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Abortion Trauma and Child Abuse

By Theresa Karminski Burke and David C. Reardon

Experts agree that during the past 25 years the rate of child abuse has increased dramatically. Between 1976 and 1987 alone, there was a 330% increase in reported cases of child abuse. While a portion of this increase is due to better reporting, experts agree that these figures reflect a real trend toward ever higher rates of abuse.

These figures clearly contradict the pro-abortionists' claim that abortion of "unwanted children" prevents child abuse. Ignoring the obvious illogic of this argument – which suggests that killing children is better than beating them – there is not a single scientific study that supports this theory. Instead, there is a clear statistical association between increased rates of abortion and increased rates of child abuse. Indeed, statistical and clinical research support not only an association, but a causal connection between abortion and subsequent child abuse.¹

These academic studies, like all research, can be criticized as insufficient to prove that abortion causes child abuse. But these conclusions are also supported by the personal testimonies of men and women who have reported a direct correlation between their unresolved post-abortion feelings and subsequent patterns of emotional or physical abuse of their living children.

For example, one woman described feelings of intense rage whenever her newborn baby cried: "I did not understand why her crying would make me so angry. She was the most beautiful baby, and had such a placid personality. What I didn't realize then was that I hated my daughter for being able to do all these things that my lost [aborted] baby would never be able to do."²

The reasons for child abuse are complex, and can't be fully dealt with here. But clearly, if abortion contributes to feelings of depression, self-hatred, anxiety and anger among mothers and fathers, not to mention patterns of substance abuse, their children will pay a price.

Fatal Abuse

In some instances, abortion can lead to complete emotional breakdowns with tragic results. For example, Renee Nicely of New Jersey experienced a “psychotic episode” the day after her abortion which resulted in the beating death of her three-year-old son, Shawn. She told the court psychiatrist that she “knew that abortion was wrong” and “I should be punished for the abortion.” The psychiatrist who was the prosecution’s expert witness testified that the killing was clearly related to Renee’s psychological reaction to her abortion. Unfortunately, the victim of her rage and self-hatred was her own son.³

A similar tragedy occurred just one week after Donna Fleming’s second abortion. Depressed and distraught, Donna “heard voices” in her head and tried to kill herself and her two sons by jumping off a bridge in Long Beach, California. Donna and her five-year-old son were rescued: her two-year-old son died. Subsequently, Donna claimed she tried to kill herself and her other children in order to reunite her family.⁴

There is no reason to believe that these are isolated cases. Indeed, in the years to come it may be shown that post-abortion trauma was a major cause in the dramatic rise of child abuse cases in the last two decades.

Psychiatrist Philip Ney, M.D., a clinical professor at the University of British Columbia, has done by far the most research into understanding the link between abortion and subsequent child abuse. Most of his analysis, and that of others examining the issue, has focused on the role of abortion in disrupting the bond with later children; weakening of maternal instinct; reduced inhibitions against violence, particularly toward children; and heightened levels of anger, rage, and depression. It is probably that all these factors have contributed toward increased levels of child abuse following legalized abortion.

In this article, we will attempt to expand on the work of Dr. Ney and others by examining in greater detail compulsive behaviors and intrusive thoughts related to child abuse that can serve as a *traumatic reenactment* of abortion.

Why Reenact Trauma?

Traumatic experiences are by definition overwhelming experiences that are simply “too much” for a person to handle or understand. The ordinary response to a trauma is to banish the experience from one’s mind – to run away from it, hide it, or repress it. On one level, trauma victims simply want to forget and put their horrible experience behind them forever.

In conflict with this avoidance reaction, however, is the equally powerful human need to understand our experiences and find meaning in them. Thus, while a person may consciously choose to avoid thinking about the traumatic experience, their subconscious insists on calling attention to the trauma. Their subconscious knows that an unresolved trauma is unfinished business. In order to be conquered, the horror of their traumatic event must be exposed, proclaimed, and understood.

This tension between the need to hide a trauma and the need to expose it is at the heart of many of the psychological symptoms of post-abortion trauma. *Symbolic reenactment* is one of the ways that the subconscious seeks to simultaneously satisfy both of these needs: the need to expose trauma and the need to hide it. Reenactment allows the person to expose the trauma with the hope that its exposure will eventually lead to understanding and mastery over the trauma. At the same time, because the trauma is reenacted behind a *symbolic* mask, the essence of the trauma is still concealed and protected. In other words, reenactment allows the person to call for help while disguising the areas that need help.

As trauma specialist Judith Lewis Herman, M.D., has observed, symbolic reenactment of a trauma serves to “simultaneously call attention to the exist



Rachel's Vineyard Ministries
808 N. Henderson Rd.
King of Prussia, PA 19406
610-354-0555—1-877-HOPE-4-ME

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