

1.

I called her Nadine.

How to make the right decision ?

About the problems BEFORE termination of pregnancy.

2.

Why this information?

Dear Readers,

If you received this leaflet from your doctor you have probably already discussed a termination with him. It is not easy to make such a decision. Once the decision has been made you want to ``carry it through``, not have it disrupted again.

We, the publishers of this leaflet, are women who have experienced a termination and have got together to form a group.

After the termination we suffered from emotional problems and together we are now looking for ways in which to help other women.

Before going through with a termination every woman must sign a form acknowledging that she has been informed about possible injury to the body.

Any eventual incidence of emotional injury, of which one is not informed, can be just as serious.

Unfortunately silence reigns.

Why?

No woman who has gone through or plans a termination likes to talk about it. Usually it remains a secret amongst those concerned or in the close family.

The following lines cannot substitute talking to your family, friends or advice centre, but they can give you important information for finding and accepting help in your difficult situation.

Further important information can be found on our homepage www.spuren-im-leben.at or in the book 'Ich nannte sie Nadine'.

3.

How to make the right decision?

The experiences of a gynaecologist.

At the point in time when terminations were no longer punishable by law, I was giving women advice on terminations who had come to our hospital.

An enormous amount of women came, and it was my job to give advice and also appointments. That was a very difficult time for me – but I gained important experience, which I would like to pass on:

Women with *enough* time to think again, before the actual termination took place, often decided against it. Whereas women who I informed had only a few days time mostly decided *for* the termination.

Take two sheets of paper: one white and one which is the colour of the sex of the child which you would wish for (blue or pink)then write down on the white sheet everything that is in favour of a termination. On the coloured sheet write down what is in favour of a child. Leave the sheets for a while adding to them slowly. *Most important is:* Don't make any decision out of strong feelings! Fear and anger disappear in time. What matters most is that you make a decision that you can live with afterwards. Collect advice from your best friend, the people who know you best of all – yourself.

But how can you help yourself when you are so mixed up?

I call the method I use in such a case 'Helicopter- Method': In my imagination I climb into a helicopter and look down onto the situation: under me I see the chaos and jungle of my life, but from up here I can also discover that there **is** a way, perhaps only 100 meters away which leads to a place where there is help.

You can see more from up there, you can see into a part of the future. From up there you can find better advice.

4.

But how do you gain the distance, which you need, to get into the helicopter?

Four steps lead to the helicopter:
Motion, sleep, water and happiness.

1. Exercise

Use every opportunity to get more exercise than average. It's enough just running round the block, or bending your knees a few times. Putting your body in motion usually makes you mentally active.

2. Sleep

Your wisdom, your ability to make decisions, your energy are necessary and your mind needs fuel. If your mind is ``going round in circles``, you will become restless, until you are burnt out and exhausted. Soon you won't be able to think and also won't be able to sleep. Try to get enough sleep at the right time, if at all possible. If you cannot sleep ask your doctor for a mild aid – if possible a natural remedy. The time you spend sleeping extra hours, gives you twice or three times more rest than otherwise.

3. Water

Perhaps it sounds unbelievable, but when you are under stress you often don't feel very thirsty. Never forget to drink enough. Consciously drink two or three glasses of water. Water is at least available everywhere. It doesn't cost anything and it gets the circulation going straight away.

4. Happiness

To be happy in this situation is a big word, but try to put your problem to one side for a while and spoil yourself: eat something delicious, listen to a few bars of beautiful music, have a chat with good friends, or read a few pages in a good book.

Wait and see, new ways and possibilities will open up when seen from a different perspective.

Prof. Dr. Maria Hengstberger, Vienna

5.

Experiences of a midwife

My name is Marianne, I was a midwife, but now I have retired. Even so my heart still belongs to pregnant women, those giving birth and the small creature the HUMAN BEING. For many years I accompanied young women and families through happiness and sorrow. I would like to say a few words to all those women who find themselves in such a difficult situation.

