

# A LITTLE BUTTON MEANS A PRECIOUS BUTTON LIVED

Buttons Project



BY MARINA YOUNG  
FOUNDER OF  
BUTTONS PROJECT TRUST



FOR OUR SPECIAL BUTTON HOPE

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BUTTONS PROJECT NZ

# Table of Contents

01	Introduction and disclaimer
04	Begin your journey
06	Some coping tools which you may find helpful
15	Acknowledging our baby loss
18	Managing upcoming significant dates
20	Support Services



# INTRODUCTION AND DISCLAIMER

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Hi, my name is Marina, and I had an abortion many years ago at the age of 20, just prior to marrying Peter. Peter was the father of the baby, and it deeply impacted our marriage going forward and both of us individually.

As we embarked on this journey of healing, we founded Buttons Project Charitable Trust in 2008 to help towards healing from abortion, and together we created a buttons memorial - to remember, to grieve and to love. We named our baby Hope.

Buttons Project provides a platform for people affected by abortion to take a step towards healing by sending in buttons. Each button represents a baby we have not met. These buttons are sent in physically or virtually to be added to our Virtual Buttons Memorial.

Through my own journey and hearing from many other post abortive women and men, the realisation of what we have may hit within days of the termination, months or not come for many years.

Realising that for many of us, the periods of depression, anxiety, self-medicating,

and an unfillable void within, can often link back to the abortion.

Many post abortive people are struggling alone with their pain and just waiting for the right person to hear their story. Someone who understands what she or he is going through, and someone who will not condemn them for what has happened.

This booklet is just part of your healing journey and some coping strategies that you may find helpful.

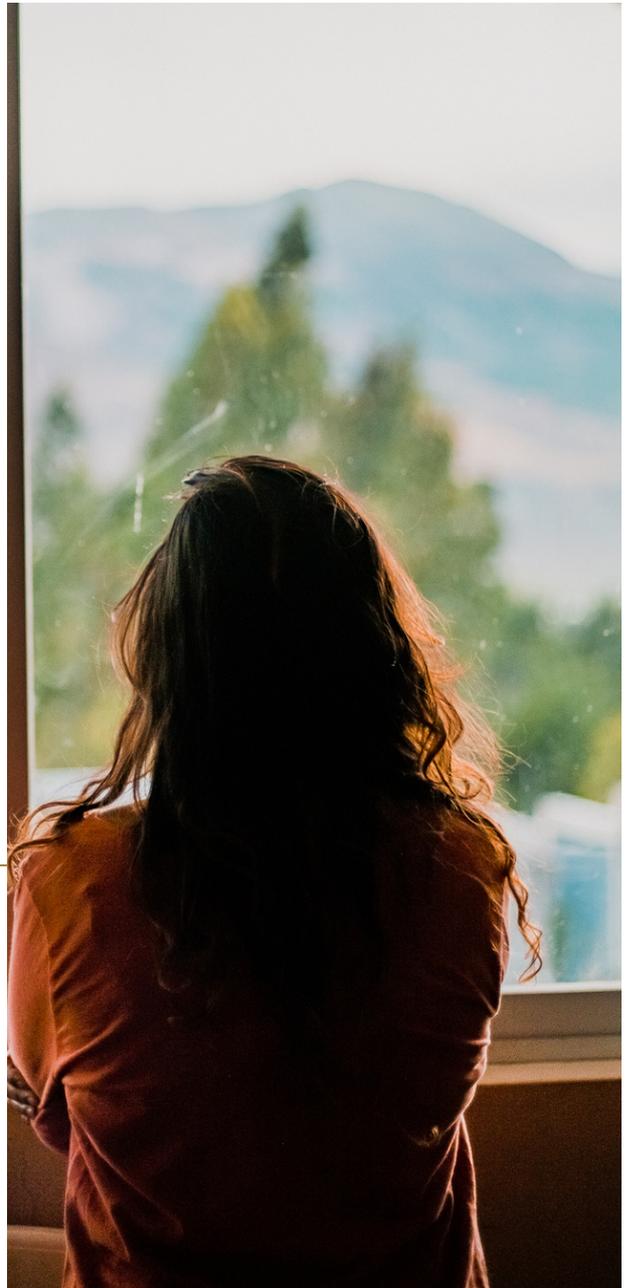
If you are struggling to function with daily tasks, mental wellbeing, with relationships, physically, or self-medicating, please do not hesitate to reach out to a counsellor, Mental Health Service or your General Practitioner.

