



## Michelle's Story

**I was 18 years old when I got pregnant.** Since I had already enlisted in the Air Force, I thought I had to have an abortion in order to make something out of my life.

My best friend drove me to the abortion clinic. It was like an assembly line. When the ultrasound was being done I asked to see it. But this wasn't allowed (so much for "an informed decision"). Then I asked how far along I was. I was told I was nine-and-a-half weeks pregnant. That hit me hard. I started doubting, and wanted to talk to my friend, but I wasn't allowed to.

When it was my turn the nurse told me that I was going to feel some discomfort, like strong menstrual cramps. The truth is that the abortion was more pain than I've ever felt in my life. It felt like my insides were literally being sucked out of my body. Later I went into shock.

After the abortion, I tried to make up for it by trying to get pregnant again. I wanted my baby back. I never got pregnant again. I don't know if I can ever have another baby. I named my baby. I found out later that this is part of the grieving process.

Two-and-a-half years later, I ended up in the hospital with bulimia. I felt that no one had punished me for what I had done so I was punishing myself. I became obsessed with women who were pregnant. My life was in shambles! I was suffering from post-abortion trauma.

When I was 21 years old I received help from a woman who was involved with pro-life activism. I went through a program called "Conquerors." Not only did I experience forgiveness, I was also challenged to help others. I answered the challenge!

I started sidewalk counseling. There is a healing process that comes from getting involved in the pro-life movement. I talk to youth groups and students and share my testimony. To them, and to you, I plead, "Please don't make the same mistake I did." — Michelle

## THE SILENT GRIEF OF ABORTION

**A**FTER AN ELECTIVE ABORTION some women may immediately experience a sense of relief since they are no longer facing an unwanted pregnancy. However, this "relief" experience is all too often short-lived. Abortion is clearly an experience of loss and a period of grieving is to be expected. The natural tendency to suppress or deny the unpleasant, not to mention the pressure from a society that fails to recognize the need to grieve the loss of an aborted child, may help a woman to mask the grief and cope temporarily. Eventually, however, the stress from the intense pain she naturally suffers may result in emotional instability or even psychosis.

In an interview for the Washington Post, Dr. Julius Fogel, a psychiatrist and obstetrician who has performed abortions as well as counseled many women who have undergone an abortion, said, "There is no question about the emotional grief and mourning following an abortion. Many come in—some are just mute, some hostile. Some burst out crying... There is no question in my mind that we are disturbing a life process." In an earlier interview, Fogel said, "This is part



Ann Marie Cosgrove

of her own life. When she destroys a pregnancy, she is destroying herself. There is no way it can be innocuous."

Ann Marie Cosgrove, President of Silent No More-Minnesota, publicly testifies about the trauma and pain that abortion has caused in her life, "Abortion changes you forever. I thought the abortion would free me up from a responsibility I felt I was not ready for. Instead it held me in bondage to feelings of regret, remorse, depression and despair. My soul became a slave to self-hatred and worthlessness. My sanity the price I would pay. Women deserve better than abortion."

There are many courageous women, such as Ann Marie, who give personal testimony in opposition to abortion. They also offer their understanding, compassion and time to those who need their support in coping with the emotional and psychological aftermath of an abortion. There are chapters of Silent No More in nearly every state.

The U.S. Senate recognized the mental health consequences of abortion when it passed an amendment (November 6, 2001) to the appropriations bill H.R.3061:

**(SEC. 227)** Expresses the sense of the Senate that: (1) the Secretary of HHS [Health and Human Services], through the Director of NIH and the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), should expand and intensify research... with respect to

## THE OTHER HALF: A FATHER'S REGRET

ACTUAL TESTIMONY

"I was a participant in two abortions with my ex-wife...It has been six years since the last abortion, nine since the decision for the first one. Every time I see children of the approximate age of the two lost ones, I cry, no matter where... church, the mall, the park, the library. I want to call their names, Michelle, Danielle, Stephen, William. Their legacy is gone. Their beauty unfinished, nullified by a decision to which I agreed...I have gone from pro-choice to pro-child."



— E-mail message from a father to Human Life Alliance

### FOR MORE INFORMATION OR HELP FOLLOWING AN ABORTION:

GO TO [WWW.PREGNANCYCENTERS.ORG](http://WWW.PREGNANCYCENTERS.ORG) OR CALL 1-800-395-HELP (4357)

[WWW.SILENTNOMOREAWARENESS.COM](http://WWW.SILENTNOMOREAWARENESS.COM)

[WWW.AFTERABORTION.ORG](http://WWW.AFTERABORTION.ORG)

[WWW.VICTIMSOFACTORTIONSPEAKOUT.ORG](http://WWW.VICTIMSOFACTORTIONSPEAKOUT.ORG)

post-abortion depression and post-abortion psychosis (post-abortion conditions);... (3) the Director of NIMH should conduct or support research on causes of and cure for post-abortion conditions,...

Fortunately, as the emotional/psychological correlates of induced abortion are becoming more fully recognized and acknowledged, women and their families who have undergone an abortion are able to identify the symptoms, better understand their cause, and seek help. Treatment programs have sprung up across the nation making it possible to get help privately over the Internet and on the telephone, confidentially on a one-on-one basis, or by joining one of the many group therapy programs available.

#### Notes and Resources:

[www.seghea.com/pat/life/morbidity.html](http://www.seghea.com/pat/life/morbidity.html) (for a list of articles on post abortion trauma)

<sup>1</sup>Angelo, E. Joanne, MD, "The Negative Impact of Abortion on Women and Families," *Post-Abortion Aftermath*, Mannion M., ed., Sheed and Ward: Kansas City, MO, 1994.

<sup>2</sup>Speckhard, PhD, Anne, and Dr. Vincent Rue, PhD, "Complicated Mourning: Dynamics of Impacted Post-Abortion Grief," *Pre- and Perinatal Psychology Journal*, Vol. 8, No.1., Fall, 1993.

<sup>3</sup>McCarthy, Colman, "The Real Anguish of Abortion," *Washington Post*, February 5, 1989.

<sup>4</sup>McCarthy, Colman, "A Psychological View of Abortion," *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, March 7, 1971.

<sup>5</sup>H.R.3061, SEC. 227, <http://thomas.loc.gov>