

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS AFTER AN ABORTION

The decision to have an abortion is a very personal one, and it's not always an easy decision to make. Everyone has their own reasons for having an abortion, and while it's a decision that you might consider very carefully, and think about extensively beforehand, it's difficult to anticipate just how you'll feel afterwards. No matter how you do end up feeling, it's important to take care of yourself both physically and emotionally.

### **Your Emotions Post-Abortion**

Many people are somewhat surprised by the emotions they feel after having an abortion. Some are more emotional than they thought they'd be, and some take the event more or less in their stride, and aren't as deeply affected as they expected. No matter how you personally react to your own abortion, one thing that's important to remember is that whatever you do feel is a valid and absolutely okay way to be.

You may feel sadness, grief, guilt, or regret, or conversely, you might be relieved and thankful—all of this is normal, and it's even normal to feel all of those things simultaneously. The abortion might be something you spend a lot of time thinking about afterwards, or it might not, and these are both normal ways to react, too. In fact, it's more accurate to say that there isn't any single "right" way to feel afterwards, and the normal range of emotions covers the entire spectrum. How you react and how you feel will depend a lot on your reasons for having the abortion, so like the decision itself, your reaction to the event is highly individual and personal.

The important thing to remember is that even though you might be feeling flat-out terrible, it's absolutely normal, and in all likelihood most of it will pass within a few days. Try not to suppress your emotions—let yourself feel what you're feeling, and remind yourself that it will pass. Another thing to understand is that often, your emotions aren't related only to the abortion itself, and the decision you made to have it—there are also biological reasons relating to fluctuating hormone levels, which can make you feel depressed, angry, or anxious, or any combination thereof.

### **Your Physical Health Affects Your Emotional Health, Too**

Whether you have a surgical or chemical abortion, make sure you're familiar before the procedure about what types of physical symptoms and effects you can expect to experience. Knowing what to expect may help to alleviate any anxiety you feel about the aftereffects once they start. After your abortion, any symptoms of pregnancy you were experiencing, like vomiting, nausea, and fatigue, should stop within two or three days, but you may find that your breasts remain tender and swollen for up to ten days.

The physical aftereffects of having an abortion can make you feel emotional too, so be sure to take care of yourself physical as well as mentally. For example, wearing a bra that provides good support without constricting, such as a sports bra, can help to ease the discomfort caused by breast tenderness, and this can in turn help to improve your emotional state.

If you can, take some time for personal care and maybe some pampering, to ease the stress and help you get back into the swing of your usual life.

**Getting Help and Support**

If you don't start to feel better within a few days, consider talking to your doctor or to your therapist, if you have one. You can also get support and information by calling the free national talkline 1-866-4-EXHALE.

It's unusual for someone to become depressed as a direct result of having an abortion, but sometimes, repressed emotions relating to the abortion can contribute to lingering sadness or depression. As well as this, someone who has a history of depression may experience a new depressive episode after an abortion. This is one reason why it's crucial to have a support system—someone like a partner, sibling, friend, or therapist, who you can talk to about the abortion and how you're feeling about it.