AFTER ABORTION SUPPORT



1/4 of people who have a uterus get an abortion before the age of 40.

One of the biggest barriers faced by people having an abortion is stigma.

Even though abortion is normal, life saving healthcare, people feel that they can't turn to their loved ones for support.

who is this zine for?

This zine is for people who want to help others getting abortions.
You might be a partner, family member, friend, or someone close to them.
Even if no one has told you they've had an abortion, chances are you know someone who has.
This zine will help you:

- Support someone who asks for your help.
- Talk about abortion in a kind and thoughtful way.
- Help people who might not feel comfortable sharing their experience.



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what's in here?

This guide aims to build up community capacity for abortion support and fight stigma.

In this guide you can learn:

1. **How does an abortion happen?**
   pg 3 & 4
2. **Barriers to abortion**
   pg 5
3. **Ways to support**
   pg 6
4. **Emotions after an abortion**
   pg 7 & 8
5. **Things to say**
   pg 9
6. **A note on safety**
   pg 10
7. **A note on later abortion**
   pg 11
8. **Misinformation**
   pg 12
9. **More resources**
   pg 13 & 14

other zines for abortion support

There are loads of other zines about abortion! Some are included on the resources pages.

While this zine focuses on building capacity for community-based after abortion care, lots of others have information about self-managed abortion, political action, and abortion stories. A list of abortion zines can be found on the STREET Lab website at **streelab.tech**

gratitude

The content in this guide is coming from decades of organizing from diverse groups across the world. It is important to honour where the knowledge in this zine came from, and to reflect the continuous and connected nature of the struggle for bodily autonomy.



A few inspirational groups are detailed here:

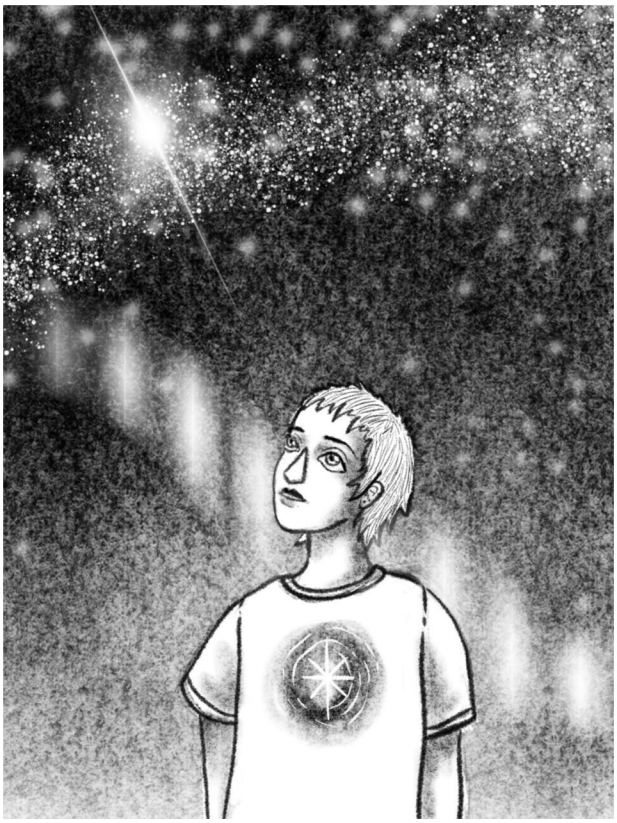
accompianistas grew out of Latin American feminists who accompany people getting their abortions.
abortion doulas provide spiritual and physical guidance before and during abortions.
pro-voice is an after-abortion, kind, non-judgmental way of talking about abortion, created by the Exhale Pro-Voice text line.
These, and many others (listed on the back of this zine) helped inspire this zine.

reproductive justice

This is a concept pioneered by Black feminists at the Cohambee River Collective. Reproductive justice frames bodily autonomy as a human right, which includes:

1. The right to not have a child.
2. The right to have a child.
3. The right to raise children in a safe and healthful environment.

This reminds us that not everyone has the same choices when it comes to having children.



what's an abortion?

An abortion is when a pregnancy is ended.

Abortions can happen at any stage of pregnancy, but are less common later on.

Abortions are safe, normal, and nothing to be ashamed of.

Important distinctions:

- Birth control (like pills or condoms) is not abortion.
- "Post-birth abortion" is not real. It's a lie made up by people who don't support abortion.

