

How Are You Likely to Handle Having an Abortion? © Imagine 2020

Charlotte Taft Beforeandafterabortion.com

Name _____ Date _____

We have learned a lot about what can cause a woman to have difficulties after an abortion, and we also know a lot about how to help work through those things *before* an abortion. Abortion is not the best choice for every woman, and it is your job to be confident in whichever decision you make. Like a medical history, this form is designed to help identify problems you may be having on an emotional/spiritual level. It's fine if you are not having problems! It's also important to see if you are, so you can get help to work them out. Listening to the YouTube recordings of **Before Abortion, making a choice you can live with**, can help you sort out your thoughts and feelings *before* you have an abortion that you cannot undo.

A small percent of women who are emotionally 'split in two' by this decision may not be able to find resolution, even with counseling. Refer to my website beforeandafterabortion.com for the self-test for *Woman Split in Two*.

Please answer these questions in whatever way is most true for you:

How are you feeling today (mark all that apply)

Confident Helpless Angry Happy Trapped Relieved Afraid
Mean Strong Worried Curious Relaxed Sad Guilty
Peaceful Powerful Ashamed Numb Resolved

Other: _____

I. Questions you may need answers to!

For some women, abortion is frightening because there are things they just don't know. Go to beforeandafterabortion.com, or talk with your clinic to get these questions answered. **Don't be fooled by an anti-abortion fake clinic. Ask directly if they provide abortions—if they don't, or won't give you're a straight answer, they are likely against abortion.**

Please put a check mark next to any concerns you are having:

- I don't understand how an abortion is done
- I'm scared that an abortion is dangerous
- I'm scared that it will hurt
- I'm wondering what the pregnancy looks like--how developed it is
- I'm wondering if an abortion could cause pain to the fetus/baby
- I'm worried that I won't be able to have children later if I want to
- I'm worried about how to avoid getting pregnant in the future
- I'm worried about my relationship with the man involved/or with my family
- I'm worried about my job or money problems
- Other worries? _____

2. How are you handling being pregnant?

Some women are so upset by an unexpected pregnancy that they go sort of numb. If this is true for you, it may be important to come back to yourself a little before you go through with any choice.

Which is NOT TRUE, SOMEWHAT TRUE, OR TRUE for you regarding the abortion during this past week Mark: 1) Not true 2) Somewhat true 3) True

1. I thought about it when I didn't want to or mean to -----
1 2 3
2. I tried not to talk about it or have feelings about it-----
1 2 3
3. I had trouble sleeping because of thinking about it-----
1 2 3
4. I've felt like it wasn't real, or it wasn't really happening to me-----
1 2 3
5. I was aware I had a lot of feelings & didn't want to deal with them-
1 2 3
6. Sometimes I think about hurting myself-----
1 2 3

Section 2 Total score _____

3. About you:

Talking with women and research on abortion has helped us understand some of the factors in a woman's life that make it easier or harder for her to handle having an abortion. How do you see yourself?

Mark: 1) Not true for me 2) Somewhat true for me 3) True

1. I suffer from depression or diagnosed personality disorder-----

1 2 3

2. I feel good about myself-----

3 2 1

3. I feel in charge of my life and what happens to me-----

3 2 1

4. I really feel a connection to this pregnancy-----

1 2 3

5. I am emotionally mature-----

3 2 1

6. I think I will be able to handle having an abortion well-----

3 2 1

Section 3 Total Score _____

4. Your beliefs about abortion:

A woman's beliefs about abortion naturally affect her ability to feel whole and emotionally healthy when she is making a decision about her pregnancy.

Mark: 1) Not true for me 2) Somewhat true for me 3) True for me

1. I believe abortion is the same as murdering a born person-----

1 2 3

2. I am not sure if I am making the right decision-----

1 2 3

3. I don't want an abortion, but I have to have one -----

1 2 3

4. I know I will regret having an abortion-----

1 2 3

5. I think God will punish me for having an abortion-----

1 2 3

6. I will not be able to forgive myself for having an abortion-----

1 2 3

7. Someone else is forcing me or pushing me into an abortion-----

1 2 3

Section 4 total score _____

5. Support:

Studies have shown us that a woman’s perception of the kind and amount of support she has in her life can make a difference in how she experiences the choice of abortion. What is your support like?

