

Unveiling the Effects of Abortion on Women: BROADENING PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN AND ABORTION

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Relationship Center

Safe Haven

Veiled Issue

Historically

Secret

Religious and Political

Medical

Impersonal

Recent Shifts

Less Medical

Still Religious and Political

Very Personal

Changing Labels and

Narrative

Outreach and Support

- Shift from shame

Focus on After-care: - Personal stories

- Feeling supported

Resources

Media & Entertainment

- Woman-centered

Focus on Normalizing: - Decision process

- Some after-effects

Conversation

Friends and Family

“What do I say?”

Relationships

Reinforcing the Veil: Where to Focus?

Abortion has been compartmentalized to the detriment of:

- ✧ research
- ✧ prevention
- ✧ development of after-care
- ✧ professional diagnosis and treatment

Considering Trauma Behind the Veil Perinatal Loss

- * Infertility – 10.9%
- * Miscarriage - 10-25%
- * Abortion – 21%
- * Stillbirth- 10.9%
- * Neonatal death
- * Adoption – 14,000

Miscarriage = 10-25%
(American Pregnancy Assoc)

Stillbirth = 10.9% or 1 in 160
(CDC)

Abortion = 21%
(Alan Guttmacher Institute)

Adoption = Of annual unintended pregnancies:
1.4 million choose to parent
1.2 million choose abortion
14,000 choose adoption
(Alan Guttmacher)

Grief & Perinatal Loss:

Identify the losses

“Yet many parents who suffer a perinatal loss feel disenfranchised in their grieving processes compared to those mourning more traditionally accepted deaths.”

“Suddenly and forever more, one’s life is incorporated with that of one’s child, even if the pregnancy ends in a

miscarriage or other reproductive loss.”

“When the unborn child dies, there is so little to grieve.... So much of perinatal loss involves grieving the loss of the future: relinquishing the wishes, hopes, and fantasies about one who could have been but never was (but briefly).”

Trauma and Perinatal Loss

“The first is that fetal loss is traumatic.”

Trauma after...

- * Miscarriage
- * Stillbirth
- * Neonatal death
- * Abortion
- * Adoption

“The one thing I never found out- and I wish I find the time to pursue it- is how far along was I pregnant? And what caused it? [The doctor] wasn’t able to give me any of the answers I was hoping for.”

(Fetal death, 1st trimester)

Adoption Placement

Edwards, D. S. (1995)

... found a range of poor psychological outcomes. The women studied frequently described the experience of placing their children for adoption as the most traumatic event of their lives; and related multiple symptoms of posttraumatic stress

Carr, M. J. (2000)

“all were traumatized by the act of relinquishing their child for adoption.”

Crowell (2007)



82% of mothers suffered depression after the surrender



80% had feelings of inadequacy



68% trust issues



57% anger

Abortion-Related Trauma

Personal History
Pre-existing Conditions

- * Past trauma
- * Substance use/abuse
- * Depression
- * Anxiety
- * History of abuse

Attachment Injuries & Style

- * Perceived and real injuries to attachment bond
- * Internal Working Model – Lens

“I’ll support whatever decision you make.”

Before:

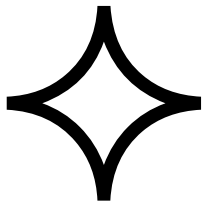
Context of Decision

- * Context of pregnancy
- * Personal belief system
- * Level of support
- * Coerced decision
- * Fetal abnormalities
- * Rape or Incest
- * Past pregnancies or pregnancy losses

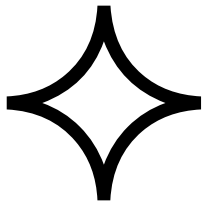
After: Unique to Women

Bio-psycho-social Reinforcing the Veil

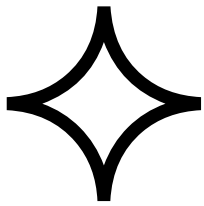
After the Procedure



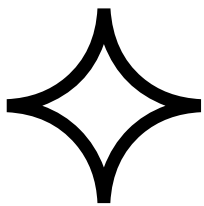
Relief



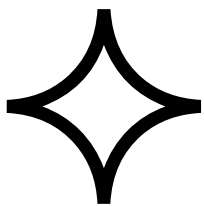
Grief (may be delayed, or report none at all)



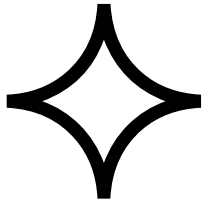
Disenfranchised grief*



Complicated grief



Future pregnancies



Fetal abnormalities – video

Define the Terms

According to the APA:

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives.

According to the APA:

- * **PTSD**, or post-traumatic stress disorder, is an anxiety problem that develops in some people after extremely traumatic events, such as combat, crime, an accident or natural disaster.
- * People with PTSD may relive the event via intrusive

memories, flashbacks and nightmares; avoid anything that reminds them of the trauma; and have anxious feelings they didn't have before that are so intense their lives are disrupted.

Potential Triggers

- ✧ Social Media
- ✧ Entertainment
- ✧ Politics
- ✧ Anniversaries/Mother's Day
- ✧ OB or Medical appointments
- ✧ Intake forms
- ✧ Our conversations
- ✧ Pregnant women
- ✧ Families

Abortion as Attachment Injury

- ✧ Woman & Dating Partner
- ✧ Victim of Rape/Incest
- ✧ Woman & Married Partner
- ✧ Mother & Child (aborted)
- ✧ Mother & Siblings

Treatment

- * Attachment theory
- * EFT – Emotionally Focused Therapy
- * Narrative interventions

Removing the Veil

- * Broaden the picture and change the narrative
- * Effects how we talk about and treat abortion
- * Can move away from disenfranchised grief
- * Give more accurate context for treatment
- * Heal attachments
- * Provides stepping stone to identify future research and prevention