

Risk Factors for More Negative Reactions to Abortion

A Self-Evaluation Sheet

Negative feelings after an abortion are common. The American Psychological Association has identified numerous risk factors that can predict which women are most likely to have more severe emotional reactions to abortion.

In general, you are at greater risk if you feel you have no choice . . . if you feel obligated to abort due to the preferences of others or because of difficult circumstances. This is especially true if it conflicts with your own prior moral beliefs or your maternal desires. Other major risk factors include a prior history of mental health issues or prior pregnancy losses (miscarriage or abortion).

For women at higher risk, abortion may trigger or worsen mental health problems. Some negative reactions will last for only weeks. Others may last for years. In other cases, if you have good coping skills, negative feelings may be successfully repressed for years. But repressed feelings may later be triggered by another event such as a birth, a miscarriage, or some other loss.

This check list of risk factors is developed from the medical research on abortion and mental health. It can help you to identify if you have any risk factors.

| | Not at All True | | | | Very Much True |
|---|--------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| I don't feel like I have much control over my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have low self esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have been treated in the past for depression, anxiety or other mental health issues. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| In general, I try to avoid thinking about negative feelings and other problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I've had difficulty dealing with a previous abortion or miscarriage. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I expect to have feelings of loss, guilt, or other negative feelings after the abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| It will be hard to put this abortion out of my mind and not think about it in the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Given my circumstances, I don't have any practical choice other than abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| If I had more financial resources, I would not be having this abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| If I were in a better relationship, I would not be having this abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Not at All True | | | | Very Much True |
|--|--------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Relationship problems make it necessary to have an abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I wish I was in a place where I could carry this pregnancy to term. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have had feelings of attachment to this pregnancy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I want to have one or more children in the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have always wanted to have children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I am worried that I'm not making the right decision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| When I came here today, I was hoping for better information and insights from a counselor in order to make a decision. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I came to the clinic hoping to hear alternatives to abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| There are times I wish I could keep this pregnancy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The decision to have an abortion was very difficult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have felt pressured by others to choose abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| If I had the baby, I would have no support from others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have no support from others to have an abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Having an abortion will benefit others more than me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| There are people close to me opposed to abortion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| There are people close to me opposed to me keeping this baby. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have had one or more abortions before. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have had one or more miscarriages before. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

If you agreed with any of these statements (3, 4 or 5), you are at higher risk of more negative reactions to abortion than are women who do not have these risk factors.

You should discuss these risk factors with your counselor. If your counselor is not able to help you, consider calling a pregnancy help line, **(800) 712-4357**, for a referral to other resources.

If you ever experience negative feelings related to an abortion, you may find help by calling (866) 482-5433 or (877) 467-3463.