1-877-HOPE-4-ME or [www.rachelsvineyard.org](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org). This selection is excerpted from the introduction to *Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion*, by Theresa Burke with David C. Reardon (Acorn Books, March 2002). © 2001, Theresa Karminski Burke. Reprinted with permission.*

---

# Always Two

Melanie Fyock

---

The mother and child logo shown here was inspired by Dr. David Reardon's book, *Making Abortion Rare*. It was created to represent the tragic fact that *abortion always has two victims*, because you cannot hurt the child without hurting the mother. The two are one and can only be separated by doing violence to both.

*Making Abortion Rare* presents a plan to end abortion by shining the light of truth on its many physical and psychological dangers to women. To do this we must reach out to the millions of aborted mothers, the living victims of abortion, who desperately need the healing and forgiveness that is found only in Jesus Christ.

The logo is a symbol of a pro-woman/pro-life belief that the church must provide an atmosphere in which these wounded women can grieve, and repent, and heal. It is a call to serve them in the name of the Lord until they are able to speak out against the horrors of abortion with a testimony that cannot be denied or ignored. "Always 2" is a collective cry from all across America to stop the daily slaughter of innocents and the daily violation of their mothers.

Although the logo was created because of the tragedy of abortion, it has triumphant meanings as well. Any image of mother and child must make us immediately think of Mary and the infant Jesus, so it is a reminder that the Almighty God chose to enter His creation through the doorway of a womb.

He became a human so as to grow into the Man who would die on a cross and rise from the dead to open for us the doorway to eternal life. The miracle of the Incarnation teaches us to protect mothers, consider the womb a sanctuary, and celebrate every birth no matter the circumstances surrounding it.

"Always 2" means that "unto us a Child is born and unto us a Son is given and the government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called 'Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.'"

As we commit ourselves to the task of fighting abortion, we must remember that it is not a political but a spiritual struggle we are entering. We have an invisible enemy destroying the closest bond in humanity by deceiving mothers into sacrificing their unborn children. This is only a continuation of the destruction that he began in the Garden of Eden, and continued in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he deceived mankind into rebelling against our Creator. Killing babies is only a step toward his ultimate goal of separating us from our heavenly Father forever.

For that reason, the logo also represents each believer cradled in

the arms of our Creator. It is a reminder that He will never leave us or forsake us. It is a reminder that apart from Him we can do nothing, but we can do all things through Jesus Christ who gives us strength. It is a reminder that anyone who even thinks about joining the spiritual battle must make his relationship with the Lord the priority of his life. "Always 2" means the child of God is safe in His arms.

Though we are never alone because He is with us, it is part of His design to knit us together with other believers. From the perfect garden where He said that it is not good for man to be alone (though He Himself was there) to the time He walked this earth and sent His disciples out two by two, He has continuously taught us that two are better than one because they have good reward for their labor. If one falls down his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up. So the logo also represents the union of believers in the body of Christ.

It is vital for us each to have at least one comrade in arms to turn to when the battle rages, when the trials and testings come. We need each other to pray with, to talk with, to mutually encourage and strengthen one another. At times we will nurture, just like a mother, at times we will be nurtured, just like a child—all the while building a bond that is deeper than any ties of blood. "Always 2" reminds us that even when we are two individuals, we are truly one in the Spirit of Life and forever united in the family of God.

May the logo of the mother and child and the words "Always 2" become a familiar sign in the household of faith, like the memorial stones of ancient Israel, to remind us of the wonderful things the Lord has done. He became like one of us to make us one with Him and one with each other. He has given us life and power so that we might be His witnesses to a lost and dying world.

Who more clearly stands in need of that witness than the victims of abortion? Not the children, for they are beyond our reach and already in God's embrace. But if we can offer the love and forgiveness of Christ to their mothers, their children's tragic deaths may yet serve a redeeming purpose in helping to end the bloodshed in our nation.

This logo belongs to whosoever will use it to the glory of God.

\*\*\*

*Melanie Fyock lives in Pennsylvania, where she collects books and woodworking tools and works and prays for the restoration of the God-ordained dignity and honor of women. To get a copy of Making Abortion Rare, call the Elliot Institute at 1 (888) 412-2676.*



# News Briefs

---

## **U.S. Senate Recognizes Need for Research on Post-Abortion Syndrome**

During consideration of the Labor and Health and Human Services Appropriations bill for 2002, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed a resolution expressing the belief that the National Institutes of Health should expand and intensify its research and related activities regarding post-abortion depression and psychosis.

The resolution, sponsored by Sen. Robert Smith (R-NH), was passed without debate.

\*\*\*

## **Planned Parenthood Sued For Failing to Warn Women of Abortion/Breast Cancer Link**

Three California women are suing Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, in an attempt to force them to acknowledge the link between abortion and breast cancer.