Being able to talk about your experience and express the emotions around it may help.

There are also some great Post Abortion Healing programmes, which provide a safe avenue for women and men to find strength and hope, as we journey together on this path of healing and restoration. We have provided some links on our support services page at the back of this booklet.

If you have been through an abortion and you are in pain, know you are not alone. Pain is real, but so is hope.

Marina  
Founder of Buttons Project  
[www.buttonsproject.org](http://www.buttonsproject.org)





Sometimes the hardest part of embarking on the healing journey, is believing you're worth the trip.

Mercy reminds us that we're all broken, all hurting, all human. And yet all worthy of love and help.

# BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY

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For some it may take some time, but this is a good place to begin your journey of healing. Remember, everyone's experience is different. Whatever you are feeling is okay and normal.

What is the hardest thing for you right now?

What is it that you are needing?

You may find it hard if you expected things to settle or to go back to the way they were before all this happened and they haven't. It can be a difficult and confusing time soon after an abortion experience with the build-up, decision-making, going through the procedure and wondering now what?

Going from being pregnant to not pregnant can mean some hormonal and biological changes. There may be a mix of thoughts and feelings. If there were uncertainties around the decision, different pressures, or influences . . . it can be hard to make sense of these now.

Either way, whatever your experience, it is likely to involve grief, as you adjust to the losses and changes from the whole situation around the abortion and the abortion itself.

How do I know if I am experiencing grief after my abortion?

Here are some things you may be experiencing:

- feeling numb or in shock, or sad and tearful
- unable to turn off thoughts and feelings
- continually focusing on the abortion, or telling yourself to just get over it
- find it hard to talk about what happened
- going over lots of "what ifs" repeatedly
- problems eating, sleeping, concentrating, or doing usual tasks
- greater anger and impatience
- self-medicating, greater risk taking or activities to escape unbearable feelings
- relationship issues

If you are experiencing some of the above reactions, you may be affected by your abortion more than you realise.



# SOME COPING TOOLS WHICH YOU MAY FIND HELPFUL.

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When emotions run high, when you are faced with painful or distressing situations or memories, your system responds to cope or to survive.

There are a range of things you may experience, like emotional shock, numbness, heart racing or palpitations, rapid shallow breathing, sweating, weakness, dizziness, fear, anxiety, panic, feeling overwhelmed or like you are losing control.

When you feel like this there are some things you can do to help calm and settle yourself.

The following strategies may help, but if you find things do not settle, you are encouraged to talk to someone like a trusted family member, friend, or pastor, or seek help from a health professional or counsellor



## JOURNALING OR ART

Journaling is a way to express thoughts and feelings by free uncensored writing or drawing. Journaling can help release and clarify thoughts and feelings.

It is important that your journal is private unless you choose to share it with someone you trust.

Sometimes it is hard to express your feelings in words, so I have also found being creative by drawing or painting and building helpful. At times I have put together a collage of pictures, to express what I am feeling. Showing hope for the future, a taste of some joy, forgiveness, love, and peace.



## MINDFUL BREATHING

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This deep breathing technique helps to slow down your breathing. When done effectively it can help lessen anxiety.

- Breathe in through your nose 1, 2, 3, 4 evenly whilst gently allowing your abdomen to rise as you fill your lungs and as your chest expands
- Hold 1 and 2
- Breathe out through your mouth 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 evenly and gently allowing abdomen to fall

You can also mindfully breathe as you take a walk down the street or around the garden, or as you are listening to relaxing music, doing gentle exercises, or even as you are doing everyday activities.

