

LESSON 2—DOES ANYONE ELSE FEEL LIKE ME?

I've never told anyone this ...secret. Who could possibly understand?

WE do. That is why we want to help. How many times have you replayed the day in your mind trying to understand? The danger of trying to solve this on your own is that you may have developed a pattern of beating yourself up over it. We recommend a guide to help you. Support groups, retreats, 1-1 mentoring will help.

There is something real called Post Abortion Syndrome (PAS). It is a TRAUMA that happens after an abortion. You have been deeply hurt. Check out the website at www.projectrachelkc.com for some of the symptoms.

Have a pen and paper ready.

1. List some of the fears you had about this pregnancy.
Listing your fears helps you understand where you were at the time of the decision to abort. [down the road this will help you forgive yourself]

When we make decisions in fear, we **react** rather than thinking things through. Read 2 Samuel 11, the story of David, a man after God's own heart. What did he do in his fear?

Read Matthew 26:69-75. What did Peter, one of Jesus' best friends, do?

Read about Saul of Tarsus and how God did not give up on him but sought him out to be Paul, one of the greatest evangelists.

Did God stop loving them? NO! Remember Jer. 31:3 and God's everlasting love! God does not change. He is I AM, always.

2. Was this your choice or did you feel others wanted you to abort?
64% report being pressured or coerced into an abortion. Pope John Paul II wrote in the **Gospel of Life**, *"As well as the mother, there are often other people too who decide upon the death of the child in the womb. In the first place, the father of the child may be to blame, not only when he directly pressures the woman to have an abortion, but also when he indirectly encourages such a decision on her part by leaving her alone to face the problems of pregnancy...Nor can one overlook the pressures which sometimes come from the wider family circle and from friends. Sometimes the woman is subjected to such strong pressure that she feels psychologically forced to have an abortion: certainly in this case the moral responsibility lies particularly with those who have directly or indirectly obliged her to have an abortion. Paragraph 59*

Only you can know fully the pressures or reasons to abort. Write them down. As you review them, see what you have learned about yourself at that time. Is there something you want to change now?

Our spiritual walk is much like a toddler learning to walk. He/she falls down and gets up

again. Falls down and gets up. Doesn't stop until he has learned how to walk. Do you think the parents hate the child because he can't walk the first, second or 100th time? NO. Neither does God Who is our parent, our Father, hate us when we "fall down." He, like the earthly parents, encourages us to try again.

No matter how many times we fall, God's mercy is sufficient, never ending. Much like an ocean. We cannot see the other side or measure the volume of water in the ocean, nor can we see the end of God's mercy or measure the volume of His mercy.

A good book to read is *Mercy Minutes with Jesus, Praying Daily on Jesus' Words from the Diary of St. Faustina*. George Kosicki, CSB . **"Souls that make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls I grant even more graces than they ask. I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to My compassion, but on the contrary, I justify him in My unfathomable and inscrutable mercy."** (*Diary, 1146*)

In the Catholic faith tradition, there is a special Sunday dedicated to honoring Divine Mercy. It is the Sunday after Easter. Mercy is God's greatest attribute. Look up Saint Faustina and Divine Mercy on the internet.

3. What part did the father or the mother of the baby play?
Supporting? Pressuring? Noncommittal? Some times we are angry that the father did not come to rescue us and help us change our minds. Perhaps he was scared, too. Perhaps he didn't know what to do or understand what was going on. Perhaps he felt it was his job to support you in whatever decision you made. Regardless, the decision changed him, too.
4. Or the father of the baby may be angry because it was not his decision. Maybe he thought you wanted the abortion and he was told it was your body, your right.
When there is an abortion in the relationship, 9 out of 10 fail. It is too big of a hurt for both the mother and the father.
5. Can you remember how you felt before and after the abortion?
Abortion changes you and most are unprepared for how it feels afterwards.
Are you the same then as now? You are a different person, you know. You have grown. You don't even have the same skin you had then. Have you learned a better spiritual walk?

Why is it so hard to let go?