Mark: 1) Not true for me 2) Somewhat true for me 3) True for me

1. My parents are/were rejecting, critical, and abusive-----

1 2 3

2. The man involved is abusive, rejecting, and controlling-----

1 2 3

3. Family and friends who know support my decision-----

3 2 1

4. Most of the people I know think that abortion is wrong-----

1 2 3

Section 5 total score _____

6. How do you think you’ll feel after the abortion?

Since an abortion is a decision that lasts for all of your life, it can be very helpful to know what your thoughts and expectations are for how you will deal with this experience afterwards:

Mark: 1) Not true for me 2) Somewhat true for me 3) True for me

1. I am never going to think about it again after it’s over-----

1 2 3

2. I’m afraid I will think about the abortion all the time-----

1 2 3

3. I will feel relieved, and positive about the future-----

3 2 1

4. I will not be able to talk about the abortion with anyone-----

1 2 3

5. There may be bad things in my future as punishment for this-----

1 2 3

Section 6 total score _____

7. Some additional concerns: Spiritual/religious:

For many women abortion brings up spiritual or religious questions. Perhaps some of these have been troubling you?

If you are religious, what religion are you? _____

If you have a religion, do you think your religion is AGAINST abortion?

YES NO Don't Know

How important are religion/spiritual beliefs to you? (Mark one)

Very important important not very important

Not at all important do not have any

Do you need guidance or forgiveness from God/a higher power? YES NO

If YES, have you asked for it? YES NO

What is your definition of abortion?

Other issues about pregnancy that may be unresolved:

Have you had any abortions in the past? YES NO If yes, what was that experience like?

Have you placed a child/children for adoption? YES NO

If yes, what was that experience like?

Do you have memories or feelings about past pregnancies that feel unresolved?

YES NO

How to interpret your scores.

These interpretations of your scores are based on our experience with years of working with women. Add up your score for each section and write it in the space next to the section. This form is just a guide to help you see if you are feeling confident about the choice of abortion, or if you need to do some work to come to resolution. Most abortion providers are able to give you a safe abortion, but they may not offer decision-making counseling, so it **is up to you** to work through any feelings or issues that might leave you unresolved or even regretting your choice **before you have an abortion.**

At **BeforeandAfterabortion.com**, our purpose is to help you feel peaceful about whatever choice you make----now, next month, ten years from now, and for the rest of your life. **You have all the wisdom you need to handle your own life.** Sometimes you just need help to find it. Especially if you know you have some things that feel unresolved, we hope you'll watch our series of three YouTube videos—Before Abortion: Making a choice you can live with---and take the time to do the exercises in the third video. We want to help you connect your feelings--what's in your heart; with your thoughts---what's in your head. These questions will give you a good idea of areas where you might need to do some work before you have an abortion.

Section I. Questions

For some women unanswered fears, misperceptions or concerns about things like not understanding how an abortion will be done, pain, fetal development, unsubstantiated fears about the fetus feeling pain, or future fertility, may get in the way of working through feelings. If you don't have the information you need, it's hard to even begin to explore your feelings. It is very important that you understand what's happening and that you get your questions answered—not just by your friends or rumors--but by medical professionals. Make a list of the things you are wondering about, and be sure you get your questions answered. There are answers to some basic questions on the website, beforeandafterabortion.com.

Section 2. Reactions to being pregnant

Section score _____

Sometimes an experience like an unexpected pregnancy can be so upsetting that it can create a kind of emotional shock. When this happens you may be sort of obsessed with the problem---or even kind of numb. This question is to help you see how much emotional distress, if any, you are having. It's not realistic to think you can make a considered choice about your situation if you are numb. To make a decision that you can live with and be at peace with requires that you feel all the feelings you're having---and that you also be able to examine your beliefs and your thinking.