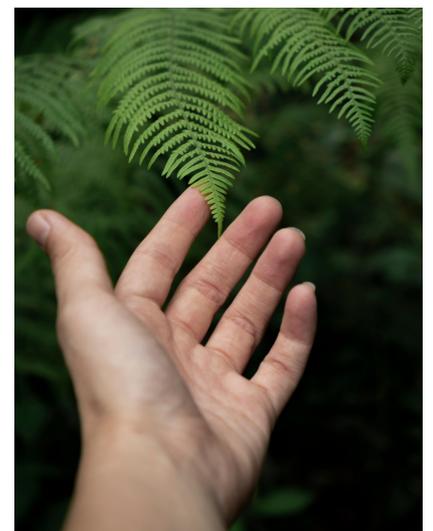
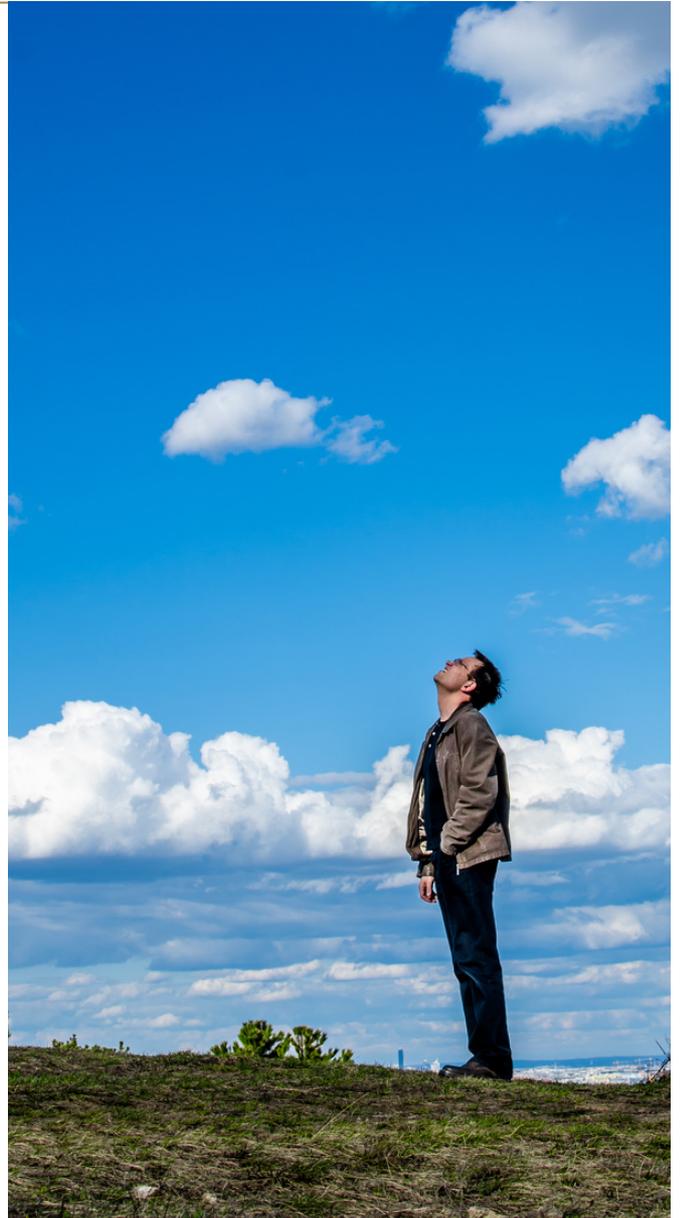
## GROUNDING EXERCISE

When you find yourself getting panicky, very anxious, thoughts racing, zoning out or dissociating, then consciously practise grounding yourself.

Grounding can help to restore you to a more peaceful and present state.

