

**You deserve kindness, peace and compassion.** If you're like most women, you may spend a lot of time being hard on yourself (wishing for a different body, better job, nicer car, etc.). You may have recently added having an abortion to the list of reasons to be unkind to yourself. Pause for a moment, and take a deep breath. Now say out loud, "I'm doing the best that I can." Then, say it again. Self-doubt and resentment about choices that led to your pregnancy and/or abortion won't heal shame, guilt and disappointment. *Negative* thoughts will not help you move forward in *positive* ways. To make a fresh and productive start, focus on what you can do *starting now* to make positive changes.

**To make positive shifts in your thoughts,** you'll need practice. Pay attention to messages you send yourself. When you find yourself saying something like, "Of course \_\_\_\_ happened to me, it always does," or "I won't ever find anything better than \_\_\_\_," follow up with something to counter it. If you constantly find yourself in difficult situations, can you start to take notice of when good things occur as well? For example, right now, name three things you can be thankful for today. If a partner, boss or friend treats you harshly, take a moment to recall someone who offered a kind smile or gesture. Each day, do one (or more) of the following exercises: 1) Ask yourself, "What am I good at?" Come up with at least three answers, then write them down. 2) List at least three things you're proud of, and in a paragraph about each one, elaborate why. 3) At least once a day, write down one sentence about why you deserve to be loved and treated with kindness. Collect your statements in a jar or journal and reflect back each week or month to remind yourself of what you said. 4) At least once a week, treat yourself to something (an ice cream cone, pedicure, extended lunch break or just go to bed early, etc.), without feeling guilty. 5) Each night, as you get in bed, say a silent "goodnight" to yourself and say the following words, "I am worthy of love, peace, safety and kindness." It may feel strange or awkward at first, but stick with it. Negativity doesn't change overnight, but with time, doing these "little" things can shift negative thoughts or self-image into a more positive, loving lifestyle.

We would like to thank our pro-choice colleagues for their assistance in making this brochure. Some of the information here is available in "A Guide to Emotional and Spiritual Resolution After an Abortion," which can be found at [www.pregnancyoptions.info](http://www.pregnancyoptions.info).



*Summit Medical Centers are state-licensed facilities and are handicapped accessible. We adhere to the highest standards of medical care for all our patients. Free on-site parking is available.*

[www.summitcenters.com](http://www.summitcenters.com)

#### LOCATIONS

Summit Medical Center  
360 Market Street  
Hartford, CT 06120  
Ph: 800.446.4271  
Ph: 860.493.6575  
Fax: 860.493.6583

Summit Women's Center  
3787 Main Street  
Bridgeport, CT 06606  
Ph: 800.972.4073  
Ph: 203.365.2660  
Fax: 203.365.2667



## ***You've had Your Abortion... Now What?***

It is common for a woman who has had an abortion to have mixed feelings afterwards, yet with the politics surrounding abortion, many women feel uncomfortable discussing their experience openly with friends or family, as they would during other difficult times. At Summit Centers, we realize that *your abortion experience* is not a political issue, and that the feelings you may be dealing with are personal ones. Use this guide to sort through some of your feelings and concerns, and remember that just because your visit at Summit may be behind you, we're still here. Our counselors are available by phone, walk-in or appointment, and offer services free of charge—and free of judgment—at anytime.

**Feeling relieved** does not mean you are a bad or insensitive person. For many women, the decision to have an abortion comes with heavy stress and anticipation in the days and moments leading up to the procedure. It is natural to feel relieved when any stressful situation is resolved, including this one.

**Feeling sadness or loss** is common and does not mean the wrong decision was made. Even if you know the time or situation was not right to have a child, it's natural to feel a sense of loss. Allow yourself some time to grieve and reflect. During times of sadness or change, we can also become open to revelations that can remind us of joy and gratitude. Perhaps you've found that certain people were more supportive than you imagined they would be, or you've realized that you were able to cope with stressful events better than you'd previously thought. Other discoveries can be hard, especially if certain loved ones have been insensitive or unsupportive, or if a relationship has suffered. Though it may not seem like it now, this can ultimately be a constructive and positive process to help you gain a sense of self-trust and independence.