The three women, two of whom had abortions and another who has been treated for cancer, say they want Planned Parenthood to inform women that there is a significant association between abortion and a subsequent risk of breast cancer. The suit, which is being handled by the Thomas More Law Center, a non-profit public interest law firm, does not include a request for monetary damages. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death among middle-aged women in the U.S.

\*\*\*

## **Man Sentenced for Forced Abortion Attempt**

A Connecticut man will serve five years in prison for beating a pregnant teen in an attempt to abort their child.

Jerome Butler, 26, of West Haven, had earlier pleaded guilty to charges that he planned the attack on the 15-year-old. He must also register as a sex offender for 10 years for his affair with the 15-year-old girl. Butler's wife, Nicole, who was charged with helping to plan the attack, received a suspended sentence as a result of a plea bargain. The baby survived the attack and was born in good health.

\*\*\*

## **D.C. Medic Had Abortion Out of Fear for Her Job**

A medic in Washington, D.C. has told officials that she underwent an abortion recently after being told by a supervisor that she would be fired if she stayed pregnant.

The woman accused her supervisor, Samantha Robinson, of telling her and other new employees that they could not become pregnant during their first year on the job because they had no medical benefits. The 21-year-old Catholic woman said that when she informed Robinson of her pregnancy, she was told to abort, which resulted in great distress for her and a rift with her family.

Union officials reported that three other women have also said they aborted out of fear for their jobs. Both union and department officials say they are investigating the matter.

\*\*\*

## **Canadian Woman Dies After Taking RU-486**

The death of a Canadian woman during clinical trials of RU-486 has led the distributors to suspend trials of the abortion pill in that country.

The woman is reported to have died from septic shock resulting from a rare infection after taking the pill, although it is not clear whether the infection was directly related to her use of RU-486. RU-486, also known as mifepristone or Mifeprex, was approved for use in the U.S. last year. The Population Council, which distributes RU-486 in the U.S., said that it has suspended Canadian trials of the drug and reported the woman's death to Canadian and U.S. officials.

## **New Post-Abortion Resources Available From Ramah**

"Ramah's Voice" is a newsletter designed to equip, educate and encourage those involved in post-abortion ministries. Past issues included information on ministering on college campuses, compassion collapse, reaching hearts on the Internet, breaking sexual soul ties, and developing prison ministries. If you are involved in reaching post-abortive hearts, this newsletter will be a perfect companion to your ministry. The suggested donation for a one-year membership (6 issues) is \$20.

Also available is the "Her Choice to Heal Recovery Guide Set." Written by Sydna Masse, founder and president of Ramah International, and Linda Perry, this tool allows women to work further in the recovery process. Incorporating new areas of need like breaking sexual soul ties, this recovery guide will allow post-abortion ministry leaders to use the book "Her Choice to Heal" in a 9-12 week group study format. A leader's version is also available with weekly instruction and vital ministry forms. Suggested donations are \$6.50 for the book only, \$10 for the book and recovery guide set, and \$25 for the leader's version.

To obtain any of these resources, contact Ramah International at 1776 Hudson St., Englewood, FL 34223, (941) 473-2188, or visit [www.ramahinternational.org](http://www.ramahinternational.org).

# All of Abortion's Dangers Documented in New Book

**L**ibraries, pregnancy centers and researchers can now easily access information on the most hotly-contested social, moral and political topic of our day. The Elliot Institute proudly announces the release of *Detrimental Effects of Abortion: An Annotated Bibliography with Commentary (3rd Edition)*. It is the most complete summary available of statistically significant studies on abortion.

Compiled by attorney and post-abortion expert Thomas W. Strahan, this 276-page reference guide is an indispensable resource for therapists, counselors, medical professionals, students, pro-life activists and anyone else interested in post-abortion studies. Studies are organized into more than 50 different subtopics, and each entry includes a review of the key findings of the cited study. Major topics covered include:

- Abortion-Decision Making
- Standard of Care for Abortion Providers
- Psychological Effects of Abortion
- Physical Effects of Abortion
- Social Effects and Implications of Abortion
- Abortion and Maternal Mortality
- Adolescents and Abortion

"Most of the public doesn't know what information is out there, especially not information that is published in scholarly or medical journals," said Elliot Institute director David Reardon. "The task of searching for it in the Internet or in a reference library can be overwhelming and time-consuming. So we're especially encouraging pro-life groups to donate a copy to their local library so everyone can easily access this information."

Strahan, who edits *The Research Bulletin* for the Association for Interdisciplinary Research in Values and Social Change, said this book is an important tool for those who want to help people recognize the risks of abortion.

"Most people think that because abortion is legal, it's safe for women, period," Strahan said. "They think that as long as the government says it's okay, then it must be good for our society. They don't realize that many researchers and scholars studying this issue have found that just the opposite is true."