LISTEN TO YOUR INNER VOICE

An unwanted pregnancy brings a great deal of stress with it. After the gynaecologist has made the diagnosis and said the words "You are pregnant!" - What does a woman feel at such a moment? The mind can go completely blank, and you can have a dizzy spell. The heart panics: "I can't possibly be pregnant!", "We don't want a child now.", "How will I tell my partner?"

As quick as lightning plans and wishes go through your head. The conclusion is "No, not a child.", "How did I get pregnant, I took the proper precautions!" But what you don't think: There are many reasons for becoming pregnant in spite of contraception. The partners reaction "What, a child now?" or "A child, not another? What about our plans, my career....?" So, a child doesn't fit in with your plans!

That is when the idea emerges for the first time: a termination of the pregnancy! At first it is only a thought: "Yes, it is my right, it is legal, I can make the decisions about my body, my womb."

6.

Yes, you can make decisions about your body. But remember: The child inside you is an independent person, not “your womb”! Be aware of the fact that: You also have a soul. Perhaps you think: so many people have a termination and they are OK. Are you sure that everything really is OK?

Your heart begins to register, it’s your turn to be a woman. As a woman be aware it is YOUR decision, and only yours to make. Your partner can only support you. Every person, every woman is unique. Your body, your feelings, your mind are all unique. To become a mother is unique! Every living thing has the right to be on this earth. It occurs to you “I have been carrying a new life in me for a few weeks.” The sparks of love inflame. Do some soul-searching! Open up your heart and let positive feelings flow in! Don’t you feel proud: I’m going to be a MOTHER?

Your stomach is still flat, but your breasts feel taut. You are able to experience the feelings of being pregnant, you can share in the most beautiful role of being a woman. You listen to your inner self: “Yes, my child is growing inside me, I can see it on ultrasound, it is 5 weeks old, already 11-12 mm long. – My child feels happy inside me.”

Allow these feelings towards your child – the band of love should begin gently and tenderly. Wasn’t it love that brought it into existence? Isn’t there a shred of wanting to protect and defend inside you?

YOU ARE PART OF THE BIGGEST WONDERS OF THIS WORLD. YOU CAN TAKE PART, YOU CAN EXPERIENCE IT.

Actually there is only a short time in your life, when you can and may give birth. It is the most wonderful time in a woman’s life. Be aware of your beauty and your worth! You are something special! Just think about the joy it brings to accompany such a small being on it’s way into life – this little person, who chose you to be its mother. It’s a big responsibility and takes a lot of dedication, it will take all your effort and will not always be an easy task.

For many women pregnancy flies by far too fast, because it is a time in which solely the woman has and feels the little creature. *It is a wonderful time!* Women who give premature birth, have an immense feeling of grief for the remaining time of the pregnancy. Be glad that you can have a baby.

7.

THE DECISION

Be aware of the fact: You alone make the decision! In the end it's you who has to make the decision about the child. The decision has to be made in a very short time. With the morning-after pill this time has been shortened even more. With all the help and advice made available to you, it is still you who has to make the decision – no one can make it for you. No one else is allowed to make it for you, not even your partner has the right. You and your partner have talked long and often about this pregnancy, about your future, your plans. Even with a child you can realise your plans for a career. Perhaps with some delay, but what does that matter? The main thing is that you can live your life with a healthy body and mind. You and your partner are in a mental blockade at the moment, which seems almost unsurmountable. You have perhaps talked about your feelings, and about your state of mind. THE answer that you need to hear from him is not forthcoming :'' Somehow we will manage with the child!`` So your insecurity grows, your feelings are pulled in all directions.

Time has passed. In the end you lean more and more towards a termination. The little one is 8 weeks old and about 4 cms. long: Everything that makes up a grown person is there. You have missed two periods, time is passing, You have to DECIDE.