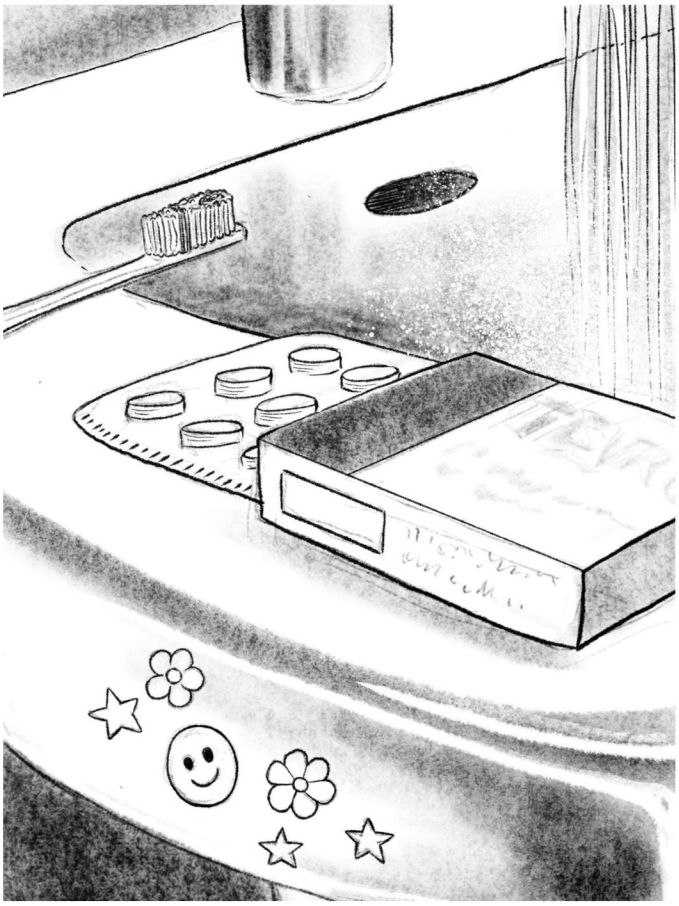
who gets abortions?

Lots of people!
People get abortions for many reasons. They might not be ready for a child, have a health problem, or need to leave a bad relationship. All reasons are valid.
People who get abortions can be young (like when they get their first period) or older (like when their periods stop).
Trans men and non-binary people can get abortions too.
Many people who get abortions already have children.
People from all races, cultures, and places get abortions.
People from all income levels get abortions.



how an abortion happens

Many people don't learn about abortion because of poor sex education and stigma. It's important to know how abortions work so you can talk about them accurately.



Pill-based abortion

Pill-based abortions can be self-managed, or managed with the support of a healthcare professional. Self-managed does not mean solo, lots of people have support people around them during their pill-based abortion.
The 'pill' is actually two types of pills:

1. Mifepristone, which stops the pregnancy hormones
2. Misoprostal, which makes the uterus contract and empty.

The body then passes the contents of pregnancy out of the vagina, similar to a very heavy period, based on how many weeks pregnant the person is. The later in pregnancy they are, the more pregnancy tissue needs to pass out.

Procedural abortion

Procedural abortions happen in a clinic or other medical facility. They are performed by a medical professional. Procedural abortions are sometimes called 'in-clinic' procedures or 'surgical' abortions. In most procedural abortions, surgery is not needed. There are several different types of procedural abortions, chosen based on the length of pregnancy and person's healthcare needs.

Procedural abortions usually include gently opening the cervix and using tools to suction out the pregnancy tissue. The procedure can happen over 1 or 2 days, depending on the stage of pregnancy.

A more detailed description of the different types of abortion can be found at: reproductiveaccess.org/abortion/

barriers to abortion care

Many people think the biggest barrier to abortion is the law. But there are many other barriers too:

1. **Information:** It can be hard to find clear, accurate information about abortion.
2. **Travel/Distance:** Some people have to travel far to reach a clinic, sometimes hundreds of miles away.
3. **Cost:** Abortions can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Some groups, called abortion funds, can help with the cost.
4. **Stigma:** Negative stories and shame about abortion can make people afraid to seek care.
5. **Safety:** Some people are in unsafe relationships or situations, making it hard to get an abortion.



7. **Age:** In some places, young people need permission from a parent or guardian to get an abortion, and not everyone has supportive parents.
8. **Systemic Oppression:** Many people face extra barriers because of racism, poverty, or other unfair systems. For example:
   - People in jail or prison.
   - People who have been hurt by doctors or hospitals.
   - People who use drugs.

ways to support

emotional support



Being an emotional support for someone after their abortion can look like a lot of things, including:

1. Talking them through their feelings.
2. Expressing your support.
3. Just listening.
4. Ensuring they don't have to deal with potentially harmful people .
5. Making sure they know you love them.

