

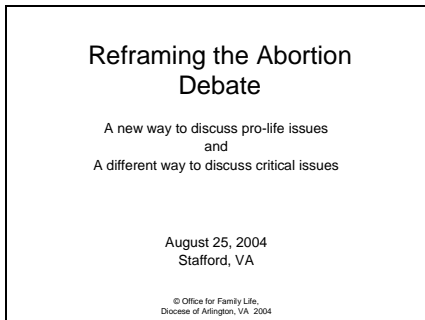
Reframing the Abortion Debate

©Office for Family Life
Catholic Diocese of Arlington – 2004
(703) 841-2550
familylife@arlingtondiocese.org

Do not reproduce, forward or copy the briefing without permission

Information contained in this briefing is contained in:
“Reversing the Gender Gap” by Elliot Institute 2004
and
“Covenant of Love” by Revs. Richard Hogan and John LeVoir

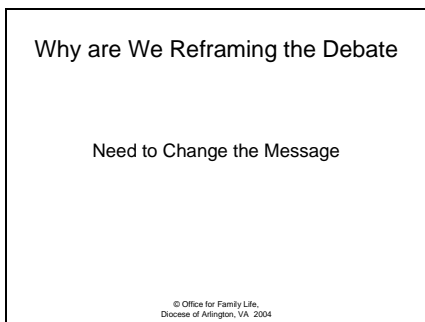
Both publications are available at the Office for Family Life



PRESENTERS:

Gerri Laird – Coordinator of Education and Training
Maryanne Christensen, Director of Project Rachel
Rev. Keith O’Hare
Rev. Jack Fullen

This presentation is the culmination of about four years of planning and discussion. It is based on the thought of our Holy Father, but was truly crystallized with the publication of the Elliot Institutes, “Reversing the Gender Gap,” a small booklet loaded with compelling rationale for changing the message on abortion by reaching out to individuals where they are in life today. We recently finished converting our marriage preparation weekend course – the Conferences for the Engaged – to a program that better reaches the engaged couples where they are! We’d like to do it for the pro-life message as well.



Why are we doing this?

Media people tell us that we should be constantly changing the message. We wouldn’t appreciate hearing the same homily each Sunday! How about radio ads which are the same day-in/day-out. Same logo, “Yes!” Same message, “no!” Why do people spend so much time watching the super bowl ads – same old products – new message. The same is true here!

Changing the Message

- Planned Parenthood's message
 - Abortion is legal and safe
 - Abortion supports women's rights
 - Abortion is good for families



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Planned Parenthood is continually changing their message. First of all, (click) "Abortion is legal and safe." Next, abortion (click) supports women's rights! Now (click), "Abortion is good for families."

As a matter of fact, have you seen the tee shirt that PP is selling. (CLICK) On the front it says, "I had an abortion!" The sales pitch that accompanies it is, "These soft and comfortable fitted tees assert a powerful message in support of women's rights."

It's a sound business practice to change our message as well.

During the Democratic National Convention, Bill O'Reilly on Fox News was interviewing Susan Ethridge regarding the PP T-shirt. Bill stated that the shirt was an outrage. Susan got very emotional and with tears streaming down her face revealed that she had been pregnant 4x and has two beautiful children. She had been raped as a young woman, didn't say whether she had an abortion as a result. She went on to say that during one pregnancy she received a call from her doctor saying that the news was not good and that continuing with the pregnancy would jeopardize her future fertility, so she chose to have an abortion. She stated that Bill had never gone through anything like that. "You're a man, you never experienced anything like that – how would you know?" She also said that she has been on Planned Parenthood's board for a number of years, an organization that has done more for women with unwanted pregnancies than any other. Susan is the classic poster child of the angry, unhealed post-abortive woman.

Change the Message From What?

- Pro-Life Movement
 - Focused on the child:
 - Baby feet
 - Abortion is wrong – it kills a baby
 - Statement of Reality
 - Morally legitimate



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

What has been the focus of the pro-life movement? It has been focused on the child (click).

Abortion is wrong because it kills the baby. (click) We must protect the defenseless baby!

This is a statement of reality (click). It is morally legitimate (click), but doesn't often reach the woman in crisis with an unplanned pregnancy.

What about the Abortion Issue?

- Perceived as politically charged
- Perceived as being the same "boring" arguments
- Perceived as never going to change the law
- Perceived as stirring the guilt of a previous abortion
- Perceived as being presented in a confrontational way

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

What about Abortion as an issue?

(click) Perceived as politically charged.

(click) Perceived as boring! The same arguments are used – Abortion is wrong because it kills the baby.

(click) Perceived as futile fight - not able to change the law.

(click) Perceived as stirring (hitting home at) the guilt of a previous abortion!

(click) Perceived as being presented in a confrontational way!

The public have closed their minds to the old arguments centered around the child – it's too confrontational – so we must change the way we approach the issue of abortion in order to change hearts.