In this section, if you score:

- 6-8 You're probably relatively in touch with your feelings
- 9-13 You may be having a hard time connecting with your feelings
- 14-18 You may be emotionally 'numb'--and it is likely that you may need help knowing and feeling your emotions.

It is very important to "thaw out" before you try to make a decision. What to do if you have a high score:

If you score 9 or more, it may help you to write or tell your story and share it with a counselor or trusted friend, using words that express feelings--happy, sad, angry, scared, ashamed.

If you answered true or somewhat true to #6, "Sometimes I think about hurting myself," PLEASE ask for help from a friend, relative, clergy, or counselor. Your community probably has a crisis and suicide hotline. No matter how hopeless or frightening your situation may seem this terrible time will pass. If you can look for the gifts in your situation, you can create a life worth living.

Section 3. How you see yourself

section score _____

- 6-9 You probably have good inner resources
- 10-13 You may need assistance to tap your inner resources
- 14-18 You probably need assistance to create and use your inner resources

What do to if you have high scores on the following questions:

1. If you have a diagnosed personality disorder, or are on medication for emotional or psychological issues, it is a good idea to be in touch with your clinician to help you determine if you're in an OK place to make this significant decision. **If you need additional support or assistance you deserve to have it!**
2. Let's make some distinctions: Are you feeling 'bad' about your behavior/choice/actions; or are you feeling 'bad' about your *self*--your own inner value? If you are feeling bad about your behaviors and choices, how you would like to **be** different---not what outer circumstances would you like to have different, but how would you like to **BE**? What could you change within yourself? If you feel that you do not have value or worthiness, it may be hard for you to feel resolved or positive about much of anything, including your choice about abortion. If you are spiritual or religious, you might ask whether the higher power you believe in would make you worthless? Or you might ask yourself, if anyone benefits by you holding a low opinion of yourself? As with other issues, you actually have a **choice** about how to experience your own value. *The interpretation you choose* affects all your other choices, relationships, work, future, etc. What would you say to your best friend in a similar situation? What if you could be your own best friend?
3. If you don't feel in charge of your life, who **is** in charge? If you see yourself as a victim of events in your life--Ask 'what experience of myself do I **want** to have?' Who decides what experience you will have? Though you can't choose everything that happens, you always choose the interpretation. Why not choose the interpretation that **empowers** you and lets you feel good about yourself?
4. If you feel a connection to the pregnancy it's important to explore it. Abortion may not be the best choice for you. Is this a baby for you? Do you believe the pregnancy has a spirit or soul? Where would the spirit go if you have an abortion? If you feel a strong connection, it could be very important to write a letter saying goodbye. There is an example of this in the third session of *Before Abortion: making a choice you can live with*. Or do a guided imagery such as those in "Pregnancy Options Workbook". Or seek guidance from God, from the spirit of the pregnancy within you, from your inner knowing.
5. If you don't think you are emotionally mature, there are some ways you can begin to become aware of and take responsibility for your own feelings. What do you think are the characteristics of emotional maturity? See if you can think of some times when you did have those characteristics. Since you are capable of being like that, ask 'who decides whether you are like that or not? One way to begin to be in touch with your feelings is to do what's called an 'emotional inventory'. That means you take some time every day or a few times a week to go

through a list of feelings---happy, sad, angry, scared, and ashamed. So, you say to yourself, here are some things I'm feeling happy about----then what are some things I'm feeling sad about, etc.

6. If you don't expect to be able to handle having an abortion well, you are powerful enough to make sure that you're right! What does 'not handling the abortion well' mean to you? What problems do you think you might face after an abortion? How would you handle the problems? What **should** a woman's experience of abortion be? What would it be like if you did handle abortion well? Do you want/deserve to handle the abortion well? Does it make sense to you to do something if you have negative expectations about it?

