

Acknowledge

Regardless of how a person feels after an abortion or pregnancy loss, acknowledging loss is part of the grieving process and ultimately helps incorporate loss into one's life. Some examples of related losses include: loss of the pregnancy itself, loss of pregnancy hormones, loss of relationship(s), loss of trust in one's own body, loss of confidence in a method of birth control, and more depending on one's experience.

Acknowledging your loss can be done through ritual to aid in achieving closure.

Moving Forward

Incorporating or utilizing a ritual may assist in your journey through your feelings, emotions, and thoughts. A ritual does not need to be long or repeated; it can be brief and simple. What feels right for you is the most important thing when using a ritual.

References

Lenhardt, A. M. (1997). Grieving Disenfranchised Losses: Background and Strategies for Counselors. *The Journal of Humanistic Education and Development*, 35(4), 208-216.

Trybulski, J. (2008). Making sense: Women's abortion experiences. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 16(9), 576-582. doi:10.12968/bjom.2008.16.9.3088

Resources

Exhale Talk & Text Line
exhaleprovoice.org

The Healing Choice: Your Guide to Emotional Recovery After an Abortion
by Candace De Puy & Dana Dovitch

Shout Your Abortion by Emily Nokes & Amelia Bonow

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
rcrc.org



Coping After a Loss

**Acknowledging loss after
an abortion and/or pregnancy loss
& using rituals to help in your journey**

Pregnancy and abortion take their meaning from the person "in whose body the pregnancy is unfolding."

(Trybulski, 2008, p. 581)

Abortion

Abortion is a personal choice, and everyone experiences an accompanying range of emotions before and after the procedure. Relief, guilt, shame, sadness, happiness, and more are all common and can be experienced at the same time. Regardless of how a person may feel about their decision, there is loss involved. This experience is different for everyone, but it is important to note that it can bring up past losses, other impactful life events, and neglected mental health concerns.

Approximately 46 million abortions are performed each year.

(Trybulski, 2008, p. 576)



Grief & Loss

Lenhardt (1997) writes that "[w]here there is loss, there must be an accompanying grieving process for healthy adaptation and recovery" (p. 208). This can often be difficult in terms of abortion and/or pregnancy loss because of the associated stigma and silence surrounding this issue. Conflicting emotions may coexist, and people are allowed to grieve regardless of the reasons for and how they ultimately feel about their situation.

Ritual

WHAT IS RITUAL?

Ritual is a symbolic expression of thoughts and feelings. Common rituals include ceremonies, celebrations, and/or rituals incorporated into routines (like a 'morning ritual').

ROLE OF RITUAL

Ritual can be powerful in helping with meaning making and the resolution of grief. It can help a person incorporate loss into their life in order to move forward.

CREATING A RITUAL

The important part about creating a ritual is that it helps in achieving the closure a person needs. The chosen ritual can be as simple or as complex as the person desires, can be completely unique to them or something commonly performed, and can be sentimental or simply practical. It is okay to brainstorm with a support or browse for ideas online. A few examples of ritual could include:

- Receiving a follow-up call or ultrasound photo
- Prayer, meditation, smoke cleansing
- Journalling or letter-writing
- Lighting a candle or listening to a song