Will an abortion ruin our relationship? [1]

Alice,

Recently my girlfriend and I purchased a home pregnancy test and it came out positive. Four days later, we were sitting in a clinic awaiting her name to be called for an abortion. My girlfriend wouldn’t hear of any idea but going through the process as quickly as possible.

Throughout the entire experience I tried to be as supportive as possible, taking as much care of her and giving her as much love as I could, and in the meantime suppressing as much of the stress I was under as I could; she has even told me that I was 'perfect' throughout the whole thing. The period following the procedure, though, has been a roller coaster ride: she was subject to mood swings, going from a state of total bliss in my company to practically despising my existence.

She told me she wants time away from me. She is convinced that an experience like this (an abortion) irrevocably changes a relationship. She is pro-choice, but this abortion has affected her more than she expected; she cannot shake the feeling that she killed our child? she has even dreamed about the would-be baby...

Now, I understand that an abortion can bring a person to her emotional knees, regardless of how she might have thought about it previously. But here I am witnessing her shutting me completely out... and I ask myself, is this how it has to be? I love her very, very much ? she absolutely means the world to me. She has repeatedly let me know she feels the same about me. How do people deal with this crisis? Is this common? What are the resources available for CU students, post-abortion? How do I convince her that this doesn't have to be the undoing of our relationship, or am I wrong in believing this fate can be avoided?

?Pining for the most precious person I've ever known

Answer

Dear Pining for the most precious person I've ever known,

Whether you are a partner, friend, or family member of someone having an abortion, going through the process can present many emotional hurdles. It seems that your girlfriend is working through many complicated and even conflicting emotions? sadness, happiness, anger, relief, confusion, even regret. Given that she made the decision to have an abortion quickly, she may just now be processing all of her feelings. Her telling you that she needs space may be one way that she is coping with the aftermath of her decision.
It sounds as if you have made a great effort to be supportive. Have you expressed to her your own feelings about the abortion, whatever they may be? The best thing you can do now is to reassure your girlfriend that you're there for her, whenever she's ready. You're not going to abandon her, although you're willing to give her the space she needs. You may want to let her know you're sorry that she's the one going through all this physically, and check in with her often to see how she's feeling. When she's ready to work things through, she can call you, and you can both sit down and try to negotiate what happened and what will happen next.

You may have many feelings related to the pregnancy and abortion, and your feelings may be different from hers. It is normal for significant others to feel a whole range of emotions — including love, care, relief, anxiety, a sense of failure, loss of control, guilt, fear, and/or anger. You may experience several of these feelings, and they might differ from what you'd expected. Your feelings may also change over time. Often, a neutral opinion and a listening ear can help you to sort through your problems. You may want to seek out a professional counselor to talk about your feelings. Also, both of you can speak confidentially with a counselor at Exhale [2].

It may seem that there are problems in your relationship that are only being addressed now that the abortion has taken place. It is common for couples going through an abortion to experience stress on their relationship. It can help to take a step back and consider your communication skills. Be patient, and take the time to talk to each other. If both of you agree to support each other, the relationship can get better. Even if you have agreed to break up, caring for each other now will make you both cope better with this unexpected situation. You will feel better knowing that you did your best at a difficult time.

Lastly, try not to be hard on yourself — this is quite a challenge. You're doing a great job. Your support during this time is the best gift you can give yourself and her. Time, self-reflection, and communication will ultimately help you, and your girlfriend, come to a resolution.

Alice!
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Blues & Depression [4]
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Relating & Communicating [7]

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Is it too late to take emergency contraception? [13]

Resources
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [14]
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [15]
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