

1.

I called her Nadine

Small steps towards the process of healing

Problems which occur AFTER termination of a pregnancy

2.

Dear Readers,

We know what we have to do to cure a cold or the flu. Very few though know how to cure a broken heart or deal with psychological problems. There is a way to heal your deep wounds, a way back to life.

How to start the healing process :

Healing starts the moment you are able to talk about your feelings and what has happened. If you think nobody should know about your termination, please continue reading, because the healing process starts by talking, and opens the door to a new and worthwhile way of life.

Who has written these lines?

We are a group of women who have suffered greatly from the consequences of a termination. In accepting and talking openly about our termination and our lost child as being a part of our lives, we have stopped suppressing what has happened.

What talking can achieve:

Talking openly is healing for the person affected and explains a lot to those close to you. Other women can be warned, or a termination even prevented by talking about your painful experience.

You carry a huge amount of knowledge inside yourself, because of the pain you have gone through, which can be passed on. Just by talking to your family or friends you show just what the reality of this taboo subject looks like. It takes a lot of courage but you have got the courage inside you. You never know, you may even meet others who have been through the same fate. Very often people only open up when the other person starts a conversation on the subject.

Wishing you all the very best for your future and many valuable conversations.

Karin, Veronika and Birgitt

3.

EXPERIENCES OF A MIDWIFE

Susanne Schießer, private practice midwife

For many years this subject has been a passion of mine. My experiences of the consequences and decades of unsolved problems due to a termination have characterised my work with women. In the very intimate relationship between midwife and mother we get a direct knowledge of their backgrounds.

Many mothers only realise, consciously or unconsciously, the consequences and problems of a lost child during a following pregnancy or birth. Especially when “Goodbyes” have not been said to the child.

After some very striking experiences I have used my own initiative and been the first to bring up the subject with the mothers. Very often the fathers are not present, being unaware of the suppressed past. The next birth has to be gently prepared for with caring respect for each and every woman’s turn of fate.

4.

ONE CARRIES THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVERY CHILD

From the experiences of Mag. Christa Renoldner, psychotherapist

Usually one does not speak about the child after a termination. One does not talk to anyone about it. A child which has been aborted is still a dead child. Many of these children are not mourned, the parents do not come to terms with their grief. Many women who have been through a termination, and many men who have pushed their wives into a termination, suffer greatly from guilt. There are many women who never have a child after going through with a termination. I once had a patient who was in a crisis because of bad depression. In her youth she had had a termination and afterwards no children. She said “

If only I had not had the termination, I would at least have had one child.”

Not being able to grieve is very often the reason for depression. Sometimes it is not easy to find out that bad depression is caused by an earlier termination. Usually one searches for something that has happened recently or the circumstances surrounding one at the moment. Some women feel they are being punished if it takes them a long time to become pregnant, or have a child with health problems, for example a chronic illness, after going through with a termination. I always ask patients about their family tree. Children who died at birth and terminated children are included. In this way the children are real and can be mourned. Very often I suggest the patients go through a farewell ritual. They can go to a family grave and light a candle for example, or I place a small chair in my room which symbolises the terminated child.

5.

In this way the parents can say something to the child e.g. “ We saw no way out, we didn’t know what else to do, but we accept the consequences” or “ We took it too lightly, it wasn’t right, but now we feel you are important to us and we give you a place in our memories.”

When couples take responsibility for what has happened, and which cannot be undone, then they can carry on with an intact marriage.

They can then find peace and stop accusing one another, which is typical for quarrelling couples. Each should shoulder the responsibilities accordingly. This can mean couples divide equally or one takes more blame, for example if one partner talked the other into having a termination. When each accepts their part of responsibility, a deep sense of gravity ensues. One can then see how hurt the other one is. Then peace will reign.

Something new can now grow.

Apart from what one's thoughts are towards a termination, women always suffer more, than what one would think. This attitude of being ostracised, which is felt by the women who have a termination, is in my opinion arrogance. Only people who have never been in such a life threatening position can talk in such a way. If one doesn't give someone the chance to take responsibility for their actions, then it is as if you are perfect and stand high above everyone else.

