



# HOW TO TALK TO A FRIEND WHO'S HAD AN ABORTION

## ANDIE'S STORY

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One night my best friend in high school called me, totally in tears. I hadn't seen her since we left for college. She told me she got pregnant her first semester at State and let her boyfriend talk her into an abortion. It was the baby's due date the night she called. The boyfriend broke up with her months ago because she "wasn't fun to be around anymore." What could I say? I had no clue how to deal with this. Growing up we were both pro-life.

I thought I could calm her down by saying stuff like "Don't worry. You did the right thing." "What else could you do? It was the best choice." I told her to try to get over it and think about her future. And I thought she was just being dramatic when she said she didn't have a future anymore. But I found out that, a few days later, she tried to kill herself. I keep wishing I had said something that could have helped her instead of making her feel more alone.

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Almost everyone knows someone who's had an abortion. Many people know someone personally who is suffering because of an abortion. If a friend confided in you tomorrow that she had an abortion, would you be able to respond in a way that brings her closer to healing?

There are ways to avoid the mistake Andie made. Ways that may help your friend be hopeful again about her future.

If this is the first time your friend has told you about her abortion, she may be afraid that you will be critical or that you will repeat to others what she tells you. She must know that you are a real friend who cares about her, and that you are not sitting in judgment of her.

Before you talk to her, keep in mind: What does she need today?

- someone to listen?
- a shoulder to cry on?
- a referral to a professional counselor,
- a priest or minister?
- or even crisis intervention?

## LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART

Begin by listening to your friend. Let her pour out the whole story without interrupting her. You don't have to understand every detail. It's important that she lets go of some of the burden she's been carrying and that she no longer feels alone.

She may talk about:

- what happened at the abortion facility
- rage and anger—at the boyfriend, her parents, the facility personnel, God, herself
- guilt, regret, depression, nightmares
- using alcohol or drugs to try to forget, and even suicidal thoughts
- unbearable grief
- being alienated from her boyfriend, family and friends
- feeling that she doesn't deserve to be loved or forgiven

## ASSURE HER OF YOUR LOVE AND SUPPORT

Much as you'd like to make all her suffering go

away with the right words, her grief and loss won't disappear after one conversation. Assure her of your friendship. Tell her you will be there for her and help her find healing.

## WHERE HELP CAN BE FOUND

Ask your friend if she has ever heard about help for people struggling after abortion. There are safe places where trained people can help her overcome grief and loss, and give her hope. There are counselors, priests and ministers prepared to help, as well as support groups and retreats. Offer her the name and phone number of the local Project Rachel Ministry. Give her this website address:

[www.hopeafterabortion.org](http://www.hopeafterabortion.org).

## SPIRITUAL HEALING

Even a woman who doesn't go to church or think of herself as religious can be afraid that God will never forgive her for having an abortion. She should know that God loves and forgives those who are sorrowful. He wants to comfort them and give them his peace.

You might want to invite your friend to go to church with you, or ask her to consider talking it over with a priest or minister trained in helping women who suffer after participation in abortion. Some Bible passages and prayers relating to God's love and mercy can be found in the 'Prayers' section of [www.hopeafterabortion.org](http://www.hopeafterabortion.org).

## BEGIN THE JOURNEY

Encourage her to contact Project Rachel Ministry for help. Remind her that God's love and mercy is bigger than any sin.

Assure her again of your friendship. Promise to be there, not only today, but in the future.

Thank her for having the trust to talk with you. It took courage. Her healing journey has begun.



## HELPING A FRIEND SUFFERING IN SILENCE

If you see a friend struggling with sadness and emotional turmoil and you think that abortion might be the cause, would you know how to bring up the topic without asking directly if abortion is the source of her pain? A suggestion: At an appropriate time and place, you might say something like this:

"I've been learning about the awful pressures women face to have an abortion or how, afterward, they suffer, grieve and feel alone. There's an interesting web site where women share their pain after abortion and their healing journeys. And there are programs, like Project Rachel Ministry, all over the country that help women struggling with emotional problems after abortion."

Have information on local programs (address and phone number) on hand in case she asks for it. Or leave information where she can find it.

## CONTACT PROJECT RACHEL MINISTRY

For confidential help: [www.hopeafterabortion.org](http://www.hopeafterabortion.org) or 888-456-HOPE (888-456-4673).

For the nearest Project Rachel Ministry, click on the 'Find Help' map at [www.hopeafterabortion.org](http://www.hopeafterabortion.org).

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