

Recommendations for preabortion care

Factors affecting postabortion emotional outcome and coping

Negative emotional sequelae

Although the predominant emotional response to induced abortion is relief for the vast majority of women, negative reactions can include extreme grief, guilt, shame, anger, regret, increased symptoms of emotional disorders the patient has or has had in the past, and inability to cope [7,19]. Research has identified a number of psychosocial predictors for negative emotional sequelae [5]. Providers are wise to use the list of risk factors to assess the level of care a patient may need preabortion ([Table 5.4](#)). Patients with risk factors may require more time to reconsider options or make a plan for coping strategies.

Table 5.4 Risk Factors for Negative Emotional Sequelae

Appraisal of abortion as extremely stressful before it occurs
Experiencing social stigma and antiabortion demonstrators on the day of the abortion
An existing emotional disorder or mental illness prior to the abortion
Significant ambivalence about the decision
Perceived coercion to have the abortion
Intense guilt and shame before the abortion
Belief that abortion is the same act as killing a newborn infant
Lack of emotional support and receiving criticism from significant people in their lives
Fetal abnormality or other medical indications for the abortion
Commitment and attachment to the pregnancy
Advanced stage of pregnancy
Putting great effort into keeping the abortion a secret for fear of stigma
Usual coping style is denial and repressing thoughts
Unresolved past losses and perception of abortion as a loss
Past or present sexual, physical, or emotional abuse
Preexisting experience of trauma
Expecting depression, severe grief or guilt, and regret after the abortion
Disbelief in their ability to do what it takes to produce a positive outcome