



Project Candlelight
Awareness, Education & Outreach
During Coerced Abortion Awareness Week
April 3-10, 2011

HOW TO WRITE AN OP ED

Tips for writing an Op Ed or whenever writing or speaking about this issue

The importance of setting the stage with new evidence about coercion

Before people can accept new evidence they often must first "unlearn" what they *think* they know. Words like "choice," and "safe" have been used for so long by people on all "sides" of this issue, that many well-intended people may mistakenly believe this is true.

That is why it's important to first educate people that most (not some or all, but most) abortions are unwanted or coerced and that forced abortions are happening here. This is an unthinkable assault on the fundamental human rights and lives of *both* the unborn and women. It's an assault that is often lost in the rush to educate and advocate on a national scale or to find healing for those already affected. But it is important evidence that helps those already hurt find the support they deserve while also exposing abortion's exploitation of women and families at risk.

Finally, this "prelude to abortion" evidence educates others about the urgent need for non-presumptive outreach and compassion toward individuals and families at risk, in need or already hurt.

New evidence. New message:

Here, in a nutshell, are some key points about "pre-abortion" injustices that often precede "post-abortion" issues:

- New evidence shows that most abortions are unwanted or coerced.
- Coercion comes in many forms and from all sides and can involve abuse of power, professional negligence or malpractice, or deceptive or coercive counseling from trusted or powerful gatekeepers, guides and authorities.
- Coercion can escalate to violence. Forced abortions are happening here, too, and homicide is the leading killer of pregnant women. Maternal death rates after abortion are also significant.
- Conclusion: Abortion endangers the rights and lives of both the unborn and women. Before or after abortion, help, hope and healing are available.

What is an "Op Ed"?

This is news jargon for an Opinion Editorial by someone with a particular point of view or expertise on some topic. It is typically placed in print or on-line newspapers and other news publications. There are many different angles to “pre-abortion,” abortion and post-abortion issues that may qualify you as an expert.

If you work in a pregnancy resource center, a pastoral or counseling profession or ministry, if you work in the medical, legal or social services professions, or if have had an abortion or were otherwise personally affected by abortion, you can consider yourself an expert in this issue. If you counsel, interact with or advocate for individuals and families at risk, you have a special expertise that is worthy of sharing.

7 tips for writing an Op Ed piece or other opinion pieces

(Most of these guidelines apply anytime you're addressing this issue)

1. Get to the point, but put the issue in context first. Always preface your comments by stating that "new evidence indicates that most abortions are unwanted or coerced, and forced abortion is happening here." Express your concern and compassion for this injustice and the heartbreak of those affected by abortion. Depending on the focus of your piece, you may want to address the "synergy of coercion." (Cite examples and facts from the Forced Abortion in America Special Report or the grouping of “pre-abortion” statistics in “What Every American Needs to Know,” downloadable www.theunchoice.com/whateveramerican.htm. Or draw from other resources listed below.)

Sharing this news that most abortions are unwanted or coerced is also a gesture of respect and compassion for women and families who've been there. Many don't know that we know, that we care and that they are not alone. Many may have been harshly judged or on the receiving end of blanket condemnation or harsh political rhetoric.

Still other readers at risk or those inclined to coerce women into abortion also need to know the heartbreak this causes before or after abortion, and that women are being maimed, injured and killed, too.

2. Good timing helps. Watch for timely news opportunities and mention this upfront. If something about pregnancy or abortion-related issues is in the news, this is an ideal time to respond. Mention the news tie-in and be specific.

For example, say: *"The April 3rd issue of the Newsleader Times talked about teen pregnancy. Many parents don't realize their own kids are at risk of coercion and serious aftereffects."*

Other times may tie in with holidays or national events during or beyond April events. For example, Coerced Abortion Awareness Week, LifeChain, 40 Days for Life, Mothers' Day, or the Roe v. Wade anniversary. See the PR Calendar for ideas.

3. Cut to the chase and K.I.S.S. - Great communicators -- especially editors -- know it's best to "Keep it Short and Simple." The entire piece may be rejected if it's rambling, harshly or disrespectfully presented or wordy. Pick one central theme that is mentioned upfront and focuses on

one or two key points. Later, you can include a supporting fact or two or a supporting example. Clear. Fact-based. Simple. Your Op Ed should be no more than 700-750 words maximum. Even fewer is better! Present the new facts showing how abortion endangers the rights and lives of both the unborn and women.

4, Relate your message to the audience's interests. Why is this relevant to them? Are they parents whose kids are at risk of coercion in schools, doctors' offices or even shopping malls? Are they women who are being coerced into unwanted abortions and haven't heard that they have a right to be informed or that help of all kinds is available? Are they individuals and families already hurt who need to know they're not alone? Are they compassionate bystanders who thought this was just a "political issue" vs. heartbreak in their own circles and a need for compassion and healing? Are they political activists and advocates who may want to get involved or helpers who may want to help? Are they educators who may want to include this in their lesson plans or volunteer service hours? Think about your audience and their needs and tailor your message to them.

5. Write in a friendly, conversational style. Use "I," as in "I noticed this paper reported on this issue last Tues. and I'd like to add some new evidence to the discussion." Avoid sounding preachy, dry or vague. State the issue, why it matters and how they can help. Respect your audience. Presume that they care, but that they just haven't heard this new evidence. Include a personal anecdote from your own or someone else's experience. However, respect people's privacy and don't mention names or disclose personal information without their permission. Write in a tone that is conversational, not oppositional, presumptive or lecturing. This will offend and alienate people who may very well not be aware of the information you're sharing. In an age of sound bites and spin, misperceptions are common. Acknowledge that and simply share the information and let people draw their own conclusions.

6. Aim locally or in niche publications. Major news media are inundated with Op Ed submissions and odds of being published there are slim, unless you're already well-established as a national leader in a particular field. Try local, regional or state civic, religious or group publications.

Any publication has a potential tie-in to this issue, from youth group advocates to senior citizens who care or may themselves have had or coerced an abortion. Wherever you publish, you'll reach many people who will in turn reach others. Consider popular blogs, too. Look closely at their preferred writing style and match your submission to that. Editors don't have time to edit or rewrite extensively and most publications have a clear, established style, writing guidelines, etc.

7. Submit contact information and a photo, if required. Every publication has different guidelines. Whether it is print, Internet or broadcast media, check with the editorial department about what specifics are required.