



Five Considerations for Telling a Survivor About Their Survival

We're often asked, and importantly so, how, when, and even why a survivor should be told about their survival. Know that you aren't alone in navigating these questions of when and how to talk to a survivor about their survival experience.

Although every survivor and survival circumstances are unique, we've found there are some considerations for you to reflect upon as you navigate this journey.

- 1. In survivors' experiences, as painful as learning about our survivals are, it is far better to know the truth than have it be kept a secret.**

For some survivors, intellectual disabilities or significant emotional or mental health issues can prevent them fully understanding, so in that instance, you, as a family member or a supportive person in their life, will know if they are simply unable to understand and process such information. Use your discretion.

Most survivors share that the truth really helps them to "connect the dots" about what they think and feel and even what they've experienced with members of their family or in relationships with others. It's a journey, to ultimately live with the truth of their life, but it really does just "make sense" for most of us.

- 2. You know the survivor best to know when they're ready to emotionally handle the information.**

There are a handful of survivors who know their story from a very young age, but most are told in their teens or as they become an adult. We've experienced that waiting too long has its own ramifications. When survivors find out on accident, when they decide to start searching for their biological family, through other people or through records, it causes trauma and impacts their relationship with their parents or caregivers.

It's prudent to establish a relationship with a therapist to address relationship or mental health issues prior to telling a survivor their story, not only because unresolved issues can intensify when a survivor learns their story, but also because the therapist has the potential to be a great support/transition to how and when the survivor is told their story.

3. Most survivors have lots of questions, so try to write down everything you know long before the conversation takes place and gather up any documentation that you have.

Records are hard to come by. Most survivors don't have medical records that disclose the abortion attempt. We do work with survivors and families to try and obtain them, so please contact us if you need assistance.

Some adoptive families are provided information in the adoption file about a failed abortion. If it's simply stated to you and not included in the adoption record, we encourage you to write out everything you were told and who you remember having said it, even the date, if you can remember.

If you do have records in your possession, we encourage you to keep a copy for the survivor to someday have in their possession if they're interested in them, and don't destroy the documentation. We know it's hard to share the details of our survival stories, but they are a part of who we are, and there can be lingering and longing questions when documentation is destroyed or even simply inaccessible.

4. Create a safe space for the survivor.

Let the survivor know it's okay to feel whatever they are feeling.

Their feelings are going to change from day to day. They shouldn't be made to feel guilty for being angry or sad; they shouldn't be told they have nothing to feel ashamed about. That is their feeling that day. You can supportively remind them they are loved, that it wasn't their fault, that there is nothing wrong with them that led to them being aborted unsuccessfully, that they are infinitely loved and there is a purpose in their life. But...they may not believe that or accept those words for a period of time.

Our culture that has been so radically impacted by abortion, articulates a message about abortion that survivors face every day: abortion is a choice, a right, failed abortions don't happen, survivors are a myth. Be conscious of the messages the survivor is receiving in our world and be willing to talk about it with them to let them know our culture doesn't yet recognize the truth about survivors and failed abortions. They are more than a choice. Every human being is.

Create a safe place for the survivor to have conversations with you about these messages they see and hear reflected in our culture, from their friends, even their teachers. As the survivor heals and grows, support them if they choose to educate others on the truth about their life, and respect them if they choose to keep silent about it.

5. Let the survivor know they aren't alone.

Let them know that there are hundreds, if not thousands or even tens of thousands of survivors out in the world. We don't have a clear idea of the number because it historically

hasn't been documented. As of May 2020, we've connected with 325 survivors through our organization, alone.

Share our website: www.abortionsurvivors.org. Look through stories on our website, our messages on social media (maybe even collect some before you share with them so you feel like you have a strong foundation to draw from, yourself). Watch survivor videos on our YouTube channel.

We're always here for when a survivor or family member learns they aren't alone in their experience.



The Abortion Survivors Network is an affiliate of Pro-Love Ministries.



Five Things To Know About Survivors

There's so much to know about survivors! We're miracles, although we may not always feel that way and the world may not see us that way. Every survivor is unique and every set of survival circumstances are different, but whether the abortion was legal or illegal, an attempt to self-induce an abortion at home or a chemical or surgical abortion, survivors have many common characteristics and experiences.

- 1. Most survivors have issues with trust, healthy relationships and boundaries---either we build up a wall or we let everyone in, attempting to be loved. We deeply fear being rejected. Even when we've been deeply loved in our lives.**

We often act out in these ways before we even know the story of our survival, and finding out our survival story can exacerbate this. Learning their story will, over time and with support, help the survivor understand where these issues come from and help them learn to work through them.

