



"I attributed the divorce to other reasons, but years later, the pressure of carrying a secret became too much to bear and I knew I could not go on if I did not confront the abortion."

Sandra, Phone Consultant Arkansas

At age 17, I became pregnant. I reluctantly told my parents because I couldn't endure the aloneness I felt. They were angry and hurt. Their hopes and dreams for me were shattered, and their hearts were broken.

My parents (who later came to regret the abortion as much as I did) supported me having an abortion and within days went with me to an abortion clinic.

What I remember most about the abortion clinic is the indifference. The cash was paid first, and then I was given a pregnancy test to confirm the pregnancy. I went into a counseling room where I was told about the physical things that would happen to me.

Once in abortion room, I was told to lie down on the abortion table and wait for the doctor. When the doctor came in, he did not stop to talk to me and went straight to what he was there for.

A nurse sat less than an inch away from my face and began to chit-chat about simple things. She did not stop asking me questions about my life and future plans even after the suction machine came on. I felt terrified and traumatized and yet, at the same time, made efforts to answer the nurse's questions.

Once the abortion was over, I was rushed out of the room. I was given medicine and told how to take it and minutes later was pointed toward the exit. During the ride home, I was in such excruciating pain that I blacked out and do not remember anything else except being home and feeling like I never wanted to get out of bed again.

I felt unforgivable and daily felt like I didn't deserve to live. But God had not abandoned me like I thought He had and I turned my life over to Him.

I later married a Christian man and with God's help was able to forgive those that had wronged me. However, I still carried the shame of having had an abortion and never acknowledged it. I probably never would have either except that I had a step-son that was the same age my child would have been if I had not chosen abortion. I could no longer deny what I had actually done. It wasn't just a blob of tissue. I had taken a life. The grief that hit me was so unexpected and overwhelming that even the loving people around me did not know how to help me and the marriage ended in divorce shortly afterward.

I attributed the divorce to other reasons, but years later, the pressure of carrying a secret became too much to bear, and I knew I could not go on if I did not confront the abortion experience. I had no idea who to turn so I did an

internet search. I found an 800 number and called it and was directed to a pregnancy crisis center in my area. I went through an abortion recovery bible study with a woman who had also had an abortion. I was finally able to grieve for the child that I had lost and memorialize her with dignity. Before releasing the abortion secret, I was not able to maintain eye contact with people and developed a stuttering problem; however, after receiving God's forgiveness and sharing my testimony, I was able to look people in the eye and not look away and the stuttering disappeared. I was even able to forgive and love myself.

I now hope and pray that my experience will help others to grieve their aborted children and to no longer live in fear, shame, and secrecy.

Sandra is a high school English Language Arts teacher and has served as abortion recovery director at First Choice Pregnancy Resource Center in Texarkana, Texas. She volunteers for Operation Outcry Silent No More and is a part time staff member for the National Helpline for Abortion Recovery.