

Pregnancy Advisory Centre:

Values Clarification: a guide when making a decision

If you have just had your pregnancy confirmed (either by a urine or blood test or by ultrasound), and you are not sure whether you want to continue the pregnancy, you may find the following list of questions useful when thinking through your options.

The questions enable you to consider your values about abortion based on the possible options - you may have already reached a point where you would exclude an option. That's fine - listen to yourself; you can trust yourself.

People of various ages and cultural identities, people who have religious beliefs and those who don't, people who have and have not parented, and people who are in relationships or not, can face dilemmas in decision making with regards to a pregnancy. In your specific personal situation, it can be useful to consider questions and values that are important for your circumstances.

Questions regarding your values

- What are my values on abortion, parenting or adoption, in my situation?
- Where do my values come from? (Religion, Family, Friends, Media, my previous experiences?)
- Do I personally agree with the values of my religion, partner, family or friends?
- What are some different values/beliefs about this topic I haven't thought about?
- Who benefits from me acting on my values and beliefs?
- How committed am I to my personal beliefs/values? Do I always follow through with what I believe in? Have I ever not acted on my beliefs and values? If so, were the consequences negative or positive?
- Do my values and beliefs cover all circumstances? Are there any exceptions to the rule?
- Values and beliefs are sometimes formed through life experiences. Does this experience affect or alter my values and beliefs? Or, does this experience reinforce how strong my beliefs are?
- Are values & beliefs the most important part of my decision? Are other factors important (e.g. finances, current emotional state, whether or not you are in a relationship, care of existing children, career/study responsibilities)?
- If I am doing something that goes against my beliefs, how can I prepare myself for coping afterwards?

Questions regarding the pregnancy

- How do I feel about this pregnancy?
- Was it intended?
- If it is your first pregnancy, what impact has it had on your knowledge of your body and of your fertility?
- If I had a choice, when and under what circumstances would I want to be or get pregnant?
- Do these/ should these feelings about pregnancy play a role or affect my decision one way or the other?
- Do I know how my partner/partner involved feels about this pregnancy?
- Do I know how my family feels about this pregnancy?

Questions to consider regarding whether to continue the pregnancy?

- Do I want to be a parent at this stage of my life?
- What are the positives and/or negatives of continuing this pregnancy? (It can help to write this down: get a piece of paper and create headings, positives/negatives and write your thoughts down under the category they fall into).
- How will I feel six months from now if I continue? How will I feel in two years?
- How do I feel about the prospect of becoming a parent?
- If I continue the pregnancy, what will change in my life? (consider your finances, career, education, housing, emotional state, relationship with partner, relationship with family, relationship with friends)
- Am I in a position to support myself/a child?
- Who can support me if I can't?
- How do I feel about my current partner or the partner involved?
- Do I know how my partner feels about the possibility of continuing the pregnancy?
- What will my relationship with my partner be like if I continue the pregnancy?
- Would I feel resentment towards the child and/or my partner/the partner involved?
- Do I know how my family feels about the possibility of my continuing the pregnancy?



- What will my relationship be like with my family if I continue the pregnancy?
- What are my ideal circumstances through which I would like to enter parenthood?
- Whose feelings/desires am I taking into account when I consider the option of continuing the pregnancy?
- Am I putting his/her/their feelings/desires in front of my own?
- Am I making this decision freely or am I being pressured?
- If this situation is not in accord with my view of the ideal circumstances for entering parenthood, do I feel that I can accommodate the current situation and feel reconciled with a decision to continue the pregnancy?
- What strategies can I pursue in order to feel reconciled and accepting of a decision to continue the pregnancy?

When you are having difficulty with the option of continuing the pregnancy

You may want to consider the following:

- What do I want my life to be like in 1 year?.....5 years?.....10 years?
- How will what I decide about this pregnancy affect what I want for myself in the future?
- What would have to change, or be different, for me to feel as clear as I can about what to do about this pregnancy?

