



By Jennifer Ferrero

As a young exchange student overseas, *Jane* found out she was pregnant. Although she and her boyfriend were in a committed relationship, she was in school and had career plans and felt that it would be difficult to share with anyone, other than her boyfriend, that she was pregnant.

So one day without telling anyone, including her boyfriend, Jane went to a foreign hospital to have an abortion. She was alone, and she didn't tell anyone what had happened. Her boyfriend thought she had miscarried the baby.

Abortion happens for many reasons. For every type of woman and situation, there may be a different reason for ending the pregnancy. There can be reasons that maybe at the time seem like the right choice, or the only choice.

However, one thing is for sure, the after effects of abortion can provide challenges for many years to come for both the men and women involved. Feel-

ings of loss, guilt, isolation, and even unworthiness can dominate a person's life for years after the fact.

In fact, it is typical for a woman to go for 7-12 years before deciding to seek therapy or support post-abortion.

That is exactly what happened to Jane. While attending an event last spring, the keynote speaker shared that she herself had had an abortion many years before. Jane was touched by her story and felt that it was a

message from God for her to do something about the pain and hurt she had been experiencing for the past 13 years.

Many women move forward with their lives - some get married, move on with careers, and have other children. But, according to Sheri Olsen with Path of Life Ministry, a division of Life Services, "The after affects can be quite diverse. In fact, the feeling of having made the wrong decision with the abortion can affect decision-making processes for years. Even

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Do you struggle to turn off the feelings connected to your abortion(s), perhaps telling yourself over and over again to just forget it?

Are you affected by physical reminders of your abortion such as babies or pregnant? Are you uncomfortable around children?

Are there certain times of year you find yourself depressed, sick or accident prone such as the anniversary date of the abortion or the month of the would-be birth?

Are you in a situation where you could find yourself faced with another unplanned pregnancy?

Have you experienced a substantial increase in drug or alcohol use or self-destructive behavior such as eating disorders or abusive relationships?

Have you experienced periods of prolonged depression or suicidal thoughts since your abortion?

Have you experienced reactions like nightmares, flashbacks, or hallucinations (hearing a baby cry) relating to your experience?

Are you able to talk about abortion? When choosing to share about your abortions(s), are you overcome with strong feelings?

If you don't have children, do you fear you will never be able to have them?

Do you look at your life in terms of "before" and "after" the abortion(s)?



making a decision about what color to get when buying a new car can be held up by worry over making the wrong choice.”

It's a fact that abortion on planet Earth is a staggering and prominent act. Over 43% of women of childbearing age, or up to age 45, have had an abortion at some point in their lives. For many women, it is traumatic and challenging, but might be something that isn't dealt with for years. The average age of women who attend a support group is 35-40 years old.

Just like Jane, you may be one of those millions, but your situation is unique to you. It is important that you know that there is help available.

In Spokane, Washington, there is an organization called Path of Life Ministry, and is a part of Life Services. It differs from one-on-one therapy or counseling in the sense that Post Abortion Syndrome (PAS), a form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, is not always recognized by therapists in practice. Also, the group healing element has been proven to be effective in relational healing for those that are post abortive.

After her first Path of Life meeting, Jane was so moved that she went home and sat down with her husband of 5 years to tell him about the abortion. "I felt so proud of his reaction and I knew that I had his utmost support. He was amazing from that moment on in supporting my attendance."

Jane said that she felt completely "trusting of the confidentiality" of the group, but there was one dynamic that totally surprised her. She thought she would find the group to be comprised of all young, non-Christian women. But instead she found it to be almost all Chris-

tian women of her own age group or older.

Why a Support Group?

The purpose of a Support Group is to assist women and men in moving beyond abortion to healing.

What if abortion isn't dealt with?

Not dealing with an abortion may lead to



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a variety of feelings that can inhibit future life and dealings with others, such as not moving forward with life, regret, inability to make decisions, anger at family members or people who influenced the decision, feeling unworthy, and isolation.

Is the Support Group confidential?

Yes, it is 100% confidential. The group meets for 8 weeks at a location only disclosed to the participants. If there is any chance that two people may know each other within a group and the organizers are aware of this, they will try to notify the parties that there may be someone in the group that they know.

Why is it called Path of Life?

It is a term from the Bible, Psalm 16:11 "You have made known to me the path of

life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

Is the group spiritual?

Yes, the group is based upon Christian principles and is a Bible study along with a workbook developed by volunteers and staff within Path of Life Ministry. The developers of this curriculum have a goal to empower healing to bring people back to the "path of life" in fully living without regret and sadness.

What is the timeframe?

The group meets for 8 weeks at a variety of locations around Spokane, WA. They have gone as far north as Chewelah; west to Cheney; east to Liberty Lake and Post Falls. The group meets at an undisclosed location that will be shared once the person has decided to attend the group. There are women-only groups available as well as co-ed groups.

For Jane the process was healing, deep connections were made, and she was glad to have the weight lifted off her shoulders. She came away from her Path of Life Post-Abortion Support Group experience knowing that she was not alone, and "that God had completely forgiven me and taken my pain and turned it into something good... From ashes to roses."

To contact Path of Life call their confidential voicemail to leave your first name and a number where you can be reached - 509-444-9035.

Or you can email: path@lifeservices.org. For more information about Life Services visit: www.lifeservices.org.