Change the Message to What?



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

In the millennium year, several leaders in the pro-life movement began thinking about this issue and determined that while we may not be able to keep up with the PP advertising campaign or the pro-abortion money machines that are continually cranking out more noise, **we can change our own message to attract those who may have previously turned it off, such as the post-abortive women who felt they had no choice but abortion because of the pressures they faced from others or from their circumstances.**

That is what this gathering is all about - Presenting the same message; but packaging it differently. On a national level, organizations such as the (click) USCCB Pro-Life Committee, (click) Feminists for Life, (click) the Silent No More campaign and others have been promoting the message of the dignity of both the mother and her baby. That simple message is what we are all about today.

We are attempting to approach the pro-life issues in a way that will (click) (1) show the positive effects of changing anti-abortion language (click) and (2) identify physical, emotional and spiritual strategies that win the hearts of those struggling with the pro-life message.

Goals

- To show the positive effects of changing anti abortion language
- To identify physical, emotional and spiritual strategies that win the hearts of those struggling with the pro-life message

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Reframing the Debate

Background to the Topic


Gerri Laird
Maryanne Christensen

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

As most of you know, until recently, I was the director of PR – the post-abortion healing ministry in our diocese. When this program began under our late Bishop Keating, he wanted it to be run through the Office for Family Life using regular staff. Since I had some past experience in crisis pregnancy work, I became the designated coordinator for this new venture. I learned early on in my preparation for post-abortion work that I would have to override my previously conceived ideas of how to handle clients with this type of suffering because I did not think with the same mindset as those who favor abortion, or who have had one. I read, studied, and discussed with experts, and in a sense I had to “unlearn” certain behaviors.

In many ways, we may be asking you to do the same here. For some of you, this may not be a new concept; while for others, this may challenge you to step back and re-think how you will address pro-life issues in the future.

Making Decisions



We think:

- Objectively
- Deductively
- Principled

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Many, if not most, of us grew up and were educated to look at life situations **objectively, applying our principled knowledge of right and wrong** as we determined what thoughts, words and/or actions would be appropriate in any given situation.

The red hot electric burner on the stove was hot. Our parents told us that it was hot. Based upon their position in the family, we took the fact that the burner was red hot as truth. Yes, we may have tried to experience it ourselves and touch the burner. When we did, we only reinforced our own belief system that we received from our parents that they were right. We also have a very burnt hand that we received for our questioning of their principles.

The **objective principle** that the burner was red hot was the basis for **deducting** the inherent truth of that fact! There was no need to take a poll and decide if it was red hot. There was no need to define “red hot!”

But do people think this way any more?

There was a basic shift in the cultural thinking in this country as exemplified by the Supreme Court’s 1992 Planned Parenthood vs. Casey decision. (click)

“At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

The highest court in our country is telling individuals that we alone have the right to define our own concept of existence. This totally takes any higher order of being or any rules of law out of the picture as defined in the founding document of our country. It also takes right and wrong out of the picture.

Experience becomes the factor that governs our decisions.

Majority Opinion

- The Casey Decision

- “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”


(Planned Parenthood vs. Casey, 1992)

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Making Decisions

➤ The modern mind:

- Inductive (vs. deductive)
- Subjective (vs. objective)
- Experiential (vs. principled)



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Today, we think: (click)
Inductively – polls & votes now decide beliefs & practices. How many times do we hear that moral positions are taken based on polling data rather than what is right or wrong! If abortion was really that bad, it wouldn't be legal.(click)
Subjectively – “reality” is based on each individual's perceptions not on objective truth. (click)
Experientially – “what is right for you is not necessarily right for me!” “I'm personally against abortion, but, maybe, if I were in her shoes, I would do the same thing!”

Ricky Williams on ‘Making Decisions’¹

(Washington Post 8/1/04)


- “Everything I'm doing in my life is about *finding the truth!*” (Sounds good, so far)
- “*Football isn't part of the truth* for me anymore.”
- “I failed a drug test because I was ready to quit football.”
- *The Washington Post*:
 - “Well, it turns out one reason Williams might have retired...because he tested positive for marijuana a third time and would have faced a four game suspension had he not quit in *search of the truth.*”

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

In the August 1, 2004 *Washington Post*, Ricky Williams, former running back for the Miami Dolphins, brought this to light. He was quoted as saying the following, (click)
 “Everything I'm doing in my life is about finding the truth!” (Sounds good, so far)(click)
 “Football isn't part of the truth for me anymore.”(click)
 “I failed a drug test because I was ready to quit football.”(click)
 And here's the Post's take on this!
 “Well, it turns out one reason Williams might have retired...because he tested positive for marijuana a third time and would have faced a four game suspension had he not quit in search of the truth.”
 Like it or not, if we hope to connect with our American sisters and brothers in the 21st century, it is necessary to understand how – as a culture - we think, speak and act. We need to think and respond **inductively, subjectively and experientially.**

The Abortion Issue: Deductive/Objective/Principled

- All human life is sacred from conception to natural death.
- An unborn child is a human person.
- It's wrong to kill a human person.
- Therefore, abortion is wrong because it destroys a human life.



