



Secret Heartaches

By Trudy M. Johnson, M.A., L.M.F.T.

Ask any parent what their worst imaginable fear would be and they would probably answer, “to lose one of my children to death.” Now, imagine losing a child to death and never crying about it. Worse yet, imagine choosing to not have that child because of tough circumstances you are in at the time. This is the situation for over 50 million parents in our nation who’ve chose abortion as a solution to an unplanned pregnancy.

The idea of grief over an abortion choice is a foreign concept in our culture. The legality of abortion implies that the choice *in and of itself* is the closure. This is actually not the case for many women. According to some studies, yes, the relief does come, but as time moves along the impact of the choice can hit. The emotional fallout can be delayed. When it comes our culture provides no venue for processing the grief over losing a pregnancy because of choice decisions.

As a professional therapist, I am seeing time frames for allowing the grief to come to the surface is something like 17-25 years after the fact. Watching subsequent children grow up, graduate, get married and/or have children of their own are often reminders of the choice so long ago. These events can become triggers that start a grieving process.

Facing grief that hasn’t been acknowledged for decades can be a challenge. Pretending and pushing back the feelings can become an overwhelming project. It is definitely easier to stay in denial as a place of protection. Eventually, the walls can come down though when the pain becomes too great to ignore.

For this reason, it is important for a woman needing to grieve her choice decision to have a safe, validating atmosphere. Well meaning persons can often make the process worse by assuring them the right choice was made for them at the time.

The pain of choice decisions, no matter what the reason, is a situation that many in our society are forced to manage alone and in the dark hours of the night. For this reason, I hope my work as a professional therapist and writer can be a valuable life-line to women faced with the secret heart ache of grieving the loss of a choice decision.

In this light, I’ve written “C.P.R.~Choice Processing and Resolution” to be a “first aid kit” to those needing to grieve a pregnancy loss through a voluntary termination of a pregnancy. (“vpt”). The book speaks to all cultures and faiths with no condemnation, only hope. Go to www.missingpieces.org for more information.