Mag. Christa Renoldner lives and works in Mattighofen and Salzburg as a psychotherapist
(taken from: WELT DER FRAU 2/99)

6.

Memories return again and again.....

Karin Lampelmair

.....the memories of my termination.

Time and time again the memories returned before falling asleep! It was terrible, when the pictures of what had happened flashed through my mind. Repeatedly I thought “ Why? How could I have had a termination? It will never leave me.” In this way letting myself see the “film” I wouldn't let myself suppress what had happened.

Now, after almost three years, I know exactly how it was then, but I don't let it follow me any more! I know that letting the memories out has helped me to overcome and review my termination.

I would never have been able to take this path if it was not for the help of my psychotherapist and the patience of my friends, with whom I could talk to about everything.

It is of utmost importance to have a friend to talk to about everything.
Always and at any time! Someone who never says “ You've told me that so often, please think of something else. Don't keep looking back, start looking forward.”

I know, from my own experience, how helpless everyone close to you feels, when they want to help you in your pain.

It took me a long time to emerge from the endless tunnel of despair and helplessness. I am most thankful to everyone who had time for me, even though I thought, at the time, it was all wasted. Looking back I have to say: “ *Not one minute is wasted in which someone wants to help somebody!*”

7.

Don't be afraid of memories

Mag. Bernadette Rieder, theologian and Germanist

“Remembering doesn't mean staying in the past, but the basis for stepping into the future.”

Perhaps you find yourself in a situation of utter helplessness, mourning or emptiness. The relief you expected after the termination is missing. Time passes slowly, you lose the will to live.

When the here and now seem unbearable, it can sometimes help to look into the future: Have hope, take courage and trust, develop new visions, be active. Advice given by many in such a difficult situation. One must never forget to look back into the past. Memories can be painful, but also beneficial. Ignoring and forgetting are only short term solutions. *Forgiveness for the past can also be found in memories.*

What has been, can also be a part of the whole, so that it does not put pressure on our present and future life. It is something that we know, that we understand and we want to keep. Memories are exactly that. *Remembering means wanting to know.*

Remembering how something was, makes it possible to imagine how something can be (once again). This applies to the dark and the light chapters of our lives. When we remember, we must be honest with ourselves and, if possible, remember everything that made us what we are. This knowledge about our past helps us understand why everything is as it is.

Remembering means wanting to understand.

This doesn't happen from one day to the next. A memory can change – something can be remembered differently according to mood and

situation, apart from the fact that everybody remembers a certain situation differently. Memories are not static, but dynamic. Understanding memories is not a mathematical equation, but a process. Understanding increases a little bit more, differently, or better every time you remember something.

Remembering means wanting to protect.

Protecting memories is not a static step either. It is a warning, gives encouragement, hope, mourning, and happiness. The past is not in the past. Everything we have experienced and done or has happened to us remains a part of oneself. Keeping these experiences as a part of our memories give us the knowledge that we are somebody and not constantly always starting at the beginning.

8.

This can be put pressure on you: when traumatic or guilty experiences just will not disappear.

In this case actively remembering can be useful: face it, don't look away. Don't act as if nothing has happened, give it the importance due. Try to understand the connections, and find out which experience, which feeling, which picture in your mind is worth keeping. Finally: forgive yourself.

It is good to know exactly and fully what has been in the past. It is important to want to understand how everything came about so you can live your life at the moment. It is essential to keep a sound, and complete "I", and everything that includes.

9.

"There is hope !"

Karin Lampelmair

It is almost three years ago now that I had my termination. Immediately afterwards the unexpected, psychological problems began. I had spoken to no one, apart from my husband, about the reasons for my problems. Nobody should ever find out. *When I eventually broke down the wall of silence I was on the road to healing.* The reason why I started to write was: my termination is irrevocable – but other women should be made aware of possible consequences after a termination. At the same time I realised that writing helped me.

