



Especially for Men

If your partner is having--or considering--an abortion, it's probably affecting you too. Your concerns and hers may not be exactly the same-- how you feel is important too.



How are you doing?

Even if you are trying to be “strong” for her, you are probably having some feelings about this situation. Most women want to know how their partner feels. You may think it's better to support “whatever she wants”, or, you may not want to “influence” her too much. But, it's important to tell her how you feel, knowing that ultimately she has to make her own best decision. She does want to hear that you are concerned about her and that you care.



Your feelings (what you are happy, sad, angry, scared, or ashamed about) are different from your thoughts. Telling her your feelings is different from telling her what you think she should do. Both of you may feel more than one thing. You may be scared for her, or for how your own life is affected. You may feel guilty. You may feel shut out of things. Or, sad about the relationship. Or, upset at the idea of losing the pregnancy. Or, uncomfortable about abortion.

You may want someone to talk to about some parts of this experience. This may—or may not—be your partner. Choose someone who is a good listener. The talklines listed below are free and non judgmental. Are you feeling any of the following?

“I feel bad because I'm not a good provider.” Sometimes men feel like a failure because they can't afford a child--or another child. It may be a goal to get more financially stable so that you can have a child. Or, you may feel that if you are working all the time, you can't be with her or with your children. Share your thoughts with her and work out some goals.

“Will we break up?” If both of you agree and support each other--and talk to each other--the relationship can even get better. Even if you don't agree, if you show that you care about each other, the relationship can grow. But it is a very difficult time, so try to listen to each other and don't say hurtful things.

“I don't know what she wants from me. It seems like I can't do anything right.” It's a difficult situation for her and for you. The best approach may be to ask, “Can you tell me how it is for you?” and then listen and ask questions until you feel you understand your partner's experience.

“I wanted this baby.” It may be hard on you if you wanted to have a baby with her or to get married and she doesn't. It may even seem that you feel the loss more than she does. People who suffer a loss need to grieve. It's important that you find someone who can listen to what you're going through.

“I have always been against abortion.” Until a person is actually confronted with an unintended pregnancy, it is not unusual to have negative feelings about abortion. Most people who are trying to make a good decision about a pregnancy consider what is best for all concerned. They are “good people in a hard situation, doing the best they can.” You may find that you are re-thinking your previous beliefs about abortion. If so, bring compassion for yourself in this difficult situation.

“She seems to be questioning everything. Is this normal?” Most women who are facing an unintended pregnancy find themselves considering all parts of their lives—relationships, children, family, work, school, goals and dreams. You may be having a similar experience of suddenly looking at your life in a new way. What new insights are you having? Are there things in your life that you can see more clearly now? Are there changes you might want to make? If you can take something useful from this experience, what would it be?

“Sometimes I feel like just a sperm donor. Don't I have any say in this?” It is important to say how you feel even if you can't decide the final outcome. It is probably frustrating to realize that the final decision will be hers, as the burden of a pregnancy is hers. But if a continuing relationship is important, both of you will want to consider what the other is saying.



Need help talking about abortion? Visit www.abortionconversation.com.

Showing Her You Care

1. Check in with her often about how she's feeling. Rather than say, "how are you doing?" ask her to describe how she is feeling or what she is experiencing.
2. Do something special for her--flowers, a love letter, a small gift or help her with a task like washing her car or doing the dishes.
3. Be affectionate, but be prepared for her not to want to be sexual. You may feel rejected, but remember that she may connect sexual intercourse with this difficult situation.
4. Be understanding about pregnancy symptoms. Nausea, tiredness, irritability and moodiness are all pregnancy symptoms. Most will go away within a few days after an abortion.
5. Read the abortion aftercare instructions she is given. Have pain medications available and maybe a heating pad or heat patch. Help her avoid an infection by avoiding intercourse for two weeks.
6. Some clinics offer different ways for male partners to be involved; talk with her about how you can be helpful on the day of the abortion. Sometimes just being in the waiting room, paying attention to what is happening is appreciated. Ask the clinic how you can be involved or what resources are available.
7. Help with birth control. Use condoms. Help to pay for other birth control options. Practice safer sex.

Taking Care of Yourself

1. Acknowledge that this is having an effect on you and try to write down or say all the ways that you are thinking about it.
2. Tell someone what you are thinking—if not your partner then someone you trust.
3. Figure out what you can take from this experience: a goal, a new way of looking at your life, closeness with your partner.
4. You and your partner may not communicate in the same way—most men and women don't! It may take you longer to put your thoughts into words. You can say, "I'm not sure how I feel. Can I think about it and tell you tomorrow?" Give yourself the time you need, and do get back to her as soon as you can when you are clear about what you want to say.
5. The resources listed below are non-judgmental and anonymous. Learning more and getting help are ways to take care of yourself.

Talking to Someone

The talklines listed below welcome calls from male partners. Ask at the clinic if there is someone on staff you can speak to. Or, seek out counseling from a mental health clinic, a family planning clinic, or a private therapist. Signs that you need more help include thinking about it all the time, disruptions in sleeping, eating habits, or your ability to concentrate.

You can get to a peaceful resolution to this experience, in time, with a little help. You are not alone--since abortion was made legal in 1973, there have been about 50 million abortions. Many men have been in your shoes. Yet people do not talk about abortion easily and that silence makes it more difficult for you. Abortion is one word that represents millions of stories.

Resources

Talklines:

Backline 1-888-493-0092
www.yourbackline.org

Spiritual counseling 1-888-717-5010
www.faithaloud.org

Exhale 1-866-439-4253
www.4exhale.org

Sites:

www.menandabortion.com
www.pregnancyoptions.info
www.abortionconversation.com
www.MomDadImpregnant.com
www.choicelinkup.com
www.peaceafterabortion.com
www.mgryteinnerhealing.com