Do the deep breathing technique , and as you breathe more deeply and slowly, find and focus on

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell (or smells you like that you can remember)
- 1 pleasant emotion you have felt recently



One step at a time,

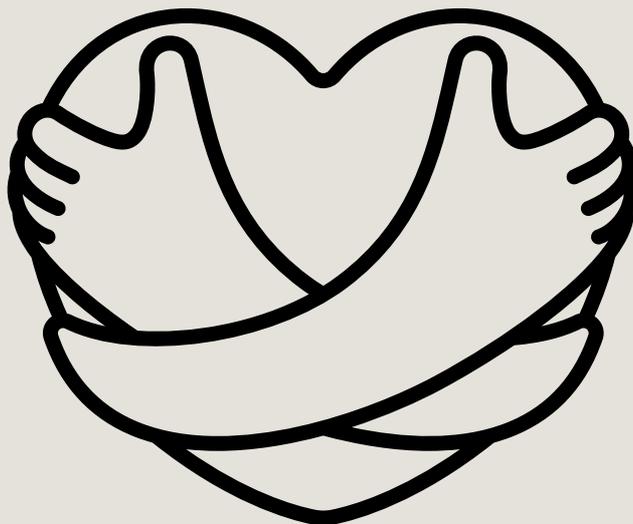
One breath at a time,

One word at a time,

One day at a time,

Be gentle with yourself,

Give yourself time.



## SELF-CALMING IDEAS

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There are lots of ways you can soothe yourself when you are experiencing heightened emotions using vision, touch, hearing, smell, and taste.

### Vision:

light a candle and watch the flame, look at a landscape painting or picture and imagine yourself there, go outside at night and watch the stars, watch something nice on TV.... Be mindful of each sight that passes in front of you as you go about your day.

### Touch:

have a long shower or bath, pat your pet, use a cold compress on your forehead, sink into a comfortable chair, hug someone you care about, squeeze a stress ball... Experience whatever you are touching; notice touch that is soothing.

### Hearing:

listen to some soothing music as you are resting, or invigorating music if you are active, pay attention to the sounds of nature (birds, rainfall, leaves rustling), listen to or sing your favourite songs, talk with someone, and really listen to what they are sharing.... Be mindful of any sounds that come your way, learning to let them come in one ear and go out the other.



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### Smell:

use your favourite spices when you cook, have some lavender or other essential oils in potpourri or burners around, smell roses or other scented flowers as you pass by, smell the early morning dew, the smell of the forest or sea as you go walking.... Mindfully breathe in any nice smells you come across, noticing and being fully aware of them as you do.

### Taste:

have a good meal, enjoy your favourite non-alcoholic drink, sample different flavours of ice cream, sweets, savouries, or any food you eat.... Mindfully taste the food you eat, eat and drink slowly and savour the tastes, noticing how things really taste. Create a special meal as a treat.

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## DISTRACTION



There are lots of things you can do that can give you temporary relief from distressing emotions, or painful memories, or overthinking things, or being overly worried about everything. The thing is to try to be as present as you can be, in the moment, as you are doing things. Some things you could try including:

- Exercise, sport, hobbies (colouring, painting, reading, woodwork, puzzles)
- Home and garden projects
- Visiting a friend
- Some Computer games
- Volunteer work or helping someone else
- Surprise gestures for someone you love
- Trying origami
- Push the situation away leaving it for a while mentally; build an imaginary wall between yourself and the situation; put your/the pain in a box and shelve it for a while
- Refuse to think on painful aspects, divert the mind to something positive
- Rubber band on your wrist; pull and let go, hold ice in your hand, as a thought breaker.

## NOTE

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When things feel overwhelming,  
remember:

One thought at a time,  
One task at a time,  
One day at a time.

If you find these strategies are not  
enough for you to manage your feelings,  
it may be worthwhile to talk with  
someone you can trust, at a place you  
feel safe.

If you are not coping very well or think  
you may be suffering from depression,  
please talk to your doctor or seek  
counselling and support, and link in with  
someone.