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Let's look at this as it pertains to the issue of abortion. The deductive, objective and principled approach is this: (click)
 All human life is sacred from the moment of conception to natural death. (click)
 An unborn child is a human person. (click)
 It's wrong to kill a human person. (click)
 Therefore, abortion is wrong because it destroys a human life!

The Abortion Issue:
Inductive/Subjective/Experiential

- 30% believe abortion should be readily available.
- Abortion is the next to last priority for women.
- 92% list domestic violence as a concern.
- 74% believe abortion is morally wrong.
- 81% feel guilty after their abortion.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

But, let's see how this deductive /objective /principled thinking plays out in real life.

According to polls by The Center for the Advancement of Women (CAW) and the LA Times, (click) Only 30% believe that abortion should be generally available. That makes sense in the context that (click) Keeping abortion legal was the "next to last" priority in importance for women. Even Senator Clinton couldn't drum up support for this issue at the recent Democratic National Convention.

On the other hand, (click) 92% list domestic violence and assault as a primary concern, and women perceive other issues more relevant than abortion.

Which explains why (click) 74% of women admitting to having a past abortion described abortion as "morally wrong." (click) 81% agreed that women feel guilty after their abortions (Reversing the Gender Gap, p. 9-10)!

The Abortion Issue:
Inductive/Subjective/Experiential

- Women need to make the decision themselves.
- Pro-choice = the choice is the woman's and hers alone to make.

"Pro-acceptance"/"Anti-judgment"

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Additionally, most women believe that women need to be allowed to make the decision themselves.

(click) Thus, women who call themselves "pro-choice" are that way because they feel that the choice is theirs, and theirs alone, to make. (click) When they perceive no choice but abortion, they are not necessarily "pro-ABORTION," but "pro-acceptance of their choice." – They are craving acceptance!

They are also "anti-judgment", appalled that anyone would stand in judgment over others, especially those who felt they had no choice but to abort (Reversing..., p. 10). These comments from a post-abortion website will give you an example of experiential thinking:

"Some women do not consider the embryo or fetus to be a potential child, and that's fine. This is totally an individual matter, dependant on your own religious, scientific and social beliefs. If you choose to not think of the pregnancy as a 'potential baby', that is fine, and no one will criticize you or judge you for those feelings. One thing we are adamant about here, is that each woman is entitled to her own experience, and her own feelings about her experience. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' view on this matter, there is only your view, and what feels right to you.

At a pro-life leaders' conference in Denver (7/26/01) a few years ago, Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver listed four problems in our American culture today that may explain why we can't see the problems with destroying life:

(click) Our inability to reason: Marketing appeals to feelings/emotions; the end justifies the means; it's okay to sacrifice the few to save the many; do not think through to the consequences.

(click) Our inability to remember: We enjoy the present moment, and we don't like the past; in addition, we have a poor grasp of history, and we learn too little from the past.

(click) Our inability to imagine and hope: Technology carries with it unintended results. For instance, many reproductive technologies are not only physically harmful to women, but emotionally destructive as well.

Problems

Four problems in American culture:
(Archbishop Chaput)


- Inability to reason
- Inability to remember
- Inability to imagine & hope
- Inability to live **real** freedom

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

(click) Our inability to live real freedom: Freedom is “ability to see, and courage to do, what is right.” Women who see abortion as their only option are not free. They are trapped like an animal whose only way out is to destroy a part of itself and come out wounded. (Chaput)

Why should you care?

- 43% of women by the age of 45 are post-abortive
- 1 out of 4 women 18 or older is post-abortive



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

So why should you care?
43% of women by the age of 45 are post-abortive (<http://womenissues.about.com/cs/abortionstats/a/aaabortionstats.htm>).

1 out of 4 women voters is post-abortive (Reframing, pg. v).

In the Washington Times (Aug 24, 2004), there was a short blurb emphasizing that women will be the key voters in the November election: “[August 26th] is Women’s Equality Day, marking the date in 1920 when women won the right to vote. It so happens that a higher percentage of women than men now vote in the presidential election. Also worth noting: More women than men are undecided about who they will vote for in the 2004 presidential election; women represent the largest number of voters up for grabs in the battleground states, and women represent the largest percentage of swing voters.”


We need to win the hearts of those women!

I want to just take a few minutes now and have you listen to the radio spots that were played during the PR publicity campaign in Feb. & Mar. 2000 based on interviews with post-abortive women.

[PLAY RADIO SPOTS]

Most of those who were interviewed aborted in order to please another person or persons. Most never really felt it was their own decision.