You have another appointment with your gynaecologist. After he has greeted you and asked ``How are you?``, your answer is ``Fine, but we are not ready for a child. We are still too young, we have so many plans.....``

The doctor can tell you want to say something else, but you are not the first to mention ``termination``. Your body language, your words say NO to the child. Therefore the doctor asks `` So it is not a planned child?`` You answer `` NO, it is far too soon, later we would like a child.``

At this moment you feel a termination is the only answer. You have buried your feelings. The doctor asks you if you have thought about it long enough, if you realise what it will mean for you in your future life. In this situation it is not what you want to hear, you don't want to see the helping hand reaching out in your direction. You just wait for him to agree and understand.

8.

You argue that you can decide what happens to your body. Are you really so sure, or is there still a shadow of doubt? The operation is irreversible for ever, you will have to live with it for the rest of your life. You would just like to get it over and done with as soon as possible, you want to have the referral for a termination in your hand. The doctor will explain that medically the termination is no problem, but enormous psychological problems could arise. Do some soul-searching, get some counselling. The doctor should be someone to rely on – he wants to be. Open up your heart, don't be stubborn, let your feelings, your insecurity out. You expect to be understood – which can only happen if you open up. The first port of call for counselling should be your gynaecologist, additionally, if you are still unsure, visit a psychologist – perhaps there is one in the hospital where the operation is to take place. If you have the feeling they don't completely understand you, go elsewhere. There are private practice midwives, who you can turn to. Every good midwife will be more than willing to talk to you, if you want to. You must do everything you need to do, it involves your future, your health, your life. The operation is no problem medically. If you are still not sure, jump off the operating table and say NO! Just think, there is still time later.

ASK YOURSELF RIGHT UP TO THE LAST SECOND, IF IT IS REALLY WHAT YOU WANT. YOU DECIDE AND ONLY YOU!

THE TIME AFTERWARDS

You come round after the anaesthetic and think, everything is over, I have got through it. What are your feelings: Contentment? Happiness? No, you just feel a big emptiness inside you. A great feeling of sadness. You consciously close your eyes quickly. Your thoughts circle round and round one point: I have done it. You feel lonely, everyone has abandoned you. After a few hours you go home, feeling tired, exhausted – from the anaesthetic, from the operation.

Your life goes on – but in the short time you were under the anaesthetic everything has changed. Your life has changed.

You have been given drops, which you have to take for a few days, so that your uterus contracts. THE womb, which was the little bed for your child, was perfectly equipped; that little being, it felt comfortable, it chose YOU as it's mother. A great feeling of sadness overcomes you. You don't feel too good, you feel down in the dumps, depressed. Your partner is kind to you, he says `` We have got it all over and done with, now we can go on as planned.`` On the other hand, you feel no happiness, no pleasure, the joy of life fades.

9.

You cannot talk about your sadness, not even with your partner. You bury yourself in work up to exhaustion.

Your sadness grows – guilty feelings and sleeplessness occur, your thoughts revolve around one point. You close up more and more, sinking deeper and deeper. You pretend to act as your partner expects you to. For a while you do a good job of covering everything up, until you are mentally at the end of your tether. The sexuality in your partnership suffers, you turn it down, you always find new excuses. You become more and more isolated, there is a huge crisis in the relationship to your partner, which could lead to the end of your relationship. You blame yourself, you blame your

partner. *You put the blame on everybody, because nobody told you how difficult it would be afterwards.* Your soul bleeds. Observers on the outside just think you have become a bit strange. Nobody else knows just what you have been going through. Your soul cries for help, but what do you do to attract attention? Crave for food? Alcohol? Try to commit suicide? Become addicted to tablets? Your depression is complete. I am not exaggerating, life can become so awful. You have taken this step, now it is up to you to take responsibility and it is YOUR duty to yourself that you seek competent help. Nobody will accuse you when you land in this crisis. You have to admit to YOURSELF, that you feel rotten. You need a great deal of strength and a strong will to get better again. It is a very difficult time.