There is no timeline for healing;  
it can be messy, as well as beautiful.

It is heart wrenching and uncomfortable.

At times when we think we have worked through it and we fall apart or are  
triggered by memories, it doesn't mean we are weak.

Healing takes courage and strength which we all have when we embark on this  
journey.

Marina 

# ACKNOWLEDGING OUR BABY LOSS

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Many people have discovered that the act of selecting a meaningful memorial can offer healing and release of the loss.

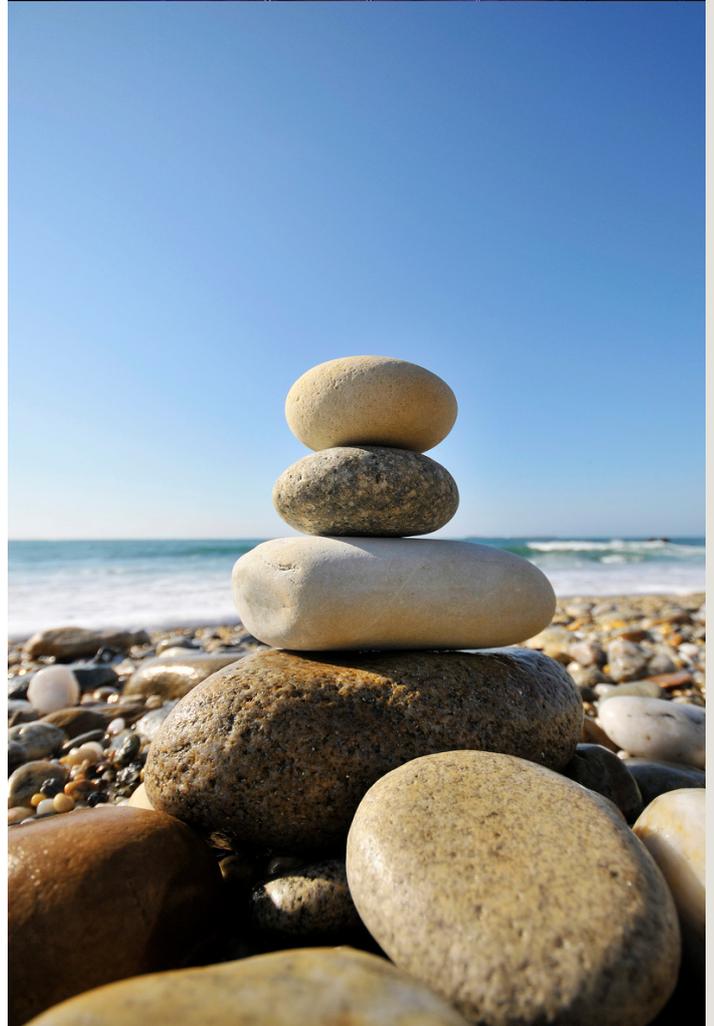
Just contemplating what the memorial might be is helpful, as it honours the reality and memory of our children and brings dignity to their shortened lives.

Consider the following ideas, but don't let them stifle your own heart's leading:

- Plant a tree or dedicate a garden to your child's memory. You may also include your child's name on a plaque and mount it on a garden bench.
- Write a poem or song, paint a picture, or make a quilt.



- Have a private candlelight memorial service for your child.
- Choose a memory box for your child to hold significant items.
- Create a special collection of songs that remind you of the love you have for your child. You may like to write a letter or poem to your child and include it as an introduction to your collection.
- Donate books on infant loss and grief to your local library or support groups in your child's name.
- Select a piece of jewellery that commemorates your child.
- Find a figurine or other piece of art that depicts your love for your child.
- Buy yourself a Bible or other meaningful book that will serve as a connection between you and your child.
- Build a cairn (a pile of stones used in ancient times as a tribute to loved ones who have been lost).
- Select a children's book that you would have loved to read with your child.
- Find a piece of literature or scripture that speaks to your heart and have it mounted and framed.



