



HUMAN LIFE INTERNATIONAL'S

PRO-LIFE TALKING POINTS

Men & Abortion

1. Men suffer in the aftermath of abortion as well as women: Though not nearly as much research has been done on abortion's effects on men as on women, considerable evidence shows that abortion often negatively affects men's mental health and that a large proportion of men regret their partner's abortion later on. Sociologists Eileen Nelson and Priscilla Coleman reported in 1993 that 52% of men felt regret after their partner's abortion. A March 19, 1989 poll published in the *Los Angeles Times* found that two-thirds of men surveyed whose partners had had an abortion regretted the aborting of their children.

2. Pro-choice sociologist finds 1 in 20 who go to the clinic severely affected: In "Abortion Clinics and Waiting Room Men: Sociological Insights," a 2005 article posted on his pro-choice website MenAndAbortion.com, Arthur B. Shostak, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Drexel University and the first social scientist to publish a study on the effects of abortion on men, writes together with two co-authors, "While one would not know this from media and social science neglect, about 600,000 men (male partners in ill-timed and unwanted pregnancies) accompanied a client to her abortion appointment last year (about half of all abortion-seeking women generally have a man sitting by in the clinic or doctor's waiting room)." He told Adam Voiland of US-News.com in an interview posted Sep. 12, 2008, "I would say that 90% of men consider the day of an abortion to be one of the most stressful of their lives." He said that 4%-5% suffer serious emotional problems as a result of their partners' abortions, which is about 30,000 men a year. He has not studied the one-half of men who do not accompany their partners for their abortions and who may be much more distressed by abortion.

3. The proportion may be much higher: Shostak does

not have data on the possible long-term debilitating effects of post-abortive trauma. But he and his co-authors report, "Our attention as applied sociologists was quickly drawn to a finding first noted in 1983-4, namely, 4 out of 5 of the 1,000 males deemed the abortion experience one of the most difficult of their lives." Asked to describe their emotions at the time of the abortion, 24% chose "guilty."

"A guilt-ridden, tormented male does not easily love or accept love. His preoccupation with his partner, his denial of himself and his relentless feelings of post-abortion emptiness can nullify even the best of intentions."

— *Psychologist Dr. Vincent Rue*

4. Anecdotal evidence supports post-abortive trauma for men: A burgeoning "lost fatherhood" movement has become involved in pro-life activism, with post-abortive men carrying signs at the January 2009 March for Life proclaiming "I Regret Lost Fatherhood." The second "Reclaiming Fatherhood" conference was held in Chicago in September 2008. Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and the Archdiocese of Chicago, "Reclaiming Fatherhood" featured testimonies from men who have suffered deep emotional scars as a result of their partners' abortions. "[Bruce] Mulligan, a hospital administrator from Minnesota, decided, along with his wife, to abort an unplanned pregnancy 37 years ago and says he still grapples with the loss emotionally,"

reported Voiland on Sep. 9, 2008. “Men don’t like to admit they have a problem, but there are a lot of guys out there who are really hurting,’ he says.” Dr. Vincent Rue, a psychologist who has long experience with abortion’s effects on men, spoke at the “Reclaiming Fatherhood” conference. He wrote in an article called “The Effects of Abortion on Men,” “[M]en do grieve following abortion, but they are more likely to deny their grief or internalize their feelings of loss rather than openly express them.... A guilt-ridden, tormented male does not easily love or accept love. His preoccupation with his partner, his denial of himself and his relentless feelings of post-abortion emptiness can nullify even the best of intentions.”

5. Men undergo physiological changes during their partners’ pregnancies: The post-abortive trauma of many men may lie not only in psychological factors, but in physiological ones as men’s bodies prepare for the births of their children, births that never occur. In “The Making of a Modern Dad,” published in the March-April 2002 edition of *Psychology Today*, Douglas Carlton Abrams wrote, “[R]esearch shows that men go through significant hormonal changes alongside their pregnant partners, changes most likely initiated by their partner’s pregnancy and ones that even cause some men to experience pregnancy-like symptoms such as nausea and weight gain. It seems increasingly clear that just as nature prepares women to be committed moms, it prepares men to be devoted dads.... There may be actual physiological signals exchanged between partners in close contact, such as the transmission of pheromones.” Abrams said that two studies reported that about 90% of men develop one or more pregnancy-related symptoms when living with a pregnant partner. In the June 28, 2004 *Scientific American*, biology professor Katherine E. Wynne-Edwards says, “Hormone changes in expectant fathers therefore involve the same hormones that are changing in an expectant mother.”

6. Just like women, different men respond very differently to abortion: According to “Reclaiming Fatherhood,” men may experience “rage or anger,” “impotence,” “grave concern for their partner,” “inability to communicate with their partner about her experience and theirs,” “chemical use and abuse,” “risk-taking behaviors,” “grieving and sadness,” among other reactions. As in other areas of life, teens may be most vulnerable. For example, according to the *Yorkshire Post* in Britain, Feb. 24, 2009, “A teenager hanged himself weeks after discovering his ex-girlfriend had had an abortion. Leon Boulton was found hanging from a banister at his home in Westcott Street, Hull.... In a statement read to the court, [his girlfriend] said: ‘Leon said we should keep the baby but I wasn’t sure.’ Tests revealed it could be an ectopic pregnancy and she decided to have an abortion.”

7. Men and women are equally pro-life: The mainstream media often portray “abortion rights” as a men-vs.-women issue, with men supposedly trying to keep women down by denying them abortion. Yet polls consistently show that men and women favor and disfavor abortion in approximately equal proportions. Polls commissioned by pro-life groups usually show a slight majority of Americans to be pro-life, and often show that a slightly greater proportion of women are pro-life than men. But even the latest large poll commissioned by a pro-choice organization shows that the difference between men and women on the issue is statistically insignificant. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life reported in August 2008, “Men and women are about equally as likely to express support for abortion rights—53% of men and 54% of women say it should be legal.”

8. Resources for post-abortive men are now available: Resources for men, often ignored in the past, have increased exponentially in the past few years. For more information, visit www.FatherhoodForever.org and www.MenAndAbortion.info

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