The wounds to your soul will heal gradually, but scars will remain. Scars are painful to the touch. Your soul seems to be healthy on the outside. Life goes on, the scars to your soul remain. You try not to touch them, you learn to live with the scars. But there are the times when over and over again you have wistful thoughts and you will be reminded about this little human creature. You will spend a lifetime experiencing moments when you quietly suffer in silence.

A lifetime has many hours, many days, many weeks, many years.

Everything I have written here is taken from women whom I have cared for, and who have personally experienced such a difficult crisis. I have not given examples of personal cases on purpose, for me that would mean a breach of trust.

I also know women who decided against a termination. The child has given them such happiness and joy that their decision has been rewarded by having a fulfilled, happy, satisfied life and a healthy state of mind.

10.

Letter to Nadine

Nine months and six days after I lost YOU, my child, in the most

awful way. Now at long last YOU have a name.

Because we used contraception – a coil – you should never have happened to us. Our wish for children had been completed. – “ unless it happens”, was always my answer to such a question. I should have stuck to it! If I had spoken to my friend, Renate, I would have chosen the right way. She has known me for half my life and as I told her of my termination she said: “ Why didn’t you come to me sooner. That’s not like you!” That’s true, and I just don’t believe that was ME! NOBODY – except your father- fought for YOUR life. “ Let’s go on holiday” he said, because next year when YOU are with us it won’t be so easy. When I spoke of a termination he said “ What if anything happens to Patrick or Sandra?” My answer was: “ Nobody can take their place.” That is correct! I’m afraid I was too “ blind” and too withdrawn, to realise that nobody could take YOUR place.

If anybody had asked me if I could imagine a life without Patrick and Sandra, I would have given a clear NO as an answer. They are part and parcel of our life – YOU also! That is why life without YOU is so terribly difficult. For a long time I thought I had died with YOU, but I can stand so much more than YOU. For a long time I was not able to live. Nothing and nobody could give me happiness. My negative feelings enveloped everything, and I lost the will to live. I was weak because I couldn’t sleep properly. I knew exactly that I had reached my limit, and because of long, continuous, lack of sleep great strain was put on my heart. Before my heart gave way and I didn’t wake up one day – I couldn’t do that to Patrick and Sandra – a pretend car accident was the best “ solution” for everything, or so I thought.

11.

Nobody should know the real reason why! But everyone who later found out the real reason said they still loved me just the same; but it didn’t help me. I could no longer accept myself. I wanted to run away – but I’m afraid there is no running away from oneself !

Now I am happy to tell you: I like myself again and I am worthy to be on this earth! I am also thankful for my life, I treasure and respect it once again, because I know it is a great gift. It is clear, you have to help yourself, but without all the dear people who I know and who I got to know during my difficult time, I would never have the feeling of `` certain security`` that I have. Even when I don't have security in my life, I am thankful for everyone who supports me. Honestly, I can say to everyone:

I WILL ! And I look forward to each new day.

At one time I used to think `` What difference does it make if I live one week more or less``, now I can say : EVERY MINUTE longer that I live is priceless! Perhaps it had to happen to me, or it was meant to be, just so that I, through my experience could help towards better education of emotional problems, resulting from such situations. I know, very many women suffer, but only a few talk about it.

Now, as I am writing, Sandra enters the room and sees a small golden photo frame with a rose on top, she says `` That's new, but there's no photo in it.`` Unfortunately! – and there will never be one inside it – only in my thoughts..... because it is YOUR photo frame. But YOU have a name, which suits YOU:

NADINE

A friend once told me, *this Name means hope.*

The hope that there will never be another broken heart in this world!

Perhaps YOU really only needed those twelve weeks of life, but YOU also know, I would give everything – FOR YOU! Even though something positive has come out of all this horror ; for YOU, for me, and for our family I only wish it had been a different story.....