



## **AFTER YOUR ABORTION**

You may have many different feelings after your abortion: you might feel relief, sadness, grief, anger, hope, or other emotions - including not feeling emotional at all. It can be a confusing and overwhelming time, especially with pregnancy hormones still flooding your system. Having an abortion can bring up feelings about other uncomfortable or traumatic past situations. Remind yourself of your own resiliency and treat yourself with kindness.

It is important to take care of yourself after your procedure. Follow the instructions given to you by the clinic to make sure that your body heals properly and quickly: no baths, swimming, or putting anything inside the vagina for seven days. Knowing that your body is on a healing track can help you move forward emotionally as well.

### **Fear and Guilt**

How you feel after you've had an abortion can be shaped by the values you hold. If you grew up thinking that abortions were immoral or dangerous, then this might be a scary time for you. If spirituality or religion plays an important role in your life, there might be someone in your religious community you can speak with about this experience, or you can reach out to pro-choice clergy at **Faith Aloud** listed below.

People are sometimes afraid that by having an abortion they are giving up on their only chance at a pregnancy. Neither a medical or surgical abortion has an impact on your fertility - you were able to get pregnant this time, and having an abortion won't change that. Remind yourself that you acted responsibly by taking care of yourself right now so that you are better able to look after your current and/or future family.

Sometimes people say that they feel guilty that they don't feel very guilty or sad about having an abortion. This is just one of many different ways of reacting; it can also take time for different emotions to kick in. As your circumstances and life change, your feelings about the abortion might change too.

### **It Didn't Feel Like a Choice**

Having an abortion can bring up a range of emotions for anyone, especially if you would prefer to be able to continue the pregnancy. Sometimes we plan for a pregnancy, but then experience major life changes such as serious health problems, a loss of employment, or the end of a relationship. This means we have to reassess our ability to parent the way we imagined we would. Because there can be such a gap between your dreams and reality you might be left feeling frustrated and afraid of regretting your decision to have an abortion. It is important to remember that you made the best choice you were able to in the situation you were in, and that you acted as responsibly as you could during a difficult time. Show yourself loving-kindness by respecting your decision.

### **Having Sex Again**

After an abortion some women will be eager to reconnect with their partner sexually, while others might be more hesitant to be intimate with anyone. Sometimes women blame themselves for getting pregnant, saying things like "I'm so stupid," or "I can't believe I let this happen." Pregnancy is something that our bodies do without asking our permission.

If you're worried about taking risks that could lead to pregnancy, now could be a good time to make some changes: start using birth control or change the method you're already using; think about where and when you've taken risks before and decide how to avoid those in the future.

Remember that sex should be an activity you enjoy both physically and emotionally, and you get to set boundaries around when and how you have sex. Those boundaries can include needing to use your preferred



## BLOOR WEST VILLAGE WOMEN'S CLINIC

method of birth control. You are allowed to say “no” to sex for any reason, and if someone pressures you into doing it anyway, that is sexual assault. Please see the resources below to find more information and support around sexual violence.

### **Moving Forward**

Just as everyone has different feelings after having an abortion, people also have different ways of dealing with those feelings. Some people might put it all aside and focus on moving forward with their life, while others will sit with the moment for a longer period of time. You know yourself best.

It is important for some people to take some time to acknowledge what they've been through - this can be through doing something private like writing in a journal, or it can mean confiding in a friend or therapist. Having a strong support network can help you through times like these. It can be hard to ask for help, but even if you spend time with friends without mentioning the abortion you can still benefit from their company and love.

It may be meaningful to connect with other people who have had abortions and find out about their stories and what they've been through. This can help you gain perspective and not feel so alone. If you have friends or family you feel comfortable asking, you might be surprised at what they share with you. Going online to read other peoples' stories can be powerful as well. A good place to start might be **shoutyourabortion.com**

### **RESOURCES**

- **All-Options** toll-free talkline offers judgement-free support around pregnancy and abortion: 1-888-493-0092
- The **Bay Centre for Birth Control** at Women's College Hospital offers free in-person pre- and post-abortion counseling. No OHIP required: 416-351-3700, press 3 to book.
- **Planned Parenthood Toronto** offers free health care and in-person post-abortion counseling for people under 30 years old: 416-961-0113
- Religious clergy and counselors are available toll-free at **Faith Aloud** to offer non-judgmental faith-based support around pregnancy options and abortion: 1-888-717-5010
- Counselors on the toll-free **AIDS and Sexual Health Infoline** offer information about pregnancy options, birth control methods, and STI risks and testing: 1-800-668-2437
- The **Assaulted Women's Helpline** offers toll-free anonymous and confidential support and referrals for women who have experienced any kind of abuse and their loved ones: 1-866-863-0511
- The **Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape** runs free in-person counseling, court support, and a toll-free support line for survivors of sexual violence: 416-597-8808
- **Sheltersafe.ca** provides a database of shelters for women and children across Canada.
- The **Gerstein Crisis Centre** offers free phone and in-person mental health crisis support for people 16 years and older in the city of Toronto: 416-929-5200
- The **Toronto Distress Line** offers toll-free mental health support and crisis intervention: 416-408-4357
- The **ConnexOntario Mental Health Services Info Helpline** can provide referrals for mental health care: 1-866-531-2600
- **Kids Help Phone** offers free non-judgmental support on many topics for youth: 1-800-668-6868
- **Teenhealthsource.com** is staffed by teen volunteers at Planned
- You can find real-life testimonies from other people who have had abortions at **shoutyourabortion.com**

**You can find more information on our website: visit [bloorwestwomensclinic.ca](http://bloorwestwomensclinic.ca)**