



Not every woman who has an abortion develops or reports problems but here are some of the things people sometimes feel after an abortion:

- Immediate sense of relief
- Disquiet or disturbance in one's inner peace
- Decreased feelings of self esteem and confidence
- Relationship problems
- Sleep and sexual disturbances
- Grief and guilt
- Remorse and regret
- Anger and feelings of self hatred
- Anxiety, panic and depression
- Strong desire to become pregnant again soon after the abortion
- In severe cases women may develop eating disorders, drug / alcohol problems, or have suicidal thoughts

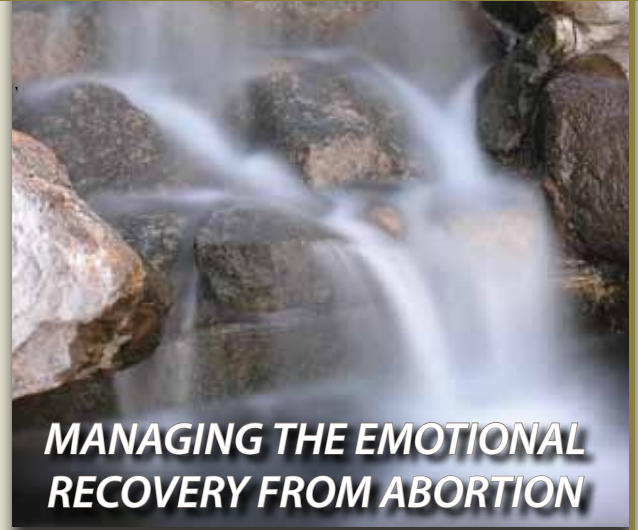
*It is important to seek post-abortion support as soon as a person is aware that they are experiencing difficulties. This is because the longer a pattern of distress is held inside a person the more entrenched that pattern becomes and the longer it takes to make positive changes away from the distress. So if you, or a woman you know, is having any difficulties post-abortion she may like to see the post-abortion recovery counsellor at Pregnancy Help Geelong Inc.*

*You can get more information or make an appointment for post abortion recovery counselling on 03 5223 2425.*



**03 5223 2425**

Pregnancy Help Geelong Inc  
17 Adams Place, Geelong Vic 3220  
[www.phg.org.au](http://www.phg.org.au)



### **Janet**

When Janet found out she was eight weeks pregnant she and her fiancé decided together on abortion. They agreed that they would have their children later when they were older and more financially prepared. Janet developed some depression and they experienced relationship difficulties. Ultimately their relationship broke down and Janet began to have very distressing feelings of grief, abandonment and broken trust which interfered with most aspects of her daily life.



## ***Aysha***

Aysha's life was great. She was achieving well and having loads of fun at Uni. That was until she found out she was pregnant. She told her partner she wanted to have an abortion. He wanted her to go through with the pregnancy but Aysha felt this would affect her career opportunities. Following the abortion she developed very angry feelings toward her partner but later a kind of self-hatred settled on Aysha that she said made it too difficult to concentrate on her Uni course.

## ***Maria***

Maria was 44 years old and six weeks pregnant when she discovered her boyfriend was already married to someone else. She had never wanted to be a sole parent so she decided to have an abortion. Three months later Maria began to feel some distress about the abortion and she was bothered by constant feelings of regret. Soon this regret impacted every aspect of her life as she felt that due to her age this had probably been her last chance to have children. She realised the terminated pregnancy was likely to be her only pregnancy and she had always imagined that some day she would have children.

## ***Understanding the emotions that may follow an abortion***

Women usually feel an enormous sense of relief immediately after an abortion. This is because the circumstances of their difficult or unplanned pregnancy are highly stressful. For example people may choose abortion for relationship, career, financial and many other reasons.

Often women expect that once the pregnancy is 'over' there will be no more stress about the pregnancy. However, some women say they feel a sense of loss following abortion.

These women are often experiencing grief which is a normal response to loss. Grief gives rise to a range of emotions including sadness, anger, regret, depression, guilt and many others. Sometimes a woman is surprised that she is having this kind of reaction to the abortion.

Often a woman will submerge her feelings of grief. This may be because she had decided to keep the abortion a secret, because she is afraid of facing those feelings, or does not know where to get help, and sometimes the medical profession, family and friends view the abortion as 'in the past'. There are many other reasons but the urge to suppress one's feelings may lead to further difficulties.

For example, if a woman is unable to come to terms with what she is experiencing she may turn negative feelings in on herself and this may lead to depression. Sometimes she may attempt to numb her psychological pain by using drugs or alcohol excessively.

*The way people respond to abortion and its aftermath is very individual.*



## ***Managing the emotions that may develop following an abortion.***

There is help for people who are experiencing post-abortion difficulties. In our post-abortion recovery program we can teach people how to manage the problems that may have arisen from an abortion. It involves the woman talking about the abortion experience or the parts of it that she believes are causing her problems and this allows the difficult feelings to surface in a safe environment. Once the woman becomes conscious of what is troubling her we examine what she thinks and how she feels about those issues and how this relates to her own set of values, experiences and self-concept. The woman works with her counsellor to identify the aspects of her thoughts and feelings that move her forward and which ones keep her stuck. We then concentrate on new ways of thinking and feeling and develop strategies together to manage her difficulties.

***Janet, Aysha and Maria have allowed the use of their abortion stories to help others understand the kinds of things that happened to them following an abortion.***