

One Woman's Story

"I Was On My Own"

Thirty years ago, I found myself pregnant, divorced and virtually alone.

The first emotion was that of sheer panic. I only had a small income and was working two jobs. I had a 4-year-old daughter to support. I had no money, no medical insurance, and didn't realize that there were places to turn to for help.

As I turned to friends and relatives for advice the whole matter became more confusing. Advice poured in from all sides. I felt like I was being put through the third degree: "What is a divorced woman going to do with such a small income? You already have one child to feed. How will you pay the hospital bills?"

A relative that had an illegal abortion 25 years before talked to me about abortion. She had never been able to have children because of her abortion, but strangely enough, advised me to have one anyway. After all, it was now legal and "safe."

I felt like I was in a tailspin. There was no time to think. As I look back, not once did anyone just put their arms around me and ask my feelings or allow me to even have time to have any. Just some positive love and support would have been a relief.

My relatives went about their business of making all the arrangements while I felt like someone on the outside looking in. It was as if it was happening to someone else. I don't blame anyone, they only did what they thought was right; that is why educating people about what's really right is so important.

Anyway, I was soon whisked off to Cleveland and dropped off at some friend's house. The next day I was again dropped off at the abortion clinic. After I got inside (alone) I paid my \$200 and was given a pregnancy test and a locker (just like in a gym). I was given a paper gown and told to put it on. The place was cold and the people formal. No compassion, no understanding. It was like a busy assembly line.

I then waited in a small room until my name was called. I was taken to another room and told to get up on the table, put my feet in the stirrups and scoot down. It was so cold—I shivered and have never been so scared or felt so alone.

I was soon to find out that the "painless" procedure I was promised was anything but painless. As my baby was ripped from my body the pain became unbearable, and tears streamed down my face. I was told to be still—it would soon be over.

After the abortion, I walked to another room and was allowed to lie down for 30 minutes, after which I was told I could leave. I went to my locker, got dressed and was told to see my family doctor in six weeks. I asked if I could use a phone to call my ride and was told they had no phones for public use, but there was a pay phone down the street I could use.

I walked down the street. It was November, and very cold. As I walked back to wait for my ride outside the clinic, I felt cold, nauseous, dizzy, alone and empty.

When my ride picked me up she had a friend with her. They were going to lunch and I had to go along. You would have thought I had just gone to get my eyes checked for all anyone cared.

Later that day, another relative took me home and dropped me off in front of my apartment. It's amazing how everyone was there to give advice before the abortion, but afterwards I was on my own.

What followed was more like a nightmare than reality. I began having nightmares about my baby. I began drinking more and more until I was up to five bottles of alcohol a week. I sometimes went so long without eating that when I would try to eat, I would vomit.

I finally went to the doctor and found out that I had an infection from the abortion. He started treatment but it didn't help. I told him about the nightmares and my nerves and he gave me tranquilizers—no comfort, no counseling—just pills.

I started taking tranquilizers to help me sleep, and drugs to keep me going during the day. Four times I deliberately overdosed, trying to commit suicide. I don't think I really wanted to die, I only wanted someone to care, to help, to listen. I wanted the pain to go away.

The doctor continued to try treatment after treatment on the physical problem, but to no avail. I finally changed doctors and had to have surgery because the infection caused by the abortion had destroyed my cervix and uterus. This helped for a short time.

I finally met the man I am now married to; with his love and support, I started to put my life back together. We started to attend church and I came to find Christ as my Savior. I knew then that I was forgiven but it took time before I was able to forgive myself. I was finally alive after being dead and living in hell.

But the physical problems caused by the abortion started cropping back up. More infections and more damage. I changed doctors again. I had a D&C. I was filled with tumors by this time and had endometriosis. A hysterectomy was inevitable, but we put it off as long as possible.

But in March 1984 it finally came to pass. *Everything* had to be removed, for it was totally destroyed. It took ten years of constant problems, but the abortion finally took its final toll.

As I look back, if I had received love and support, and above all, the true facts, I would have never even considered an abortion. The pain never goes away, it's always there.

I really believe women who have had abortions need to be heard; we have a right to be heard. The thought of anyone going through what I went through (although I know that there are literally millions who have) is heartbreaking to me.