

LESSON TWO: THE PRESSURE CLIENTS FACE

Women may experience many different pressures when deciding whether to carry a pregnancy to term or terminate. Many of the pressures are genuine and present a real threat to a client's well-being, while others are perceived pressures about what may happen and what may be said or thought. These pressures have a number of sources.

People. One must not underestimate the role of significant others in the life of a pregnancy care centre client as she makes her decision. A woman's parents, sexual partner, and friends may all have an opinion about what she should do. The opinion is sometimes spoken and sometimes perceived by the client.

Circumstances. A pregnancy care centre client may feel pressure because of money, living situation, illness, a job, or school. Additionally, the relationship with their partner, desire for a baby with the partner, and life circumstances are significant factors in pregnancy decision-making.¹ Reasons for seeking abortion are often related to life circumstances, including cost, readiness, not wanting more children, marital status, relationship stability, and being too young.² Often, the difference between the joy of pregnancy and the crisis of pregnancy is a matter of circumstance. How will I stay employed? Can I stay in school? Will he leave me? These questions must not be trivialized since they can be real impediments to a pregnancy care centre client's well-being.

Questions to consider:

What would it be like to decide between leaving your comfortable home and family or carrying to term?

How would you feel?



Cultural and ethnic diversity. Clients from all ethnicities and religious beliefs are seen at a pregnancy care centre. For those whose religion forbids premarital sex, an out-of-wedlock pregnancy is both devastating and terrifying. Some clients are from cultures and countries where abortion is commonplace and perhaps even considered a moral non-issue. Other clients are from Christian backgrounds and although they believe abortion to be wrong, they may see it as their only option.

Our Canadian culture. The cultural pressures facing a woman today are both enormous and diverse. Many in today's culture consider a woman to lack good judgment if she were to carry a pregnancy to term if the circumstances are not optimal. This woman may have to go against the tide of popular opinion about abortion. She might have to justify a decision to continue her pregnancy to her partner, peers, family, school support workers, and others who cannot understand why she would be so "unreasonable." She might also have to overcome a cultural bias portrayed in the media that teaches that responsible, educated women choose abortion when faced with an unexpected pregnancy. Many women choose to abort because they or their partner feel they have yet to meet "expected" personal goals: marriage, completing college, or the acquiring of material objectives, such as saving for a new vehicle or the down payment on a house.

Some members of the medical profession also view abortion as the "answer" to difficulties posed by an unexpected pregnancy. When a woman has a positive pregnancy test in less-than-ideal circumstances, one of the first questions she may be asked is, "Would you like to terminate?"

A client facing an unexpected pregnancy may be operating in survival mode. Pregnancy care centres have an incredible opportunity to offer her affirmation, encouragement, practical help, resources, and referrals.



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