Professional counselors who have worked with women who have had abortions have recognized a cluster of reactions that fit the model of a post-traumatic stress disorder, a psychological dysfunction resulting from a traumatic experience which overwhelms a person's normal healthy defense mechanisms. Some of the symptoms they have found to be typical are:

- intense fear, anxiety, sense of helplessness
- feeling of loss of control
- emotional numbing, difficulty recalling event
- guilt, pain, grief, depression
- irritability, angry outbursts, aggressive behavior
- sleep difficulties, sexual dysfunction
- flashbacks, nightmares, anniversary reactions
- withdrawal from relationships, avoidance of children
- pessimism regarding future
- drug, alcohol abuse, suicidal thoughts

**POST-ABORTION SYNDROME**

Abortion advocates will tell you that the most immediate emotional reaction a woman has to her abortion is one of relief — relief that the crisis is over, relief that she can get on with her life. While this may reflect her state of mind when others are urging her on and she is struggling to justify her decision in the immediate aftermath, polls and studies indicate many women end up regretting that decision in the weeks, months, or years that follow.

A 1989 Los Angeles Times survey found 56% of women who had abortions felt guilty about them, and 26% mostly regretted the abortion. Studies suggest that these numbers may be low, since negative reactions may be delayed, not surfacing for 5 or 10 years.

Despite his promises, a woman's partner often leaves after the abortion. The clinic staff is gone, and the woman has no desire to return to the place she associates with failure. Even friends who know hesitate to bring up the subject. This means, however, that she often deals with her pain, her doubts, her questions all alone.

**REAL HUMAN COST:** Studies examining the records of over 50,000 California Medicaid patients from 1989-1994 found women who aborted having 2.6 times more psychiatric admissions in the first 90 days following pregnancy than women giving birth and 17% higher mental health claims over the following four years.