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- Do something physical in honour of your child’s memory, such as running a half-marathon, climbing a mountain, or hiking to a significant destination.
  - Perform a ritual such as going to the beach, sitting quietly to contemplate your child, and then drawing something meaningful in the sand. Sit and wait until the tide comes in to wash it away, along with your grief.
  - A wonderful act of love is charity. Donate to a cause that touches your heart in honour of your child. Sponsor a child the same age as yours would have been. Try it once—the feeling is wonderful!
  - At Christmas, purchase or make an ornament that symbolizes your child at the age he/she would be now. For example, select a school-themed ornament for a six-year-old, or a key ornament for a teen of driving age.

- Send in a virtual special button and message for Buttons Project Virtual Buttons Memorial

<https://www.buttonsproject.org/buttonsmemorial>



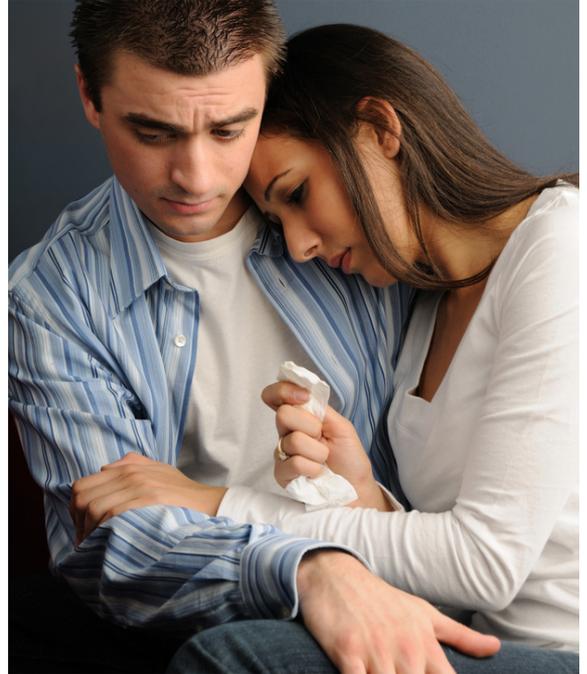
# MANAGING UPCOMING SIGNIFICANT DATES, ANNIVERSARIES, MOTHER'S DAY, OR FATHER'S DAY.

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For many women and men after losing a baby it can be a complicated and painful day - whatever stage of pregnancy you were.

You may have feelings of sadness, anger, been forgotten, unseen, lonely or hurt. Your grief is deeply personal and the way you choose to experience these days is too.

I have gathered some tips that you may find helpful as you start thinking about what you may want and what would work best for you as these days approach.



- Take some time ahead of the day to decide where you will spend it. Will you stay at home, or will it be better for you to go out? If you feel obliged to participate in celebrations, what strategies can you use to take care of yourself?
- Is there someone else who finds Mother's or Father's Day difficult? Who can you call or send a short message to? By reaching out and connecting with others, it opens our hearts and helps us feel less alone.
- Can you write down something or someone that you are grateful for on the day? Gratitude journaling has shown benefits of improving our mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Is there someone you can lean on, to support you on the day? Is it your partner, a trusted friend, a family member, or someone else? Are you able to let them know ahead of the day that you will need their support and how you'd like to be supported?
- Would it feel good to buy a gift for yourself from your child? Maybe flowers or something else which would have special meaning to you.

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So many things can live in a human heart all at once.

Grief and gratitude.

Love and loss.

Hurt and hope.

Seemingly opposite things, all begging to take up space and be seen and heard. But life is learning to live in the tension. To feel the things you need to feel. To process at your own pace. To allow other people in when it feels impossible to face. And above all else, even here, to hope. To let the gentle whisper of hope comfort and guide our broken hearts.

Hope and grief, together in one hurting heart. May we all do our best to carry both.

Author unknown.

# SUPPORT SERVICES

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The unspoken grief of abortion can often be the elephant in the room, and many can suffer in silence.