PR Campaign 2000



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Women feel that they have no real choice

- Even though 74% of the women who abort acknowledge that abortion is morally wrong:
 - 42% state they lacked emotional or financial support.
 - 52% felt pressured by an outside source, e.g., boyfriend, family, doctor, etc.
 - 83% said they would have carried their baby to term had they received support from boyfriend, families, etc.
- Women perceive other issues more relevant than abortion

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

So you can see that women feel they have no real choice. Statistics support this.

(click) Even though 74% of the women who abort acknowledge that abortion is morally wrong:

(click) 42% state they lacked emotional or financial support.

(click) 52% felt **coerced** by an outside source, e.g., boyfriend, family, doctor, etc.

(click) 83% said they would have carried their baby to term had they received support from boyfriend, families, etc.

(click) Women perceive other issues more relevant than abortion. (Reardon, *Aborted Women, Silent No More*, Alcorn Books, 2002)

[Mom and daughter example]

Abortion Hurts Women

- 60% higher risk of dying from natural causes
- 7x higher risk of suicide
- Nearly 50% begin or increase drug/alcohol use
- Reproductive problems, i.e. infertility or complications in later pregnancies
- 10% risk of immediate complications
- Increase risk of breast, lung, and cervical cancers



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

But abortion hurts women: (click)

60% higher risk of dying from natural causes (click)

7x higher risk of suicide –. (click)

Nearly 50% begin or increase drug/alcohol use (click)

Reproductive problems, i.e. infertility or complications in later pregnancies (click)

10% risk of immediate complications (click)

Increase risk of breast, lung, and cervical cancers; childbirth actually protects against cancer of the reproductive system.

(Reardon, *Ending Abortion with Compassion, How to Make Abortion Unthinkable*, Elliot Institute, 2003)

Then why so many abortions?

- 30-60% of all abortions are a result of coercion.
- Coerced abortion is a form of domestic violence



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

So if abortion is harmful to women, and if women generally know that abortion is wrong, then why are there so many abortions?

30-60% of all abortions are as a result of women submitting to the demands of boyfriends, husbands, parents, employers, doctors, and other people who influence their lives (Reframing... pg. 13) – yes, these are **coerced unwanted abortions**.

Everyone should be against coerced and unwanted abortions, (click) because this is a form of domestic violence and the pro-life movement has done a terrible job of focusing public attention to this problem.

Remember, as I pointed out a few minutes ago, 92% of women list domestic violence as their greatest concern.

Impact of Abortion

- A child is destroyed.
- A grieving mother may incur irreparable harm.
- The mother's circle of support is permanently affected.
- Both Church & society must pick up the pieces.



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Now let's take a look at the impact of abortion: (click)
A child is destroyed. (click)
A grieving mother may incur irreparable harm. (click)
The mother's circle of support is permanently affected. (click)

Both Church & society must pick up the pieces.

As we all know, the impact of each individual abortion is far-reaching. A woman aborts with the intent of becoming a "**non-mother**." The pain hits hardest when she realizes that instead, she has become **the mother of a dead child**. Yet, there is no child over which to grieve; no body. If and when the family becomes a part of this trauma, they too will be changed.

Society will applaud her for exercising her **right to choose**; they may even offer her counseling – so she can move on with her life. **But only the Church can offer her real healing – an opportunity to heal her entire person – physically, spiritually and emotionally.**

(click) On the other hand, the Church is portrayed as judgmental and insensitive to the plight of women when we act like women deserve the consequences of abortion.

(click) Fearing condemnation for themselves or loved ones, 43% of the congregation will tune out when they hear the word "abortion." Why is that you ask? Well, according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, PPA own statistical data source, by the age of 45, 43% of women are post abortive. And that's across the board - Catholic and non Catholic alike.

During this Radio campaign, we received calls from many Catholic women who were truly shocked that they could actually be forgiven. One woman said she really found this hard to believe and asked if she could come in to the office and see what it looks like. So, she did. She wandered through our storage area and looked at the various books and brochures we had available, etc. Then, she sat down and cried her heart out – blurring between sobs that she couldn't believe that the Catholic Church would actually extend a healing hand to her after what she had done.

Please note that the PR office receives calls (especially after designated "pro-life" Sundays) from women who felt badly for post-abortive loved ones in attendance with them at Mass during which the priest condemned abortion, but failed to address healing and forgiveness as well. These individuals want to comfort their loved ones and encourage them to go to confession, Mass, etc., but it is very difficult, if not impossible, if the only way the life issues are addressed is through condemnation.

The Catholic Church

- Portrayed as judgmental and insensitive to the plight of women when we act like women deserve the consequences of abortion.
- Fearing condemnation for themselves or loved ones, 43% of the congregation will tune out when they hear the word "abortion."



