

# The Forgotten

By Dave Andrusko

Quick, what is missing from this statement: "Women in the United States have aborted over 46 million unborn children since 1973"?

Stumped? It's any mention of the husbands/boyfriends of these women who are also the fathers of these unborn children.

And it is precisely the omission of any reference to fathers—even by pro-lifers—that must be corrected if the Movement is not only to win the day for unborn children but reconcile entire families grievously wounded by legal abortion. That is the contention lawyer David Wemhoff and marriage and family therapist Greg Hasek made indirectly in their workshop "Lost Fatherhood and the Male Response to Abortion" and more directly in a subsequent interview with **NRL News**.

Both Wemhoff and Hasek know of what they speak. Each was involved in an abortion when they were young men and nothing could be clearer than that both remain deeply affected by behavior that both believe was cowardly. Yet abortion's extraordinary impact on men remains the stealth issue in our ongoing conversation about a decision that has ripple effects far beyond just the woman and the unborn child.

Hasek pointed out that many components of the classic negative impact of abortion on women also holds true for men who have been a party to the abortion of their child: anger, depression, avoidance, grieving, guilt, inability to sleep—to name just a few characteristic behaviors. This can hold true not just for men who opposed the abortion, but also when the man initially acted passively—"it's your decision"—and even when he actively worked to compel the woman to abort.

Part of it, Hasek said, is because abortion so "goes against the grain." Any man knows it is his job to protect his family, not end the life of

one of its members and abandon the other. Part of the reaction is attributable to a profound sense of powerlessness.

Still another reason an abortion can take a huge toll on men is that their remorse remains buried. They are not comfortable laying their emotions on the table—and even when they do, there are precious few outlets anywhere for them to safely bare their pain.

But as many of the most eloquent written expressions of male grieving demonstrate, an abortion fundamentally means the loss of fatherhood. When this loss of a child is compounded with a poor relationship with a man's own father, the results can be devastating, even shattering, Hasek said.

"Society has not yet accepted that post-abortive men are suffering and as a result our society and families are bearing the brunt of the symptoms," he said.

Hasek believes there is a real hole in dealing with abortion's aftermath. Almost all post-abortion counseling is by women for women.

"Men and women must heal together," he argues. "If abortion begins with a man and a woman, ultimate reconciliation must end with a man and a woman."

Hasek said there needs to be a paradigm shift in thinking about how to reach the post-abortive man in the future: "Programs need to focus on how men grieve, which is often through thinking and doing."

Wemhoff said that Dr. Vincent Rue and Dr. Philip Ney have been pioneers in studying the impact abortion has had on men. "Both found the negative behaviors described by Greg Hasek, and more," he said.

"And it won't be until we recognize that abortion hurts men, too, that they will at last be able to begin the healing process."

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