

## What Can You Do?

- Ask God if He wants you to help
- Pray for those injured from abortion and those helping them heal from their injuries
- Talk about postabortion trauma with friends and colleagues
- Screen for it in your professional practice & refer
- Consider volunteering as a lay or professional counselor or healthcare provider

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## HER ABORTION EXPERIENCE

"I had this idea that once I ended the pregnancy, I'd be fine. But I'm not the same person I was, and I never will be. I felt conflicted...and then angry at myself for feeling that way. I am so glad I was able to get an abortion, but I would not do it again. Chris wanted to talk about it, but more often, we just fought. I felt the experience was more mine than his or ours, because I had to go through the physical experience as well as the emotional one. We broke up that June, and I was a mess. I cried a lot and made my friends uncomfortable because I'd get drunk and talk about the abortion. One friend actually said, 'You need help.' I went to therapy, but they just wanted to talk about my parents."

- Kristina, 24

## Trauma-Sensitive Post-Abortion Care Is Critical

**Safety:** Ensures physical and emotional safety avoiding victim-blaming & re-victimization

**Trustworthiness:** Maximizes trustworthiness via clear communication prior to intervention

**Choice:** Prioritizes patient choice and control

**Collaboration:** Maximizes collaboration and sharing of power with patient

**Empowerment:** Prioritizes patient empowerment and skill-building, e.g. cognitive reframing & self-soothing techniques

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## HIS Abortion Experience:

"They had to do a sonogram to determine how far along Kristina was and asked if we wanted to see the image. Kristina said no, and I did too. That's something I regret. I feel like it would have made the experience more real for me."

I wasn't allowed in the room, so I went to get her pads—the nurse said there would be bleeding—and then took her to her apartment. The abortion really changed our relationship. Kristina went through a deep depression afterward.

We went to New Orleans not too long afterward to visit friends and recover. We'd have a good time, and then it would come up.

Kristina felt like a bad person, like she was better than this. It made her feel out of control."

Chris, 26

Source: L. Welch (2014, January 21). How Our Abortion Changed Our Relationship. *Cosmopolitan*. Available at: <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-life/a60000/abortion-relationship/>

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## Key Factors to Screen

- Prior pregnancy loss & adjustment
- Trauma history
- Current coping abilities & dependencies
- Nature of primary relationship, i.e., supportive or abusive
- Chronic negative emotional problems
- Intimate partner violence
- Mental health concerns, including suicidal ideation

SCREENING TOOLS: <http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/screening-tools>

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## Online Resources:

- [standapart.org](http://standapart.org)
- [wecareexperts.org](http://wecareexperts.org)
- [elliottinstitute.org](http://elliottinstitute.org)
- [hopeafterabortion.com](http://hopeafterabortion.com)

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