More details on page 9!



practical support

There's a ton of practical ways that someone might need or want your support. These include:

1. Transportation to and/or from their appointment(s)
2. Childcare
3. Cooking or cleaning
4. Errands
5. Recovery supplies which can include:
   a. Snacks
   b. Water
   c. A playlist
   d. Fuzzy socks
   e. Pads
   f. Tea
   g. Other comforting items

emotions after abortion

The most common feeling after an abortion is relief. However, different people can have a variety of different emotions, based on their own experience and perspective on abortion.



Some common ones emotions that someone might experience after abortion include:

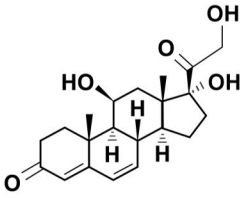
1. Grief and loss
2. Shame or guilt
3. Contentment
4. Relief
5. Hope

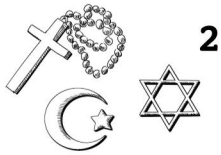


All of these feelings are valid. Even if someone feels 100% confident in their decision, they may still experience any or all of these emotions. Any emotion that someone has after an abortion is valid, and real.

These emotions can also change a lot! Sometimes, people might feel very sad after an abortion, and with time can move towards relief and hope.

emotions after abortion - cont.







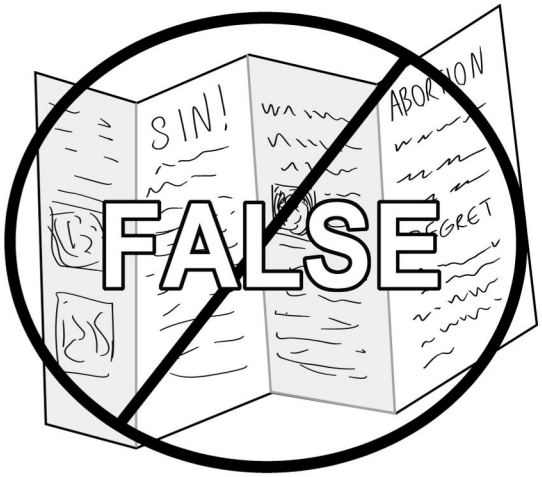
There are many reasons someone might feel big emotions after an abortion:

1. **Hormones:** Ending a pregnancy causes hormone levels to change, which can make emotions feel stronger.
2. **Religion:** Some religions don't support abortion. Even if someone doesn't personally believe it's wrong, they might feel sad or guilty if their religious community thinks abortion is bad.
3. **Stigma:** Negative stories and judgment about abortion can make people feel alone or ashamed. This is the biggest cause of emotional struggles after an abortion.

misinformation about mental health and abortion

There are a few things that the anti-abortion folks try to claim about emotions and abortion:

1. Abortion leads to worse mental health outcomes
2. People who get abortions regret their decision



Both of these claims are FALSE

The Turnaway Study found that people who get the abortion they need have better mental health than those who are forced to continue a pregnancy they don't want.

what you can say



It's hard to know what to say to someone about abortion, because you might not know how they feel about it.

It is important to always centre the person's feelings, while reaffirming their bodily autonomy.

helpful things to say



**"I'm here for you.
How can I support you?"**

"Would you like me to offer my thoughts, or just listen?"
Sometimes people just want to be heard! It's important to clarify before offering insight.

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

- This is a broad question, and it might be helpful to offer examples, like were discussed on page 6.

"I'm glad you felt comfortable telling me, and I love you unconditionally"

- Lots of people are afraid of telling those around them because they think they'll be ashamed or burdened by your disclosure.

a note on safety



Abortion is often judged harshly and is even against the law in some places. It's important to think about the risks for the person getting the abortion and for you as their support person.

1. **Legal Risks:**
    - In some areas, abortion is illegal or has strict rules.
    - Police or law enforcement might ask for things like text messages or online chats.
    - Some places have laws that let people report someone they think has had an abortion.
2. **Social Risks:**
    - Because abortion is stigmatized, people might face judgment or discrimination from friends, family, or at work.
    - Some people live with or are close to unsafe people, like a partner, parent, or family member. It might not be safe for these people to know about the abortion.
3. **Physical Risks:**
    - Physical problems after an abortion are very rare. Abortion is actually 14 times safer than childbirth.



ways to stay secure

Make sure you only talk about the person's abortion experience with people who they are comfortable knowing.