Working through these issues is painful, and can take years to heal from. Even after significant healing, these issues can resurface. This doesn't mean the survivor hasn't healed, it simply means they need to be aware that after healing has occurred, they need to continue to be aware of their own triggers and how they will manage them.

Point number two is closely connected to this.

- 2. Survivors report significant levels of anxiety. It tends to be two-fold. Survivors have the physiological carrying of stress (as a result of being subjected to that stress in utero) that manifests as anxiety, as well as anxiety, also.**

Bouts of depression, the effects of trauma on the brain and body that lead to issues with concentration and focus, which look similar to ADHD, executive functioning issues which also include issues like managing tasks, are also commonly reported.

The body bears memory of stress and trauma, including that which we experience in utero. Doctors have shared that the amount of pain survivors experience in abortion procedures keep the body in a heightened state of stress and vigilance all the time. Many survivors even identify "my body just never turns off."

It's beneficial for survivors to learn about the physiological basis for their stress and what feels in their body like anxiety. As they address emotional pain, many survivors experience an improvement in their anxiety. However, for some survivors, there is anxiety on top of their physiological stress/anxiety that will continue to need management.

Likewise, it's helpful for survivors to understand the source of the depression they struggle with, both physiologically and psychologically. Many survivors have been asked by therapists why they "can't just be happy," since they're alive. There are many reasons why it's a struggle for many to "just be happy."

Survivors can benefit from understanding how trauma affects their brain, and therefore, their executive functioning. Support in finding ways to manage time, multiple tasks, deadlines, etc. is helpful for many survivors.

We have a number of therapists across the U.S. who have voiced their knowledge about and interest in working with survivors. Please contact us to inquire about whether we have a therapist in your area on our referral list.

3. Most of the survivors in our Network don't "look" like what most people think survivors look like. Yes, some survivors are missing a limb, some have disfigurement, but to the naked eye, most people would never guess the stories our bodies carry. This can be both a blessing and a curse.

Survivors struggle with both survivor's guilt, and even guilt over not having significant health issues when other survivors they know do have them.

Survivors with health issues understandably struggle with the question of why they have complications and other survivors don't. It's common for survivors with complications to question whether that's why they were subjected to the abortion attempt in the first place. In those instances, it's important, yet difficult, to have the conversation about where the health issues or missing limbs, disfigurement came from. Very rarely have we found a survivor was targeted for abortion due to a disability. More often than not, we've found that the disability was caused by the abortion attempt. This brings some peace over time to survivors, yet brings up more feelings of anger and resentment, as the disability was preventable.

Even with years of healing and lots of self-care, many survivors are diagnosed with chronic fatigue and chronic pain syndromes, and struggle with immunodeficiency issues. In our Network, we've found recurrent shingles to be a common issue among us.

We consult with pro-life doctors, including former abortionists, on cases of survivors, to ensure the best medical care is provided to survivors. If you need assistance in receiving a consultation with a doctor, please let us know.

4. Survivors often feel very alone in this experience, and often believe they must be the only one who has survived.

Our culture, that frequently states that abortions don't fail and survivors are a myth, perpetuates the problem for survivors. If this is what survivors see and hear in the media, on social media, it's no wonder that it feels like a lonely, isolated experience.

Survivors often report that they find The Abortion Survivors Network by finally Googling "abortion survivor," and they're stunned to learn that there are others who have survived and can relate to their experience.

It's important to share with survivors that they aren't alone and point them to not only our website, www.abortionsurvivors.org, but also lead them to our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts as @theabortionsurvivorsnetwork (Twitter is simply @theabortionsurvivors).

5. Most survivors keep their survival story private.

Our predominant culture that has been deeply impacted by abortion often begs the question of “where are all these survivors?”

Just because a survivor keeps their story private, doesn't mean that they don't exist or that failed abortions don't occur.

Survivors keep their stories private for many of the same reasons why people don't openly talk about other traumatic experiences like rape, childhood abuse, etc. It's painful and it's personal.

Some survivors keep their story private out of protection for their family; some survivors keep their story a secret because of how others have treated them when they shared it. Some survivors have multiple experiences when it comes to abortion; not only have they survived an abortion, but they've had one, or as a father, they lost a child to abortion. Still other survivors have worked in the abortion industry. All of the circumstances are personal and difficult to talk about publicly.

Yes, some survivors both heal and feel called to share their stories publicly, but far more survivors will never share their story publicly. The Abortion Survivors Network supports survivors in their personal decisions about this. We never share stories without survivor permission nor do we force survivors to share their story.

As an organization, we advocate for survivors to be supported prior to, during, and after they share their story publicly. Some survivors who once told their stories publicly enter into private life after a period of time. We respect that and advocate for others to do likewise. The need for privacy and the need for support is significant.

If your family or organization needs assistance in how to support a survivor, please contact us.



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