

Risk Factors for Adverse Psychological Outcomes Following Abortion*

- 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 or 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

**Paul, M. et al. (eds.) (2009). Management of Unintended and Abnormal Pregnancy: Comprehensive Abortion Care. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, Table 5.4, p.57.*

Prepared by the Alliance for Post Abortion Research & Training