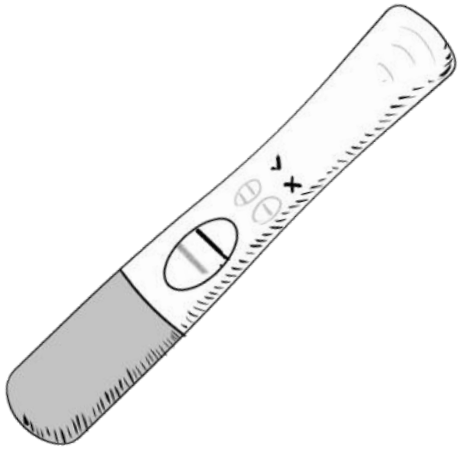
Be aware of local laws, both where the person getting an abortion is, and where you are. You can check **reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/**

Digital security: Digital Defence fund has information about digital security measures. Find them at **digitaldefensefund.org**

If someone needs help knowing when to call a doctor, you can find information at: **mahotline.org/faq**

a note on later abortion

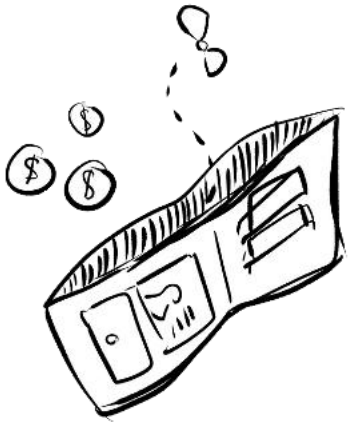
Abortion can happen at any stage of pregnancy. In media and politics, later abortion is often portrayed as something tragic and rare.



Later abortion can be sad, but sometimes it is not. People need later abortions for many reasons. Usually, this includes:

1. **Not knowing they were pregnant:** Some people don't realize they're pregnant until later, especially younger people.
2. **Medical reasons:** There might be a health problem with the fetus or the pregnant person.
3. **Changed circumstances:** Someone's situation might change, like losing a job, money problems, or the end of a relationship.
4. **Barriers to care:** Some people can't get an abortion earlier because of laws, money, travel, or someone stopping them, like an abusive partner.





People who are young, lower income, and receive less education are more likely to get later abortions. This is because of social, economic, and environmental conditions, not the wishes of the individual people.



misinformation

There is a lot of misinformation about abortion!

Here are some common myths, and what is actually true:

1. **False:** Abortion is rare.
   True: Approximately 1/4 of people who can get pregnant have an abortion in their lifetime.
2. **False:** Abortion is something that should be rare.
   True: Abortion is a necessary and common medical procedure that is needed for a myriad of situations, regardless of family planning approaches.
3. **False:** Abortion is bad for mental health.
   True: Being denied an abortion results in worse mental health outcomes.
4. **False:** Abortions impact fertility.
   True: Abortion does not impact future ability to get pregnant. People can even get pregnant immediately after an abortion.
5. **False:** Abortion can cause breast cancer.
   True: There is no link between breast cancer and abortion.
6. **False:** Later abortions are usually because of a fetal abnormality.
   True: Later abortions are usually because someone didn't know they were pregnant. The idea that later abortions are usually because of fetal abnormalities is rooted in ableism.
7. **False:** You can reverse a pill-based abortion.
   True: There is no data that supports abortion pill reversal working. These procedures can be dangerous.





resources

You might not have all of the capacity to support someone after they've had an abortion, and that's ok!
There's lots of great organizations and resources that you can refer them to, or lean on yourself.

finding care

Up-to date information about vetted abortion clinics can be found at **ineedana.com**

financial support

Abortion funds can help someone with their financial and logistical barriers to getting abortion care. Find one that fits at **abortionfunds.org/find-a-fund/**

affirming stories

Abortion storytelling organizations have stories from people who have had abortions. Good ones can be found at **shoutyourabortion.com/stories/** and **wetestify.org/**

text lines

Abortion support text lines have trained volunteers. Exhale Pro Voice provides emotional support **exhaleprovoice.org/**
M & A hotline answers medical questions about abortion and miscarriage **mahotline.org/**
All Options provides options counselling for pregnancy outcomes **all-options.org/find-support/talkline/**

legal help

Repro legal defense fund provides legal support for pregnancy outcomes: **reprolegalhelpline.org/**

if you are worried that someone might hurt themselves

Crisis text lines have trained volunteers to support people through thoughts of suicide or other strong feelings you are concerned about.
USA: **988lifeline.org/**
Canada: **talksuicide.ca/**

zines!

political zines
Who is Fit for Motherhood
Women, Witchhunts, and the Reproduction of the Capitalist World
Reproductive Justice en la Frontera
Abortion Decriminalization is Part of the Larger Struggle Against Policing and Criminalization

zines describing abortion procedures
Elena's Aspiration Abortion
Sam's Medication Abortion

self managed abortion zines
How to Give Yourself an Abortion
Bloodmoon a Guide on How to Bleed
DIY Doula

stigma busting zines
Abortion is a Form of Birth Control
Queering Reproductive Justice: a mini toolkit