

THINKING SYSTEMS AFTER ABORTION

According to Leigh F. Koerbel in *Fitting the Pieces Together*, 1997, "Men often react differently from women to trauma in their lives. Women, after all, actually carried the baby in their wombs whereas men were the more objective partner. However, God's answers to resolving abortion's spiritual and emotional aftermath are the same for both men and women. Therefore, it is crucial to *avoid* teaching post-abortion men that they have different needs from post-abortive women." The post abortive man and woman has created and adopted a set of emotional and psychological defenses that have not allowed him or her to face the factual/emotional reality of his/her actions. This system of rationalizing is the basis for later emotional, psychological and relational problems. The rationalizing system begins its development the moment he/she considers abortion; it continues as he/she develops reasons to kill his/her child and is complete at the moment the procedure is finished. The complete rationalizing system enables him/her to do what he/she has come to believe that she must. The rationalizing system is designed to cover real emotional, psychological and physical experience, distort facts, and change reality to be consistent with his/her actions.

Two systems of thought and feeling are in conflict in the post abortive man or woman. The rationalizing system is founded in the false assumption that life did not exist and even if it did his or her life is and was more important than the baby's life.

The second thinking system, the system that represents facts, real experience and personal beliefs, is the system that is to be eradicated by the rationalizing system. In this system, it is the thinking, feeling, beliefs, values, and actions that have been unable to be expressed. This system carries the information that is contrary to the post abortive man or woman's decision to abort. This system must be acknowledged in order for the guilt/shame to be resolved. The very existence of the guilt/shame is dependent on the conflict between what has become acceptable on a rationalized basis and what the actual experience of the post abortive man or woman has been. Expression of the actual experience of the post abortive man or woman is the critical issue in the resolution of the guilt/shame.

As the actual emotionally and psychologically traumatic experience of the post abortive man or woman becomes more apparent he/she becomes better able to regain control of his/her thinking, feelings, and actions. He/she now begins to "own", "accept" as real the thoughts and feelings he/she has had to keep private or suppressed. The more he/she is able to express the intensely traumatic experience of the abortion and its aftermath the better he/she feels; the better he/she is able to cope.

This is not a new notion. An axiom of self esteem development is as follows: the greater the personal honesty, the greater the self-esteem.

Facing facts and consequences of one's actions honestly adds to one's own personal integrity. The converse is also true. For the post abortive man or woman, the

adoption of this rationalizing system is to adopt a system of thinking and feeling and action that is by definition delusional and self destructing.

Social Institutional Response - Grieving is a natural and normal process for the post abortive man or woman. He/she must be allowed to grieve, and be supported and comforted in his or her loss. The need for the post abortive man or woman to grieve is not supported within the present social institutions. In most cases of death, the survivor is afforded and generally encouraged to allow their sadness and loss to be experienced and expressed. The function of a funeral, wake, and church is to lend structure and process to the bereaved person. The basic institutions available to bereaved persons are not available to the post abortive man or woman. The post abortive man or woman is left to confront hostile social and institutional systems totally alone. He/She is left to deal with the death of his/her child in a complete social and institutional void.

Family systems do not want to discuss the reality of the death of his/her child. They do not want to support the post abortive man or woman in his/her grief. The family's focus becomes one of denial. The family reinforces and enables not talking, not communicating his/her abortion experience, and the concealing and suppressing of the facts and feelings related to the post abortive man or woman's experience.

The medical community is not in the least interested in dealing with or acknowledging the psychological and emotional consequences of their actions. This system is actually hostile to the post abortive man or woman's need for access to him or her. The system's staff assume no responsibility for the psychological and emotional problems related to the abortion.

The funeral process is the major social and institutional mechanism by which grief is allowed to be experienced and expressed. Our culture has delegated to the funeral process this function. The post abortive man or woman cannot enter this system because the death of his/her child has not been recognized as a social and/or personal reality.

A whole new methodology has to be enunciated to deal with the phenomena of Post Abortion Trauma. It must include a new definition of the grieving process as it relates to the post abortive man or woman's bereavement needs. This definition includes a rethinking and discussion of denial, anger, bargaining, guilt/shame, depression, and acceptance as these phases relate to the post abortive man or woman's mourning process.

References:

Abortive Woman's Thinking System by Terry Selby, MSW, ACSW -Title and article modified and revised to include men by Concepts of Truth, Inc., 2008

Leigh F. Koerbel in *Fitting the Pieces Together*, 1997, *P.A.M-Post Abortive Ministries*