The book is \$35 (includes shipping). Check or credit card orders can be placed at 1-888-412-2676 or [amysobie@juno.com](mailto:amysobie@juno.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

## Memorial Contributions

In memory of  
Thomas McDermott

*Contributions to the Elliot Institute in memory of loved ones or for special occasions will be acknowledged in this publication unless otherwise requested.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## Major Donation From 72 Supporters

Last month the Elliot Institute received \$636.99 from BuyersOnline referrals. This income was generated by just 72 of our supporters, who are *saving money* using BuyersOnline's great long distance telephone service.

We have been using BuyersOnline (formerly Buyers United) for our long distance service since 1996. We have never had a problem, plus we've enjoyed the lowest long distance rates and frequent rate reductions—to what is now only *4.9 cents per minute!*\*

There are no gimmicks or strings attached. You too can save 20 to 50 percent or more on your present long distance bill. Moreover, even while you save money, 20 to 30 percent of your paid bill will be forwarded to us. And unlike AT&T, Sprint, and MCI-WorldCom, BuyersOnline doesn't support pro-abortion or anti-family groups. Instead, your use of BuyersOnline will *directly help* our pro-life efforts.

To sign up: Call BuyersOnline at **(800) 363-5029**. Use the chart below to select the plan code that best suits your situation. (All rates apply 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call BuyersOnline for in-state long distance rates.) Don't forget to give them the Elliot Institute referral number: **AGT5781**.

### FREE Sign up Bonus!

As a thank-you for your support, if you sign up for BuyersOnline, we'll renew your subscription to *The Post-Abortion Review* for one full year! So call BuyersOnline, today, before you forget. Then call (217) 525-8202 or email [amysobie@juno.com](mailto:amysobie@juno.com) to notify us to renew your subscription, FREE!

Rate Type	Interstate Rate per Min.	Billing Increments per min.*	Monthly Fee (unlimited lines)	Minimum monthly usage
<b>Residential 4.9</b>	4.9¢	60 / 60 sec	\$4.95	\$0.00
<b>Residential 6.9</b>	6.9¢	60 / 60 sec	\$0.00	\$5.00
<b>Commercial Plan F</b>	5.97¢	6 / 18 sec	\$0.00**	\$0.00**
<b>Commercial Plan H (over 5 phone lines)</b>	4.97¢	6 / 18 sec	\$0.00**	\$0.00**
<b>More than 10 phone lines</b>		Call (217) 525-8202		

\*6 / 18 means 6 second billing with 18 second minimum billing on a completed call.

\*\*Commercial Plans include a \$2.50 monthly service charge for all bills under \$30.00. For bills over \$30.00, there is no monthly fee.

I sat in the white room with blue bordered trim, looking around. There were many machines that I had never seen before. I remember being cold, very cold.

After sitting for what seemed like hours, an older bald man in a white lab jacket and a nurse in blue scrubs came in. He introduced himself and stated that he would be doing the procedure. By then I was terrified and I felt as if I could not turn back. He gave me a shot in my arm—he said it was to help with the discomfort. As soon as he gave it to me it took effect. I felt very dizzy.

I was instructed to lie back and look at the picture at the ceiling. “A picture on the ceiling? How did I miss that?” I thought to myself. It was of a monkey saying a funny little catch phrase, but I can’t remember what it said. Then the doctor started with the procedure. As soon as he started it was pure pain. I felt as if I was being ripped apart. I remember thinking and crying, “I want my boyfriend! Please stop!” The pain was so unbearable and he would not stop. The procedure lasted about five minutes but it seemed like an hour.

I was placed in a wheel chair and rolled into a “recovery” room. It looked more like a living room to me. There were seven leather chairs lined up in a row. I was placed in one with a blanket and a heating pad. There was a woman on each side of me. One was sleeping and she had a slight grin on her face. The other was half awake, nodding in and out of consciousness. I tried to sleep a little but as soon as I got out there a void hit me. I realized that I no longer had this living person inside of me. This person was gone, not there anymore. “What did I do?” I asked myself over and over.

Then I heard loud screams. A woman was being pushed into the recovery room. She was crying and screaming hysterically. I

had only been in the recovery room for maybe twenty minutes, but I had to leave, I could not take it any more. I spoke to the nurse who gave me my clothes and she said I could leave. She gave me my prescriptions and sent me on my way.

I had a few complications after the abortion. I woke up two days later not able to walk, and now I have bad periods. They are very unpredictable and harsh. Months after the abortion, I started to feel better, going around saying that I felt relieved, and better that I did not have this problem of a baby anymore, but within six months I was a total wreck. Guilt hung over me day in and day out. I wanted to die every day.