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

The Middle Majority

- Consider themselves against abortion but don't want to be labeled a radical.
- Feeling hypocritical to take a "pro-life position" because of personal experience with abortion.
- "Spiritually pro-life" but not politically
 - Pro-life legislation is likely to fail
 - "Illegal, back-alley" abortions
 - Don't have the right to refuse it to others
 - Hard cases of rape/incest



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

In our conversations in the day-to-day client work and in talking frankly with women and men in their twenties and thirties, we have learned that while many will admit that they consider themselves to be "pro-life," (click) they are uncomfortable with that label because of what they think it implies. They don't want to be seen as "strange religious fanatics."

(click) They also fear being hypocritical.

(click) As one young woman put it, "Some of us are spiritually pro-life, but not politically pro-life" – meaning that they believe abortion is wrong, that it kills a baby, and they would love to see abortion disappear from the face of the earth; however, they are unwilling to fight to make it illegal because of the following reasons:

(click) Pro-life legislation is likely to fail.

(click) They have heard stories of "back alley " abortions.

(click) They think they don't have the right to force other women not to have abortions.

(click) While they personally would never choose abortion, in cases of rape/incest or when the mother's life is in danger, other women should be allowed to abort.

This "great majority" is what we call the "muddy middle" – *people who are anti abortion but call themselves "pro-choice"* so they don't offend their many family and friends who have had an abortion experience. Or they have had an abortion and struggle with calling themselves pro-life because that would be too hypocritical.

To summarize, women today...



- do not like abortion;
- believe abortion causes psychological problems;
- do not care about the politics;
- are concerned about other women who may be coerced;
- would like to see abortion rates drop.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Earlier we mentioned studies of women who have had abortions. But in general today (see *Reversing the Gender Gap*, p. 16):

Women don't like abortion.


Women believe abortion frequently results in severe psychological problems.

Women don't care about the politics of abortion.

Women are concerned about women who are abused and pressured into unwanted abortion. This can easily be categorized as domestic violence. [*Fatal Fathers, Woman who killed boyfriend and then miscarried.*]

Women would like to see abortion rates decline as long as this goal is achieved in ways that advance the welfare and rights of women. What they really want is for women to receive help, compassion, and understanding before they are pregnant, when they are pregnant and after they are pregnant. Whether the pregnancy ended in a baby, miscarriage,or even abortion.

Reality



- Cannot hurt the baby without hurting the mother.
- Cannot help the baby without helping the mother.
- Our outreach must be personal.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

The key to ending abortion is recognizing that the welfare of the mother and her unborn child are inseparable. The fact that abortion hurts women demonstrates that one cannot hurt the baby without hurting the mother. The opposite is also true: one cannot *help* the baby without helping the mother (Reframing...pg. 19).


(click) Our outreach as Church needs to be “personal.” That’s where we are as a culture. That’s reality. **She must know that she is loved every bit as much as the child she carries. She must internalize her own personal dignity if we expect her to love her unborn with dignity – she cannot give what she herself does not have. She cannot love her child if she does not possess a healthy love of self...**

Therefore, we must focus on showing how women are hurt by abortion by exposing the harmful experiences of the post-abortive woman.

(click) Education on this issue will open their eyes to see that opposition to abortion is the only authentic way to stand up for the welfare of both the women and their children.

The American Audience


- Therefore, we can show that women are hurt by abortion *through the experiences of the post-abortive women.*
- Opposition to abortion is the only authentic way to defend the welfare of both the women and their children.



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

The Bottom Line

- The legal/principled approach to the abortion issue does not change women’s attitudes.
- The personal/experiential approach can reach them more directly.




© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

The legal/principled approach to the abortion issue does not change women’s attitudes.

(Click) The personal/experiential approach can reach them more directly.

Reframing the Debate



Women Deserve Better

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Abortion is a reflection that we have not met the needs of women. We need to show how society has failed women and that “Women Deserve Better™” than abortion. Memorize this slogan used by Feminists for Life! We use it all the time.

[STORY RE: N.O.W. CALLER – “We are pro-woman...abortion hurts women; therefore, we would never refer a woman for an abortion.”]

Person to Person

- Personal Communication
 - Validation of painful experiences
 - Gift of Dignity


© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

We live in a high-tech “impersonal” culture; we tend to communicate in a high tech way. However, this doesn’t work in the politically-charged pro-life arena. We must zero in on individuals. We do this by listening to others’ experiences, by meeting them where they are, (click) validating their painful circumstances, (click) then offering them dignity and respect in return.

If we show those touched by abortion that we understand why that decision was made, they will listen. (Mention “Respect Life” handout-discussion on back sheet!)

John Paul II’s Message

“The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision.”



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Our Holy Father understands this challenge. As Catholic Americans, we need to internalize his message.

First, he **reaches out with compassion** by acknowledging that there are many reasons why abortion appears to be the solution. In *Evangelium Vitae* (EV) 99, he writes, “The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision.”

