

# Post-abortion stress syndrome

**Typical post-traumatic reaction.**

**Usually includes conflicting feelings between natural maternal instincts and the reality of an abortion**

**Difficulties in normal grieving process as the acknowledgement of a loss raises up questions of right and wrong**

**Often raises a need to develop coping mechanisms to control painful feelings**

**Reactions are different for every woman. They can rise after years, even decades from the abortion**

## Women who will most likely suffer from post-abortion stress syndrome:

**Women, who have strong maternal instincts, have other children or work with children.**

**Women, who have been pressured by others into having an abortion.**

**Women, who have already gone through one or several abortions.**

**Women who battle with their decision for a long time.**

**Women who have mental health problems.**

**Women who have strong moral values or Christian background.**

**Women, whose abortion is kept as a secret.**

**Women, whose abortion was done because of health issues.**

**Women, whose abortion was done on later weeks.**

**Women, who have dysfunctional relationship with their own mother.**

## Defense and coping mechanisms:

**Denial:** Denial is at the core of post abortion depression. It means that woman can't accept what has happened. It takes a lot of energy to maintain denial and prevent collapse.

**Rationalizing:** Issue is explained only rationally. It is not really faced, only explained

**Avoidance:** Woman avoids situations and things that bring up the painful experience; pregnant women, babies, movies etc.

**Suppression:** Woman does not face her feelings, but tries to avoid them the best she can.

**Substitution:** Woman tries to make up what she has done for example by doing a lot of charity work or being a "supermom"

**Reacting:** for example aggressive pro-life or pro-choice work

**Rejection:** Abortion is totally rejected from conscious mind. Woman acts as if it never happened.

**Projection:** Woman projects her feelings in to others. Woman can for example hate and blame others and see herself only as a victim.

#### Defense mechanisms can be broken down by:

- **Another pregnancy**
- **Another loss or traumatic event**
- **TV program or an article in a magazine**
- **Knowledge of post-abortion stress disorder**
- **Spiritual conversion**
- **Another incident that raises up strong feelings**

#### Symptoms:

- **Depression**
- **Indecisiveness**
- **Sleep disorders**
- **Flashbacks**
- **Self-punishment, self-destructiveness**
- **Feelings of loss without the knowledge of reason**
- **Painful thoughts and feelings on specific dates**
- **Guilt over being alive when the child is not.**

#### Changes in behavior:

- **Avoiding babies, children and pregnant women**
- **Problems in relationships,**
- **Promiscuous relationships, abuse in relationships**
- **Sexual coldness, avoidance of intimacy**
- **Physical anxiety/tensioning when the issue of abortion is raised up in speech or memories.**
- **Avoidance of movies, magazines and pictures that feature unborn babies**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Strong need of having another child very quickly**
- **Panic attacks**

#### **Speaking helps**

**Abortion always leaves a mark. It is important to talk about what has happened and express your feelings. This reduces the risk of depression.**