From my own experience, you can feel this void within, and your heart is grieving, but you can't talk about or share your pain with others because it is considered unacceptable to others. So, it can be suppressed, and affect our physical and mental wellbeing.

We wonder, who can I reach out to? Who will truly understand what I am going through?

Many post-abortive women and men are often struggling alone with their pain and just waiting for the right person to hear their story. Someone who will not condemn them or minimise what has happened.



“Disenfranchised grief (silent grief) is a natural emotional reaction following a loss that is not openly accepted by society. It is normal and expected to grieve after any loss, but not all losses are viewed equally by those around us. Not feeling welcome or comfortable to outwardly mourn or express the emotions that come with a loss can be isolating and can prolong and complicate the grieving process.” Part of an article by Melissa Porrey LPC, NCC <https://www.verywellhealth.com/disenfranchised-grief-5214998>

A person starts the healing journey the moment they feel they have been heard.

If you would like to talk with someone, join a support group, participate in a post abortion recovery programme, or access some counselling. Here are some links which you may find helpful:

### Buttons Project - Towards healing from abortion

[www.buttonsproject.org](http://www.buttonsproject.org)

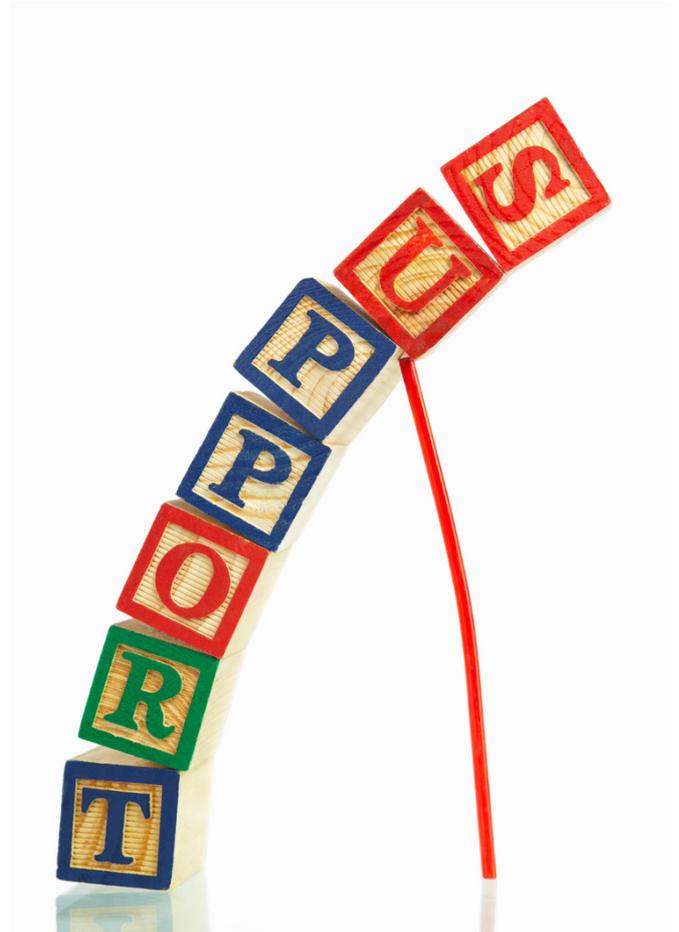
Provides individual support and facilitates post abortion healing programmes.

Email [marina@buttonsproject.org](mailto:marina@buttonsproject.org) or [info@buttonsproject.org](mailto:info@buttonsproject.org)

[www.buttonsproject.org/buttonsmemorial](http://www.buttonsproject.org/buttonsmemorial)

This is our [Virtual Buttons Memorial](#), which has many special buttons with messages from people who have lost their baby to abortion.

Having a symbolic way of naming our babies is acknowledging they existed and were a part of us. This helps us in our journey of healing and releasing them.



### Living in Colour.

<https://livingincolour.nz>

A healing and recovery programme for women who have experienced abortion. It is also available internationally.