John Paul II's Message

"The wound in your heart may not have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong."



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

(click) Next, **he validates their pain**, and he even states that it was wrong; but consider the context and wording he very carefully uses: "The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong."

John Paul II's Message

"But do not give into discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly."



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

(click) He then very skillfully **offers them hope and invites them to repent**: "But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly."

John Paul II's Message

"If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation."




© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

(click) "If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation."

John Paul II's Message

"To the same Father and to His mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child."




© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

(click) He then **restores their motherhood** to them: "To the same Father and to his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child."

By restoring her motherhood, he has just given her back her own personhood as well – her own dignity.

John Paul II's Message

"With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life."



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Now, he **challenges her to seek healing** and to become a defender of life herself. In other words, he meets her in her brokenness – in her sinfulness; offers her hope and healing; and challenges her to go out and do likewise – to "sin no more." (click) In his words, "With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life."

Now, when we in PR receive a call from a woman who is sobbing because of a past abortion, we will ask her if we can share a few words from Pope JP II. It doesn't matter whether she is Catholic or atheist, in all cases, the women have allowed us to read these words when they were really struggling with tears and/or self-condemnation. In every case, this has brought tremendous comfort and helped to open these women up to further healing and to a greater understanding of why abortion is wrong.

Personhood

"...Only the individual who experiences himself as a person, as an integrated whole, is capable of understanding other persons..." (Edith Stein)

- **The Body is the Expression of the Person**
 - What hurts our body, hurts our person
- "The self is the individual's way of structuring experience..." (Stein)

BUT

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Edith Stein's writings can also help us to understand "personhood" and why we must address the life issues from JP II's perspective: "...Only the individual who experiences himself as a person, as an integrated whole, is capable of understanding other persons..." John Paul II says that in order to know how we are to act as persons, we must turn to God because we are made in His image and likeness.

But, let's look at our American culture again. How many Americans look to God in order to know how they should behave?? This is a great problem, but it should help us to understand why so many people are willing to accept abortion.

Back to what you see on the screen. Theoretically speaking, we as Catholics should be taking the lead when it comes to embracing and educating not only those who are post-abortive, but also those who are "personally opposed but..." Whether we are speaking to a Catholic individual/audience/congregation or to a secular individual/audience, we can apply the Holy Father's approach simply by responding that (click) "the body is the expression of the person." (click) What hurts our body, hurts our person. If I am depressed emotionally, then I am not eating properly and probably have no desire to exercise, etc. This then hurts me physically and even spiritually – I'm too depressed for God.

Now, observe Edith Stein's next point: (click) "The self is the individual's way of structuring experience..."
But...

Personhood


- If "self" is the standard of measurement:
 - we lock ourselves up in our own individuality
 - we mold others into our own image
 - others become "riddles" for us
 - distort the historical truth (Stein)

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

As Edith Stein points out, if self becomes our standard of measurement, (click) then we lock ourselves up in our own individuality, and (click) we try to understand others only by looking to self – rather than looking to God as the standard of measurement. When others don't fit into our image (click) they become riddles to us. Logically, (click) the truth about the human person becomes distorted, and we find ourselves in the current environment. The Holy Father understands this – that is why he is so successful in embracing our youth. He understands the environment they are living in and he is trying to give us the language in which to change and heal the culture.

What Makes Human Life Different?

> The Human Body
 > "The Expression of our Personhood"




© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

What Makes Human Life Different?

The human body is....
The expression of our personhood

What Makes Human Life Different?

- >The Human Body
 - >"The Expression of our Personhood"
 - >If we didn't have bodies, we couldn't express ourselves




© Office for Family Life, Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

Note that these words can be used with any audience. We use them almost daily when assisting a post-abortive woman:

"Of course you are hurting; it's normal for you to feel this way because your body is the expression of your person – it expresses who you are – and when one part of you hurts, it affects the rest of your person as well" – e.g., the physical/hormonal effects of abortion can lead to depression; the emotional grief over the loss of the father of the child and that relationship, and the unborn child and that relationship; the spiritual disappointment because she acted against her own faith belief and now feels alienation from God...All of these can lead to depression.

What Makes Human Life Different?

- >The Human Body
 - >"The Expression of our Personhood"
 - >If we didn't have bodies, we couldn't express ourselves
 - >Our bodies are important



© Office for Family Life, Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004


Yes, our bodies are important...and they don't function well when we are depressed: Can't eat right; can't sleep; can't exercise. What does the body do then? It crashes!

This occurs especially with women who are newly post-abortive – within a few days/weeks/months or perhaps less than 1 year. They must be handled differently from women who are several years post-abortive. For the newly post-abortive, we are dealing with a woman who literally is experiencing a **sudden death in the family**. So, she must be treated just like any other relative or neighbor going thru such a trauma: She needs help nutritionally; she needs to find ways to rest/power nap; she needs to get some exercise. Otherwise, she may well go into a physical depression – which can lead to great instability.