Some of the emotions many feel afterwards are guilt, anger, shame, helplessness. These are 4 of the elements of GRIEF. No one tells us before about grief that follows an abortion. One of the participants clearly saw that guilt, anger, shame, and helplessness spell g-a-s-h. This is what she felt, a huge gash after the abortion. [I'd encourage you here to see the value of a support group—we learn from each other; we see we are not alone.]

GRIEF happens when we lose something. The greater the value of the lost, the greater the grief. It is important to acknowledge loss. If the grief is kept bottled up, it only comes out in another area. Some times it is our health, future relationships, work, marriage, child rearing.

Some common losses.

1. Who I thought I was
2. My virginity
3. The relationship with the father/mother of the baby
4. Family—pulling back so they don't find out
5. Future plans
6. My relationship with God and/or my church
7. And the baby.

Without grieving, we hang on to past losses. Unresolved grief is unreleased grief. We have funerals so the living can process and deal with the loss of a loved one. The rituals help us move on. Most likely there was nothing for you at the time of the abortion. Begin now.

Write down your losses. Under each loss, write down a blessing you have received. It does not matter if these are unrelated. Now think of a way you can survive this loss, e.g., loss of my virginity can be replaced with second virginity; future plans can be resumed—I wanted to finish college can be I'm going back to school.

Abortion grief is an illusive grief. We have very little chance to talk about it with someone else. [again I recommend a support group or grief counselor who knows about post abortion grief. Talking is good therapy.] If that is not available, journal in a private book. Writing things down gives the pent up emotional energy a place to go.

Grief and depression go hand in hand. Prolonged and severe depression needs professional attention. It may be medical. Do yourself a favor and get a check up to rule out this type of depression. Another type of depression is spiritual, as is common after an abortion.

Take some steps when you begin to feel these emotions coming on. Have a plan of what you will do. You will have emotions but you do not have to be controlled by them. One good way to lift your spirits is to do a good deed for someone else.

P=pray

L=listen to good advice

A=assure myself God is with me

N=nurture myself and someone else.

Part of the plan can be:

Exercise is another good habit to elevate the spirits. Walk outside 10 minutes every day. I do not recommend going to the mall where the temptation to buy and then weep can happen. Outside we have God's nature to nurture us. Look at the beauty He created for us. He is showing us how much He loves us in that He made a beautiful place so we would have a fitting place to live in. He wants the best for us. Where did we begin? In a Garden (Eden).

Listen to cheerful music.

Buy a good joke book. (it really helps!) Laughter is good medicine. **Proverbs 17:22 “A cheerful heart is good medicine.”**

Change gears and do something different. It takes our minds to a different place and gives us a reprieve from thinking about how bad we feel. It gives us some control. We may not be able to control our emotions, but we CAN control what we do with them. Tidying up the junk drawer in the kitchen or organizing a closet or the garage gives us a sense of order/control when we feel chaos around us.

Find some positive people to be around. Avoid negative folks who pull us down.

Homework: do a good deed every day. Something out of the ordinary routine. (for example, if you always cook dinner, cooking dinner again does not count. Taking dinner to a friend in need counts.)

Doing this good deed will reinforce that you have goodness in you. Why do I know this? **Gen 1:26-27**. What does that say? God made you in His image.

Book suggestions: The New Bible Cure for Depression & Anxiety, Don Colbert, MD; Forbidden Grief, Theresa Burke with David Reardon; Her Choice to Heal, Sydna Masse; Healing with humor books

For TEENS, No One Told Me I Could Cry, Connie Nykiel

NOTE: this is work and some days you will not feel like doing it. Excuse after excuse will try to derail you. Make a commitment to yourself and those close to you that **YOU WILL FINISH**. I promise you, you will be in a better place if you do.

My experience with Project Rachel was a support group. I was terrified to go that first night. I kept telling myself I don't have to do this. I can turn around and go home. My stomach hurt. My hands were sweaty. *Will I know anyone there? What will I have to say? Why am I doing this?* I knew I had to go. I have gone through eating disorders, depression, 2 suicide attempts, nearly failing in school. I did not want to live with this anymore.

It was hard work, but so worth it! I know God loves me, even when I turned away from Him and tried to hide.

Lesson 3: **I FEEL SO GUILTY, WILL I EVER LIKE MYSELF AGAIN?**