**If you feel guilty or regretful**, it's important to remember that you were faced with a difficult situation and little time to decide. Whatever events led to your abortion—birth control failure, unprotected sex, relationship status, etc.—they are not worth punishing yourself. Your reasons to not continue your pregnancy were sound; you are not a bad person. If you are experiencing a sense of regret, it may be over the abortion, but could also be connected to circumstances surrounding the abortion (relationship, finances, etc.). We all wish that things could have been different at various times in our lives, but you are still a good person, deserving of compassion, support and happiness.

**Your relationship with your partner** may have a lot to do with how you feel after your abortion. If your partner is loving and encouraging, you may find comfort in sharing your feelings with them. If your partner is not emotionally supportive, or if you are in a troubled relationship, look to see if you can find commonalities between how you are feeling about your

pregnancy/abortion and your relationship status. An unintended pregnancy can bring up issues you've been avoiding about commitment, communication, goals and trust. Talk honestly and directly with your partner even if it's not the easiest thing to do. If your relationship is worth holding onto, honesty is essential. If you are unable to be honest with your partner, you may want to reconsider why you're in your current relationship.

**If you have mixed feelings about sex** after your abortion, you are not alone. Some women may want to be sexually active right away; others may feel completely turned off. Feeling vulnerable, difficulty trusting a partner or nervousness about future pregnancies can contribute to your hesitations. If your partner is making you feel pressured to have sex before you are ready, it is important to communicate your feelings to them. Feeling pressure will make it more difficult to want to have sex, and can create distrust. Before having sex again, be sure to know how you will protect yourself from pregnancy in the future, as you will be fertile very soon after an abortion. If you did not opt for birth control during your visit, you can still make an appointment to speak with someone about birth control methods and options anytime.

**What else is involved?** Take a few minutes to write about your abortion decision from the moment you found out you were pregnant until now. Consider factors in your decision, i.e.: work, family, finances, fears, etc. List each factor and next to that, write 2-3 feelings you have about each one. Do any of those feelings seem similar to what you're feeling now? Is it possible that feelings you assumed to be about your abortion may have more to do with other issues you've been struggling with? Working through some of the factors that contributed to you having an abortion may help you find a little peace.

**Learning from the past.** Reflect on some of the more difficult times of your life, such as losing a job, relationship or loved ones. What lessons of strength and patience can you draw on for help now? What have you overcome and how did you get through?

**Sit still.** Sit quietly with your eyes closed (no TV, cell phones, children, etc.) for at least ten minutes (set an alarm). Allow yourself to feel everything that comes up about your abortion. Watch your thoughts as if they are cars passing by. No matter how large or trivial the thoughts, resist judging them as right or wrong. If you become distracted or upset, try to sit still and stay focused. After several minutes, what specific feelings do you notice the most? The least? Anger? Guilt? Relief? What else? When your ten minutes are up, write 5-10 sentences about your thoughts—then let them go for the day. Later or tomorrow, repeat the exercise, and do this for several days. What feelings arise? What feelings change or evolve? What or who else enters your mind during this time?

**If your religious or spiritual beliefs** are troubling you, consider how your religion or spirituality helps guide you during difficult times. Having an abortion does not mean you made a choice against your beliefs; trust in yourself and your faith to help you move forward. You are a good person. The realities and reasoning that led to your decision was and still is, valid. If you feel you need forgiveness outside of yourself (through God, etc.), how does your religion teach you to find it? Sit still and listen to your most intuitive self. What does your God say? What does your heart tell you? Discover your own truth and honor it.

**Take control of your health and overall well being.** During difficult or transitional times, it's important to reflect on what matters to you in order to make specific changes in your life. If you've been putting off taking care of your physical, emotional and/or sexual health, consider this an opportunity to start over. During your follow-up visit at Summit (or with your OBGYN), ask about scheduling a gynecological exam for a check-up, STI screening and to continue your choice of birth control. Ask your partner to get tested for STIs/HIV too. If you've been putting off calling another doctor or therapist, do so now. In addition, do something everyday to make you feel good, even if it's small. Make a pact to eat dinner with family or friends once per week, or meet for a walk or picnic. Take a yoga or dance class. By concentrating on small positive changes, you can create new, healthier habits over time.