

Your Own Feelings and Needs

You, too, may be feeling a number of different things. You may feel helpless, angry, responsible, fearful, sad, or worried; you may feel determined, relieved, or simply impatient. You may want to be strong and supportive. You might also feel that your needs are secondary at this time.



We encourage you to recognize your own emotions, even though this may be tough. If you hide your sadness, fear or vulnerability, it may have a negative impact on your interactions with her and with others.

Depending on the nature of your relationship, she may want to hear from you about your experience and feelings. Most women are receptive to how their partners and loved ones feel. When you show genuine concern for her well-being and respect for her choices, you will likely receive the same from her. Be patient, with her and with yourself. This process may take time.

It may help to talk to someone else. One way to do this while keeping her abortion story confidential is to seek counseling. We can provide you with a referral. Also, if you are in a recovery program, you may want to contact your sponsor.

Resources

Focus on what you can do now and in the future to take care of yourself physically and mentally. Discuss ideas with her. Get support from sources that are comfortable for you. One possible resource is Feminist Women's Health Center's *Men For Equality and Reproductive Justice (MERJ)* on our website: www.feministcenter.org.

To obtain further information, please check out the following web sites or resource materials:

www.nomas.org
www.menandabortion.com
www.menstoppingviolence.org

Acknowledgements

*The men and women of NOMAS, the National
Organization for Men Against Sexism*

Rose Garrity, A New Hope Center

*Peg Johnston and Anne Baker,
The Southern Tier Women's Center*

Up the River Endeavors (URE)

*Feminist Women's Health Center
Atlanta, GA
www.feministcenter.org*



For Men and other
Support People
during her
Abortion Process

Welcome

We are glad you are here today with your partner, daughter, friend, or relative. Your presence and support can be a very important part of her abortion process.

We recognize that your visit here may affect you in many different ways, just as it does the woman you are with. This brochure discusses a few of the things you might be thinking about, and some of the things the woman you accompanied may experience. It gives a few pointers on how you can offer to support her if you choose.

What is your role?
What can you say?
How should you act?
How can you deal with
your own feelings?

Her Emotional Needs

There is no right, wrong, or “normal” way to feel about an abortion. The woman you are here with may experience a range of emotions: anger, sadness, relief, determination, disappointment, self-protectiveness, confusion, guilt, strength, defiance, or many other feelings. She may be fearful of losing her family or faith community, fearful of being judged, worried about pain and her physical reactions to the procedure, or anxious about other things. Conversely, she might not be worried or fearful at all. She may be extremely comfortable with her decision, and hopeful about her future. All of these things, and anything in between, are absolutely okay. Her response will be as individual as she is.

The best thing you can do to help is to ask her what she needs, and listen. She may not want to discuss her experiences right away, or at all, and this is also okay. If she does want to share, listen. Reassure her that you support her, and you know she is doing what she feels is necessary or best. Offer her unconditional caring, and reaffirm that you respect her choices and self-determination.



If she does have a difficult time with her decision, try to be understanding of her emotional stress. If she lashes out at you, don't take it personally. If she is truly struggling, recognize that she may need additional support

from friends and loved ones, and possibly from a mental health professional. Watch for symptoms of depression. These include:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood. Feeling guilty, hopeless, or worthless.
- Changes in sleep patterns; fatigue or loss of energy.
- Loss of pleasure and interest in once enjoyable activities.
- Difficulty concentrating at work or school. Difficulty remembering things or making decisions.
- Thoughts of suicide or death.

If you see these signs, tell her what you are seeing, and encourage her to seek professional help. Our clinic staff is here to assist you in finding these resources. Call on us at any time, before, during, or after her procedure.

If you disagree with her choices, remember that she is an individual who deserves the right to determine what is best for herself. Give her credit for making her decision. Give yourself credit for standing by her as she needs you.



Her Physical Needs

Our clinic will provide her with written aftercare instructions. Take the time to read them. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

After the surgical procedure, she may experience some level of discomfort or pain. She may be nauseated, tired, crampy, irritable and/or moody. These reactions will go away after the abortion, although it may take some time for her body and hormone levels to return to a pre-pregnancy state. Check with her frequently. Again, ask what she needs and how she is feeling. The best way to show your support is by being thoughtful.



If you are her sexual partner, take care to respect her medical and emotional limitations until she is ready to safely return to sexual activity. (The aftercare guidelines advise waiting at least two weeks before sexual intercourse, in order to prevent infection.) She will continue to be fertile immediately following her abortion and in the future, so it is also very important to respect her birth control choices. You can help by sharing the responsibility and the cost of birth control. If she asks that you use a condom, be supportive. By not taking chances with her body and well-being, you can show her that you care.

Confidential Communications

It is very important for you to fully respect the confidentiality of what she tells you. As with any other relationship communications, say what you have to say directly to her and don't talk about her with others. The only exception to this is when you fear for her safety. If such concerns arise contact the clinic immediately.