Everything that one can openly talk or write about, from the soul, is a huge help on the way to being healed.

I worked intensively together with my psychotherapist and so my child was given the name “Nadine”.

GIVE THE CHILD A NAME

Mag. Ingeborg Obereder, Psychotherapist

Pain and grief for the lost child can be overcome better when the “unreality” and namelessness is removed. Most women have a feeling about if the child they would have given birth to would have been a boy or a girl.

Please, give your child a NAME, so that the relationship to him is a real one. Through having a name the person becomes real and contact made. Saying farewell to the lost child, accepting there is no going back is thus made easier. Rituals, like giving the child a name or saying goodbye to the mourned child, are important.

10.

THERE ARE NEW PATHS

Mag. Veronika Hruska

After a termination your own fertility may seem to be a time bomb, waiting to go off in a further unwanted pregnancy. You are afraid of your fertility. It becomes an enemy to your life’s security, your relationships, your sexuality.

Most women have never learnt – not even in school - how to tell when their fertile and infertile days are. The first step is to allow this feeling to happen: I want to feel and accept myself as a complete person. How often have you said to yourself “ I don’t really like these mechanical or hormonal methods of birth control”, and how often have you put these feelings to one side ? Make yourself strong for what you feel!

The new path begins by being able to work at taking small steps:

° that you no longer have to be a victim, you have your own identity and you can set the limits

° that you are responsible for being a woman, your sexuality, your fertility, and your feelings

What does this really mean in relation to birth control? The way you deal with birth control mirrors the way you deal with yourself. Something inside you had to die when you had the termination. Therefore the first step is to take a look at how you deal with yourself and your fertility, so that YOU first of all, can cope with it.

In counselling, from the outside, before the termination you are given the supportive idea: the less you have to be involved with birth control the safer it is. For a woman who has just gone through a termination the most important thing for her is that she definitely never wants to have a termination again, and so she should know: no contraceptive can stop a pregnancy. When a woman has intercourse with a man on her fertile days, in spite of these precautions, it can lead, sooner or later, to an unexpected pregnancy. The anti baby pill, the copper coil, the hormone coil (Mirena), the three month injection, the implant, even sterilisation of the woman and / or man cannot totally prevent a pregnancy.

11.

“ Healing means touching with love , that that at first touched us with fear.”

Stephen Levine

The way is not easy when coping with sexuality on the fertile and infertile days. You need to be strong and you need support from your partner. This can be a long journey. Taking this step to get to know your body and listening to what it says brings you closer to your aim: you want to move away from a way of life, that can lead to death, towards responsibility and joy of living. Natural birth control is not something you can just “ try out”. It is a way that is hard and takes a lot of commitment. As does everything valuable in life. There are many courses available on the topic of natural birth control. The sympto-thermale method is a complete method, which is far more than just “ taking your temperature daily” , and can be used by women with

very irregular cycles, after a pregnancy, after a birth, during breast feeding as well as in the change of life. (Even good doctors don't know of this method and confuse it with the Knaus - Ogino calendar method.) More information can be obtained under 0043-(0)7672/23364 (Office of Dr. Rötzer) or on www.iner.org.

Learning just how your body works and what is happening to your body can help you with your own fertility. You understand the rhythm of your own personal fertile and infertile days. You know when you can give life to a new being, but also you know exactly the times when you are infertile. This knowledge helps you to inner peace of mind. Until a perfect common ground is found in your relationship, the arguments with your partner can be long lasting and cause problems. Do not be put off before you even try. There are many parts of life where consideration for ones partner has to be taken before achieving a common goal. Standing up for oneself and ones fertility, oneself and ones wishes in relation to sexuality and birth control is very important. Listen to your inner voice which tells you it is a practicable way. Do not listen to those who believe it is only about suppressing your sexuality. It is about your development as a person with body and soul.

“ And then came the day when it was more painful to remain a closed bud than to risk opening up into a blossom.”

Anais Nin