Section 4. Patient's beliefs about abortion **section score** _____

7-9 Your beliefs are often associated with a good outcome

10-16 Your beliefs could predict difficulty in coping well after abortion

17-21 Your beliefs could predict serious difficulty in coping well after abortion

What to do if you have high scores on the following questions:

1. If you truly think abortion is the same as murder after you have explored some of these issues, then abortion may not be the best choice for you. Most doctors and clinics do not want to help you commit murder. Abortion **is** a kind of killing. Do you believe there are differences between killing and murder? What is the intention of murder? What is your intention in considering abortion? Is there a difference in the pregnancy before birth and after birth? Would you bring a two year old to a clinic and ask to have it murdered? It is very important for you to be clear about your beliefs.

2. Maybe you're not sure you are making the right decision. What if there is no 'right' or 'wrong' decision? What if there is only right or wrong for you? What if there are just different roads to travel? Abortion, adoption, and parenthood---each journey has its own joys and sorrows---its own prices and rewards. In terms of the question of 'moral rightness'--who decides what is morally right for you? If abortion is not morally right, what price do you pay for doing it? What would be morally right for you to do?

3. If you don't want an abortion, but think you have to have one, then you are being a victim. No one has to have an abortion. Abortion is a choice, even when it is a difficult one. No one has the right to force you to have an abortion. No doctor or clinic want to do an abortion on a woman who is not choosing it for herself. That's why so many women have worked so hard to make sure **you**

have a choice. If you really don't want an abortion, perhaps it's time to turn your energy to figuring out how you can **have** the baby. This will help you know whether you really want an abortion but you are having a hard time 'owning' that decision---or if you really **don't** want an abortion and you are getting pressure from someone else. It's very important for you to know what you really want in the very deepest part of your heart.

4. If you know you will regret an abortion, and you're saying that you will wish you had made another choice, don't have an abortion! If you are really saying you regret ever being in this situation, and think you'll have **feelings** about it, then know it is normal to have feelings. What exactly will you regret? How will you handle any sadness/grief you may have? How have you handled losses in the past?

5. If you believe God will punish you... Have you prayed about this? Have you asked for God's guidance? Forgiveness? What kind of God do you believe in? Do you believe that God knows your heart? Do you believe that God is with you no matter what choice you make? What kind of punishment might God give a woman who had an abortion? This would be a good time to have a conversation with God. Ask if you need help from a counselor or clergy person.

6. If you do not believe you will be able to forgive yourself...abortion is probably not the best choice for you. What do you create by not forgiving yourself? Who benefits from it? Do you think that not forgiving yourself proves that you are moral? That you really care?

7. If someone else is forcing or pushing you into an abortion, DO NOT HAVE AN ABORTION. It doesn't work to have an abortion because someone else wants you to---or to have a baby because someone else wants you to. Sometimes when you are feeling pressure it's hard even to know what you really want for yourself. You may find it helpful to watch the three counseling videos in Before Abortion: making a choice you can live with. Be sure to do the exercises in the third session. This includes drawing a pie and shading in the part of you that wants to have a baby and the part that wants to have an abortion. You can also draw a picture of your life in one year if you have a baby--or in one year if you have an abortion.

Section 5. Support section score _____

4-6 You probably have adequate support

7-9 You may not have good support from others for an abortion choice

10-12 You don't have support for an abortion choice--this may cause you distress

What to do if you have high scores on the following questions:

1.If your parents are rejecting/critical/abusive. Whether or not your parents know about or are involved in this decision, the way they were when you were growing up can have a lot to do with how you handle stressful things now. With parents like this, you may have learned to be very self-critical, or passive. You may see yourself as a victim. It may help to sort out inner voices--which are actually yours, and which are voices you have taken on from critical parent.

2. If the man involved is abusive/rejecting/controlling. Does he know about the pregnancy? If so, what is his reaction to the pregnancy? If he doesn't know, would you like to tell him? Are you afraid of him? Are you afraid of what kind of father he would be? What is his role in process of decision? Do you have a pattern of choosing controlling/rejecting relationships? What's that for?

3. If you have no support from family/friends... It only makes sense that your perception of the opinion of your closest community could affect your own judgments about your choice. This is especially true if you believe that the source of authority for your life is outside yourself. If you do not have support for your choice from close friends or family, you may easily doubt yourself no matter what decision you make. Who is there in your life who **could** be supportive? If there is no one, you may wish to set up some special follow-up with a counselor. If your answer to this question is 2, explore who does give support, who doesn't, and how do you plan on believing in yourself and your decisions even if others disagree? Think about other times you have stood up for yourself.

