

EXERCISES: VALUES CLARIFICATION

Adapted from *Obtaining Abortion Training: a Guide for Informed Decision-Making*. National Abortion Federation, 1998.

In spite of our efforts at objectivity, we all hold personal values that can influence how we respond to our patients. Sometimes these values are very clear to us and are easily articulated. Others exist at a deeper level, so we don't necessarily recognize the influence they have on our behavior and judgments as health care providers. Further, one's values may change in response to life experiences, and your encounters with patients and colleagues may influence your beliefs without your having much of a chance to reflect on these changes.

The exercises presented here are intended to help you clarify for yourself your present personal values about abortion and abortion training, and to help you think about those values in the context of professional judgments you may be called upon to make. Work through these exercises at your own pace.

EXERCISE 1.1: General Feelings about Pregnancy Options

Purpose: This exercise is designed to illustrate the wide range of beliefs about the acceptability of pregnancy options and to help you clarify your personal views about your patients choosing abortion, parenthood, or adoption.

In general, how do you feel about your patients choosing abortion?

☐ I can accept my patient's decision to choose abortion in certain circumstances including:

- ☐ if the pregnancy threatens her physical health or life
- ☐ if the pregnancy threatens her mental health
- ☐ if the pregnancy involves significant fetal abnormality
- ☐ if the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest
- ☐ if she is in an unstable relationship
- ☐ if she does not want any more children
- ☐ if she is not financially able to care for a child and requires public assistance
- ☐ if a baby would interfere with education or career goals
- ☐ if she is very young
- ☐ if she is in prison and will be unable to provide care
- ☐ if she has AIDS
- ☐ if the pregnancy resulted from birth control failure
- ☐ Other(s)

☐ I can accept my patient's decision to choose abortion in any circumstance when she has made an informed and voluntary choice.

What are the reasons for your beliefs?

EXERCISE 1.2: Gestational Age and Abortion

Purpose: For some people, the acceptability of abortion is dependent upon the stage of pregnancy at which an abortion might take place. The following exercise is designed to help you clarify whether your beliefs are influenced by the gestational age of the pregnancy.

1) At what gestational age do you stop feeling alright about your patient choosing to have an abortion? Check all that apply.

- ☐ At conception
- ☐ At implantation
- ☐ At the end of the first trimester
- ☐ At quickening (i.e. point of fetal movement)
- ☐ At the end of the second trimester
- ☐ At viability
- ☐ At some point in the third trimester
- ☐ It depends on the reason for the abortion
- ☐ Other (please explain):

2) Now consider this list again as it relates to your comfort level with varying degrees of your professional involvement in abortion. At what gestational age do you stop feeling alright about:

- a. making abortion referrals for patients
- b. performing abortions

What are the primary factors that influence your feelings?

EXERCISE 1.3: Women's Reasons and Your Choice to Provide Abortions

Purpose: This exercise will help you clarify your feelings about some potentially challenging situations that may arise in abortion care.

Consider the following potentially challenging situations:

I would feel uncomfortable providing an abortion for a woman who:

- ☐ is ambivalent about having an abortion but whose partner wants her to terminate the pregnancy
- ☐ wishes to obtain an abortion because she is carrying a female fetus
- ☐ has had what I consider too many previous abortions
- ☐ shows little emotion about becoming pregnant and choosing abortion
- ☐ has indicated that she does not want any birth control method to use in the future

What factors influenced your choices? How might you handle your discomfort when caring for patients under these circumstances?