If you would like to find out more, please email [info@livingincolour.nz](mailto:info@livingincolour.nz)

or Marina on

[marina@buttonsproject.org](mailto:marina@buttonsproject.org)

All inquiries are dealt with in the strictest confidence.

### Beyond Abortion - You are not alone

This is a closed [Facebook support group](#) that provides a private space for women and men to have online conversations that will help them towards healing and hope. Abortion is often a deep private grief and regret that is not generally talked about.

Buttons Project NZ and Greenstone Doors are admins for this group.

### Rachel's Vineyard Retreats

Healing the wounds of abortion—  
one weekend at a time.

[www.rachelsvineyard.org.nz](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org.nz)

[www.rachelsvineyard.org.au](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org.au)

[www.rachelsvineyard.org](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org)

These weekend Retreats are an  
experience of emotional and spiritual  
healing for those whose lives have  
been touched by abortion. This is open  
to both men and women.

Contact:

Wendy Hill – Retreat Facilitator,

Email: [info@rachelsvineyard.org.nz](mailto:info@rachelsvineyard.org.nz)

Ph 04 9748693 or 0277332990

### Greenstone Doors

Pregnancy and post abortion  
counselling and support

[www.greenstonedoors.co.nz](http://www.greenstonedoors.co.nz)

Email: [info@greenstonedoors.co.nz](mailto:info@greenstonedoors.co.nz)

Ph lower Hutt 04 566 5037 or

mobile 027 254 9222

### Dawnings Counselling Service

[www.dawnings.co.nz](http://www.dawnings.co.nz)

Carolina Gnad has a wide range of  
experience with a background in  
nursing and over 20 years working  
as a counsellor, supervisor, spiritual  
director and trainer.

Specialises in pregnancy-baby loss,  
including termination/abortion loss.

### Project Rachel

#### Post Abortion healing Ministry

[www.hopeafterabortion.com](http://www.hopeafterabortion.com)

[http://www.pregnantandworried.org.n  
z/Healing-After-Baby-Loss](http://www.pregnantandworried.org.nz/Healing-After-Baby-Loss)

[projectrachel@xtra.co.nz](mailto:projectrachel@xtra.co.nz)

Ph 0800-111-811

Provides information about the  
abortion aftermath, women's stories,  
healing and hope to those grieving  
after abortion. Plus, resources.

### Buttons Project Singapore

<http://www.buttonsproject.org.sg/>

Email [june@buttonsproject.org.sg](mailto:june@buttonsproject.org.sg)

### Buttons Project Australia

[www.buttonsproject.org.au](http://www.buttonsproject.org.au)

[info@pregnancyproblemhouse.com](mailto:info@pregnancyproblemhouse.com)

Western Australia.



### Support after Abortion (America) Virtual Support Groups | Support

After Abortion provides abortion healing to men and women. They also have some great resources.  
<https://supportafterabortion.com/virtual-support-groups>

We provide healing, help and recovery for abortion regret and grief. Our team understands first-hand how to care for women and men impacted by an abortion. We provide real-time, compassionate, and genuine care for women and men seeking healing for dealing with grief or regret

### Buttons Project Community

An online support group for women.  
<https://community.buttonsproject.org.sg/c/welcome>

Welcome to our online support group and thank you for being brave. This is a safe space where women who have been through the pain of abortion come together to support one another.

### Almost Daddy

<https://almostdaddy.com>  
Helping men find lost fatherhood following an abortion.

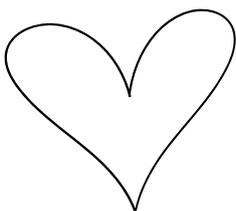
Everyone's journey of healing and loss is unique to that person.

You are worthy.

Life is an ongoing journey of change and growth.

Healing comes in layers.

You do not have to do this alone.





[WWW.BUTTONSPROJECT.ORG](http://WWW.BUTTONSPROJECT.ORG)