4. If you believe that most people you know think abortion is wrong. This is similar to question 3, but may involve your perception of **society's** view of abortion. It may be helpful for you to know that regardless of the views of people right around you, most people are pro-choice--and yet also have their discomforts about abortion, just as you do. Nearly 30% of women in this country will have an abortion at some point in their lives. Isn't it strange that we can still be afraid of other peoples' judgments? How do you feel about making a choice that you think most people disapprove of?

Section 6. After the abortion **section score** _____

5-7 You seem to have good skills for handling experience of abortion

8-10 You May need some assistance in handling feelings after abortion

11-15 You have very unrealistic or unworkable approaches to coping after abortion. Watch the Before Abortion counseling series.

What to do if you have high scores on these questions:

1. You're never going to forget this experience. You have faced a major challenge and you will remember many things about it, including how you handled it. The question is **how** are you going to remember it? How are you going to see yourself? How much courage and love did it take from you to make an honest decision about whether or not to continue a pregnancy?

2. You're afraid you'll think about it all the time. Obsessing is simply the other side of the coin of 'never thinking about it again.' It is often a way of thinking about something without truly getting anywhere--like a hamster going around and around in one of those exercise wheels. In order to actually work through feelings, it's usually helpful to identify whatever areas are the most uncomfortable and difficult--and to explore those issues fully.

4. You think you will not be able to talk about it. It is very important for human beings to be able to share our experiences with others. It is part of creating intimacy and part of healing. Not to be able to talk about a profound experience can be an indicator of an unhealthy degree of shame. The way to handle shame is to explore it more fully. What would happen if you **did** talk about it? How do you think it will work for you to do something that you can't ever discuss? Is there anyone you really **wish** you could tell? Research shows that the support of family and friends can be very helpful in creating a positive outcome, mentally and emotionally.

5. You think bad things will be a punishment. Anticipating punishment for an abortion is clearly setting up negative expectations. It might be useful to explore whether you think any bad things are ever going to happen to you even if you **don't** have an abortion. Then check on the spiritual aspects--who would determine whether bad things happened in punishment for abortion? What would you need to do to make amends or atonement for having an abortion? What **exactly** is/are the sin(s) that would be punished? Does God punish?

7. Spiritual/religious

Many times a woman facing an abortion finds that her level of spiritual or religious understanding is not sufficient to help her find peace with her choice. Spirituality and religion may be the same thing for you, or they may be very different. Even if you do not find comfort through your religion it may help you to contact your own spirit--your own inner knowing. If you have a need for

guidance or forgiveness, whom do you need it from? Then you can enter into a guided imagery in which you asks for what you needs and listens to the internal answers to your requests, whether it is from a spirit guide, your own 'wise woman', the spirit of the pregnancy, or God. Some women may wish to create a kind of ritual or ceremony to mark the importance of their experience. Some may wish to make a kind of atonement---to honor the importance of the life that has been ended. For some women, writing their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a journal may help them--not only in the present but to have a reminder and understanding in the future of how they came to their decision. For some women it may be important to seek help and guidance from a recognized religious figure. If you can find a religious person who is open to all your choices, that is a great gift. Faith Aloud is an organization that has clergy of different denominations who can talk with you. They have wonderful videos on their web site at faithaloud.org. Clergy counseling: 888-717-5010.

The last section on past pregnancies is designed to let the counselor and you see if you have past unresolved pregnancy issues. If you do, they should be addressed first using the same approaches that you would if they were the current experience. When these are resolved, begin anew, working with the current pregnancy.

Spending the time to explore your feelings *before* you have an abortion is important. You have the ability to come to a sense of peace with your choice---and you deserve to have that sense of peace. While you are in this process, you are not alone. There are thousands of women facing these same questions at this very moment. When you open your heart to your own process you are part of sending strength and love to all. *Charlotte Taft*
Beforeandafterabortion.com