As an aside, when we do get calls from women who are newly post-abortive and who haven't been eating properly, we will tell them to get a piece of meat/cheese/fish the size of the palm of their hand and a glass of orange juice, and we tell them to consume those while we talk to them – very often just reading them the words from EV. 99.

Winning Their Hearts

- We are always called to witness to the whole truth:
 - The sanctity of life
 - Authentic rights of women and children
 - The evils of abortion



© Office for Family Life, Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

We are always called to witness to the whole truth: (click) The sanctity of life, (click) the authentic rights of women and children, (click) and the evils of abortion. We are not telling people NOT to address this!

Winning Their Hearts

- Listen and understand

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

In January 2003, I [Gerri] was invited to give a 10-15 minute talk on Project Rachel to the Constitutional Issues Club at a local public high school. I was told that someone from the “other side” would also have to be there, but that this was NOT a debate. As it turned out, it was introduced as a debate, and the NARAL lawyer went first; I went second because I was the “challenger from the Catholic Diocese of Arlington.” The lawyer did the usual legalese, choice, etc., and interrupted me constantly during my few minutes. Eventually, I just threw my notes into the air (which got everyone’s attention) and then leaned forward and reminded them all that if their mothers had chosen abortion, this classroom would be empty. After discussion – the students were no longer interested in the lawyer because she was talking about an abstraction – I was talking about them! We even discussed hormonal birth control at one point, and I explained how it hurts women/girls, etc. The lawyer was basically tongue-tied. [The main discussion points are available upon request.]

This is just an example of how one can use the experience of the audience to make a point. We need to be able to listen and understand so that we can respond to their “logic.” This is a different way in which we can discuss critical issues.

This is how we can reframe the abortion debate.

Change the Language

- A middle majority
 - Against abortion personally
 - Don’t want to judge or be against women’s rights
 - Abortion must be tolerated as a necessary evil
 - Focus is not on the fetus
 - Focus is on the woman



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

We need to change the language to reach the middle majority. (click) This middle majority is against abortion personally (click) but doesn’t want to judge or be against women’s rights. (click) They believe abortion must be tolerated as a necessary evil. (click)

Their focus is not on the unborn child, so nothing you say on behalf of baby will change their mind. (click) Their focus is on the woman so we must focus on the woman. We do that by showing how abortion has hurt women through the experiences of the post-abortive woman.

Change the Language

- Legalization of abortion is based on two lies:
 - Abortion destroys a bunch of tissue, not a human life.
 - Abortion is safe and helpful to women.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

The legalization of abortion is based on 2 lies: (click) Abortion destroys a bunch of cells, not a human life, and (click) abortion is safe and helpful to women (Elliot Institute, "Ending Abortion with Compassion," 2003).

Americans know abortion kills babies. 77% of Americans believe abortion is the taking of a human life. Thus abortion advocates have abandoned the first lie in favor of a second claim: A woman's right is more important than the fetus, and abortion is safe and helpful to women.

Alexander Sanger, grandson of Margaret Sanger who founded Planned Parenthood, makes an interesting point that we need to grab onto: "few abortion supporters talk about abortion positively. Many supporters of choice carefully distinguish between being pro-choice and pro-abortion. Many say, 'I would never have an abortion, but it should be legal.' President Bill Clinton, when he talked about abortion, said it should be '**safe, legal, and rare.**' **If something is good, why should it be rare?**" Sanger laments that this statement has weakened the pro-choice position (Sanger, *Beyond Choice*, Public Affairs, 2004).

Change the Language

- Expose the false promises of abortion.
- Support Mother and Child.



Project Rachel 

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

It is important to expose the second lie: that abortion is safe. This lie is the backbone of legalized abortion. If abortion hurts women and kills babies, whom is it helping? Educating the public about the harm abortion does to women will open their eyes to see that opposition to abortion is the only authentic way to stand up for the welfare of both the women and their children.

As I mentioned a few minutes ago, even Alexander Sanger poses the question, "If something is good, why should it be rare?" (re: "safe, legal and rare")

(click) We are on the side of both the unborn and the mother. Prove that we care more about women, both before and after the abortion, and before, during and after a pregnancy.

(click) In this diocese, we are especially blessed to have both a post-abortion healing program – Project Rachel – and a pregnancy assistance program – Gabriel Project Arlington.

Love Them Both



- We are called to be pro-life
 - To help a child, we must help the mother.
 - The best interest of the child and mother are always joined.
 - Only the mother can nurture her child. All we can do is to nurture the mother.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

In short, (click) to save the baby we must first save the mother. If we treat her with dignity, there is hope that she will internalize her child's dignity as well. (click) The best interest of the child and the mother are always joined. (click) Only the mother can nurture her child. All we can do is to nurture the mother.

