

'IT WAS MY BABY TOO'

/lost fatherhood









What about the father whose baby is aborted? Does he suffer negative psychological effects?

Sociologist ARTHUR SHOSTAK says, 'Most of the men I talk to think about the abortion years after it is over. It's not accepted for them to talk about it... With the man, if he wants to shed a tear, he had better do it privately. If he feels that the abortion had denied him his child, he had better work it through himself. He does not share his pain... it just stays with him. And it stays for a long time.'

The truth is that men are often left devastated by abortion.

ARTHUR SHOSTAK

Some of the negative effects are:¹

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Grief and sadness: Men in our culture may have difficulty articulating a sense of sadness. But, after an abortion, men often find themselves sad and depressed.
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Masculinity: After abortion, a man can feel a sense of being unable to protect his partner or their offspring. This can be incapacitating, affect self-esteem and self-worth, and cause helplessness.
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Impotence: An abortion loss can interfere with sexual functioning and cause sexual impotence in men.
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Rage or anger: Rage and anger is often how post-abortive men lash out after the abortion loss. Anger may be internalized or targeted toward the mother of the child or other parties involved.
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Risk taking behaviors: Reckless or risky behaviour can increase following involvement with abortion.
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Suicidal ideation: Fathers who wanted the child and were against the abortion may experience suicidal ideation.
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Alcohol and Drug abuse: This is a common coping mechanism shared by many men. Some will seek assistance through a treatment program, while others continue excessive alcohol and drug use.
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Emotional abuse and/or spousal battering: This can be man to woman or woman to man. On a subconscious level, this is the scenario of anger and striking out, but it can also be consciously 'punishing' the partner for the choice of abortion. Some relationships may deteriorate completely and result in a divorce.

**THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR:
ABORTION CAN HAVE
DEVASTATING EFFECTS ON MEN**

THE REALITY

'THE SECRET I BURIED FOR 20 YEARS'

In front of 2,200 Baylor University students, I confessed a sin: 'Twenty years ago I came to this school to get an education, but what I got was a girl pregnant my first year here. Twenty years ago, I helped pay for my girlfriend's abortion. My immediate reaction to her news was it was an inconvenience that must be eliminated. I never stopped to think about what I was doing. I never considered that a real life was inside her that I had helped create. I simply thought the doctor was removing some unwanted tissue.

Post-abortion syndrome is typically associated with mothers of aborted children, but I'm one of the thousands of abortion fathers who have also gone through this ordeal. In my case, it resulted in 80 ulcers eating at my stomach, intestines, and colon. The pain was excruciating and made worse by the knowledge that it was a result of my secret sin. The guilt of my secret sin had destroyed my health. However, God restored it.

Shortly after speaking at Baylor, the woman I had gotten pregnant more than two decades earlier called me. She had heard about my talk. It was wonderful to hear that she, too, had experienced God's healing from that horrible act. She had only one suggestion: "The next time you tell the story be more honest about what really happened. You didn't just help pay for the abortion; you pressured me to get it." It was true. She never wanted to do it. She wanted to keep the baby. It was my forcefulness that finally led her to do what she didn't want to do.

I came face-to-face with who I really was – a coward who preyed upon someone else to make my own life easier. Studies show the most significant factor in a woman's decision to get an abortion is lack of support from the man to keep the child. As painful as it was hearing it, I was glad this friend from years ago had the courage to confront me.'²



JESUS, WHAT HAVE I DONE?

Lead singer of the band Aerosmith, Steven Tyler, wrote recently about the abortion of his child back in the 1970s and shared the details of the trauma experienced because of it. When Julia Holcomb and Tyler conceived a child, his longtime friend Ray Tabano convinced Tyler that abortion was the only solution. Tabano said, 'They had the abortion and it really messed Steven up because it was a boy. He saw the whole thing and it [messed] him up big time.' Tyler reflected on his abortion experience in his autobiography saying, 'It was a big crisis. It's a major thing when you're growing something with a woman, but they convinced us that it would never work out and would ruin our lives... You go to the doctor and they put the needle in her belly and they squeeze the stuff in and you watch. And it comes out dead. I was pretty devastated. In my mind, I'm going: "Jesus, what have I done?," said Tyler of the abortion. 'The real-life guilt was very traumatic for me. It still hurts.'³

STEVE TYLER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY,
WALK THIS WAY



STEVE ARTERBURN,
AUTHOR, RADIO
SHOW HOST

lifefacts/backup

1. Coyle, C. T., PhD. *Men and Abortion: A Path to Healing*. Lewiston, NY: Life Cycle Books, 1999
2. www.charismamag.com/index.php/entertainment/23747-stephen-arterburn-tackles-regret
3. *Walk This Way: The Autobiography of Aerosmith* [Paperback], ISBN-13: 978-0788199356, Diane Pub Co (April 1997)
4. Paterson, Judith. 'Whose Freedom of Choice? Sometimes it Takes Two to Untangle', *The Progressive*, 46(1):42-45, April 1982

According to psychiatrist Neil Bernstein, men frequently react by 'denial and distancing.' Those who can get in touch with their feelings, he says, 'experience abortion with the same range of emotions and ambivalences that women do, including compassion for the partner, guilt about destroying life and disappointment at having made a mistake.'

JUDITH PATERSON
**WHOSE FREEDOM OF CHOICE?
SOMETIMES IT TAKES TWO TO UNTANGLE⁴**