I started going to post-abortion classes, which I must say did help me a lot and even got me in touch with my more spiritual side. Though I am not fully healed, I know I am on my way to recovery. I am still with my boyfriend. We have now been together for two and a half years. He now talks about his experience with the abortion and he regrets every bit of it. There has been so many times that we have just sat down together and talked about it and what our lives would be like now, but we will never know.

If you are facing a situation such as this, I recommend that you look more into the consequences of an abortion. It may seem like the only choice to make, but it is not. I would give anything to be able to hold my baby right now. I took it for granted and now I have to live with the consequences. You do not. Try your hardest to follow your heart.

Do not do things because you are pressured by others. When you are pregnant, you are in no emotional state to make such big decisions. You may think that you will have a hard life if you have the baby—and you will—but it will all work out in the end. You just have to have strength, hope, love, and patience to get you through.

---

## Please Support Our Work

Our research, education, and advocacy efforts are funded solely by the support of people like you. We have a small mailing list, so your donation makes a big difference. Thank you! Also, please **check your mailing label** to see if this is your last issue or a one-time sample issue. To subscribe or renew your subscription, simply fill out this form and return it to us with your check.

// Please keep sending me *The Post-Abortion Review*. I want to support your research and education efforts. Enclosed is my donation of: // \$500 // \$100 // \$75 // \$50 // \$20 // Other \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Our **Sustaining Partners** support our work through regular monthly, quarterly or semi-annual donations. You decide how much to give and when—plus receive monthly updates on our work. You are free to cut back or cancel your donations at any time.

// Please send me information about how I can become a **Sustaining Partner** by making a pledge for regular donations.

**CREDIT CARD DONATIONS** now accepted. Call (217) 525-8202.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:

**The Post-Abortion Review**  
**P.O. Box 7348**  
**Springfield, IL 62791**

I had an abortion when I was 17 years old. I was the youngest in the family and no one ever expected that I would become pregnant so soon. My family was disappointed in me. My mother was sad, but willing to help me at the same time. I was willing to keep the baby and do what I had to do to survive.

But one day my boyfriend—then of a year—wanted to talk. He said he was not ready to be a daddy and that having a baby now would be too stressful and we would not be able to care for it. I knew in my heart that I could—with or without him.

From that day on my answer to him asking for an abortion was “no!” But finally after weeks of my boyfriend pressuring me and bothering me, I finally gave in. He had pressed the issue of abortion so much that it was pretty much stuck in my mind that I had to have an abortion. He told me that we could not care for a baby and I started believing him.

One day while at my vocational class at school, I found a phone book and looked up the numbers for abortion clinics. Finding one, I went home and told my mom that I had changed my mind. I did not want to keep the baby. My mom believes in a woman’s choice so she did not argue or disagree. I told my boyfriend and he just nodded his head and asked, “When?” By that evening I had made an appointment—more like a death sentence for my baby, but at the time that is not what I thought.

Days before the procedure, I came home and my brother, who at the time was 22, was home alone. He asked me to sit down, that he wanted to talk to me. I felt very uncomfortable being that I never really ever talk to my older brother. To my surprise he started crying. He said, “Please don’t do it Kari. Don’t. You have no idea what it is like! I’ve had girlfriends that have had

abortions, and it hurt me!” Staring at my brother crying made me just want to cry too. But no, I knew what I had to do. I stayed strong; I would not let myself cry. I couldn’t. He said, “If you keep the baby, I will help you out with anything—money, food, clothes. Please just don’t do it.” But I kept telling him that I had to, that I had already made up my mind.

I had friends tell me the same thing. But just like I did with my brother, I ignored all comments. I knew I had to do what my boyfriend had said. I did not want him to leave me; I loved him too much.

Finally, the day before, my mom had to go and fill out the paper work so I could go in by myself the next day. I felt bad walking in there with my mom. Ashamed. The next day came so fast.

I woke up early, went to school to make up a test for a teacher. I told her I was having surgery that day but I did not tell her for what. She guessed what it was, and she was right, but I just said no, and that I did not want to talk about it.

After that I went to my boyfriend’s house. Together we rode to the clinic in silence. I wasn’t scared. For a while I almost forgot I was there to kill my baby. It really hit me when I was put into a changing room. I was told to take all my clothes off and put them into a bag but leave my socks on. Then put on a gown, and sit in the chair until a nurse came to get me. After about ten minutes I kept thinking, “Leave Kari, leave now, don’t do this!”

But that thought vanished as soon as the door opened. “Okay, Kari, come with me,” the nurse said firmly. I followed her down a long hall into a medium-sized room. She said for me to have a seat up on the table and the doctor would be in in a few minutes.

Continued on page 7

*Elliot*  
INSTITUTE

Post Office Box 7348  
Springfield, IL 62791



Forwarding Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Springfield, IL  
Permit No. 595