Questions to consider in regard to the option of adoption

- How do I feel about adoption?
- What are the positive and negatives of adoption (get a piece of paper and create headings, positives/negatives and write your thoughts down under the category they fall into).
- How do I feel about placing the child for adoption?
- Will the man involved agree to place the child for adoption?
- What will my relationship with my partner or the partner involved be like if I place the child for adoption?
- Do I know how my family feels about the possibility of adoption?
- What will my relationship be with my family if I place the child for adoption?
- How will I feel 6 months from now as I consider placing my child for adoption?
- Would an open adoption make this process clearer (i.e. where the adoptive parents allow contact/updates with the child as it grows)?
- Am I making the decision freely or am I being pressured?
- Whose feelings/desires am I taking into account when I consider the option of adoption?
- Am I putting his/her/their feelings/desires in front of my own?
- How will I feel a year after the adoption is completed? 2 years?..... 10 years?
- What strategies can I pursue so that I will feel reconciled and accepting of a decision to adopt?

When you are having difficulty with the adoption option

Consider the following:

- What do I want my life to be like in 1 year?.....5 years?.....10 years?
- How will what I decide about this pregnancy affect what I want for myself in the future?
- What would have to change, or be different, for me to clearly know the best option for this pregnancy?

Questions to consider in regard to the option of terminating the pregnancy?

- How do I feel about abortion (terminating a pregnancy)?
- What are the positives and negatives of terminating the pregnancy? (It can help to write this down: get a piece of paper and create headings, positives/negatives and write your thoughts down under the category they fall into).
- What are my ethical/religious/personal beliefs about abortion?
- If ethical or moral issues are an issue for me, when do I believe life begins?
- How do these beliefs affect this decision?
- How will I feel six months from now if I have an abortion?
- How will I feel in 2 years?
- Am I making the decision freely or am I being pressured?
- Whose feelings/desires am I taking into account when I consider the option of terminating the pregnancy?
- Do I know how my partner or partner involved will feel about the possibility of abortion?
- What will my relationship be like with my partner or partner involved if I terminate the pregnancy?
- Do I know how my family feels about the possibility of abortion?
- What will my relationship be like with my family if I terminate the pregnancy?
- Am I putting his/her/their feelings/desires in front of my own?



- What strategies can I pursue so that I will feel reconciled and accepting of a decision to terminate the pregnancy?

If having difficulty with the option of terminating the pregnancy

Consider the following:

- What do I want my life to be like in 1 year?.....5 years?.....10 years?
- How will what I decide about this pregnancy affect what I want for myself in the future?
- What would have to change, or be different, for me to clearly know what to do about this pregnancy?

Some final comments to consider

Not all women and pregnant people will find all parts of this values clarification and pregnancy decision making guide useful. It is a tool to use to assist in clarifying one's thought processes and to assist in making the decision that is right for you. You are the one who must live with the decision; you are the one who must reconcile the decision as **you are the only one who can implement the decision.**

Remember to be kind to yourself over this decision-making period. Remember you need time and space (uninterrupted) so to clarify your mind and come to whatever decision is right for you. You may also require time and space to talk to significant others in your life. Be guided by knowledge of yourself. Whatever decision you make, make it as freely as you possibly can within whatever constraints you are facing, so it's the right decision for you.

Grief and loss

It is worthwhile remembering that sometimes grief and loss issues can come up for people no matter the outcome of the decision that is, you and the partner involved may feel grief and loss whether it is a decision to continue the pregnancy, adopt or have a termination of pregnancy. Grief and loss issues are, in fact, part our life and can be felt following a number of significant markers in our life. For example, after becoming a parent once can feel a sense of grief and loss about one's own childhood as one compares one's parenting styles/aspirations with one's own childhood. We can also feel grief and loss after the break up of a relationship or after being made redundant from the workplace.

What is important at times such as these or when facing decision making about a pregnancy, is to allow if possible the time to think through the issues and seek support. If you are not getting the kind of support you know you need then try other sources of support such as your general practitioner (if you trust and can speak openly with them), or counselling at a health centre or talking with trusted friends.

If you feel grief and loss after your decision about a pregnancy, whatever that decision is, allow yourself the time and space to journey through the feelings, contact support services for further support or advice, read articles about issues that are relevant for you.

This questionnaire was adapted by the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and was modified from the Bessie Smyth Foundation, NSW, in 2003. The Bessie Smyth Foundation no longer has funding to provide counselling and support and this service was closed in 2007.

For more information

Pregnancy Advisory Centre

**Central Adelaide Local Health Network
21 Belmore Terrace
Woodville Park SA 5011**

Telephone: (08) 7117 8999 or Free Call 1800672 966 (country callers only)

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/AbortionSupportServices

© Department of Health, Government of South Australia. All rights reserved.



**Government
of South Australia**

SA Health