Share the Truth

- 52% of women suffering from abortion report they were "forced by others" to abort.
- Abortion doesn't turn back the clock.
- Choice: Having a baby and having an abortion.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Since 52% of women who suffer post abortion aftermath report they were "forced by others" into unwanted abortions, it is absolutely critical to educate their boyfriends, parents, counselors, and the medical community about the risks that abortion poses to women. We need to empower women by rebuilding their own dignity. We should get on the bandwagon and proclaim that **no woman should be coerced into having an unwanted abortion!** (Believe me, this will resonate with post-abortive women.)

By encouraging abortion, they actually hurt those they are trying to help. We need to empower those whose loved one has a "problem pregnancy" with an understanding that abortion will only add to the pain of their loved one.

(click) Abortion doesn't turn back the clock.


Once a woman is pregnant, the choice is not simply whether or not to have a baby. (click) It is a choice between having a baby and having an abortion – which is fundamentally a traumatic experience.

With birth, the mother's body naturally opens up, etc.; with abortion, she is "forced open," life is stripped from her, and she may even feel like she has been raped. No woman should ever be forced to go thru such a trauma. One expert psychologist in the field of post-abortion healing coined the term "**baby on the brain.**" – because after the baby is removed from the womb, he lodges in the brain and is never forgotten.

The Bottom Line

–The legal/principled approach to the abortion issue does not change women's attitudes.

–The personal/experiential approach can reach them more directly.



© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

The legal/principled approach to the abortion issue does not change women's attitudes.

(Click) The personal/experiential approach can reach them more directly.

The Bottom Line

–Compassion vs. Condemnation


“A teaspoon of honey will catch more flies than a barrel of vinegar.”

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Compassion vs. Condemnation

“A teaspoon of honey will catch more flies than a barrel of vinegar.” Francis de Sales

The Bottom Line



– We must be Christ-like:

- Meet each person where they are.
- Lift them up through healing.
- Challenge them to sin no more.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

We must be Christ-like: Like Christ in the Gospel, we must meet (click) each person individually where they are, (click) lift them up through healing and (click) challenge them to sin no more.

The Bottom Line



- Understand the audience:
Assume at least one post-abortive person is within earshot or in the audience or congregation
- Indicate your understanding by using language that validates & invites.
- Always address healing and forgiveness first when discussing abortion.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Therefore, concluding this discussion on Reframing the Abortion Debate, we must first (click) understand our audience. There may be post-abortive women and men, teens and children with post-abortive parents, close friends and relatives of those who have aborted.

While not condoning abortion, (click) we need to convey that we understand why so many women feel compelled to make that choice. Abortion is a reflection that we have failed to meet the needs of women. Women deserve better.

If the ultimate goal is to end abortion, we must also elect leaders who understand this reality: that abortion is a form of domestic violence, and hurts women. To reach the majority – and win their votes - it is imperative that we show the connection between abortions – especially coerced unwanted abortions - domestic violence, and the devastating life-changing experiences of so many individuals.

And finally, (click) we need to invite anyone who has had an abortion or been involved with abortion, to experience healing and forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Project Rachel. Everyone knows that the Catholic Church condemns abortion, but very few understand that She also offers forgiveness and healing.

Reframing the Debate

A Witness to Life

Father Jack Fullen
Father Keith O'Hare

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Building Bridges With Empathy

- The message of forgiveness must always precede a message about the sanctity of life:
 - Acknowledge their need and desire for healing and share God's freely offered forgiveness.
 - Build up confidence that aborted children "can with sure hope" be entrusted to the Father of mercy.
 - Build up faith that even our sins can be used by God to make us into better people.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

It is only after they feel forgiven, or at least taste its hope, that post-aborted women and men can bear to look at the truth of their unborn children.

Building Bridges With Empathy

- Develop the understanding that the only lasting victims of abortion are those who fail to embrace God's forgiveness.
- Paint a picture of joy and healing which has been experienced by so many people who have worked through post-abortion healing.
- Invite members of your community to help each other and those who have been involved in abortion to experience healing.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

By bringing down the walls of defensiveness, we can lead post abortive men and women to the truth of forgiveness. They need to hear that in repentance there is freedom.

A Healing Strategy

Concern for the unborn should always be connected to love for the unborn child's mother.
Love them both!

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

This is necessary, remember in God's natural order of things, an unborn child can only be nurtured and protected by the mother. Only in serving her needs can we serve her child.

Reducing Judgments

- The walking wounded need to know we understand; we do not judge the person
 - we judge the act.
 - Post aborted are filled with humility or shame.
 - The forgiven feel humility; the unforgiven feel shame.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

When we begin a discussion with the statement, "I can't understand how anyone could have an abortion," we alienate people. Maybe a friend was about to share with us a painful past experience. Now she will never share anything with us. Women go to great lengths to protect denial and become defiant, even hateful, of anyone perceived to aggravate their feelings of guilt. They feel no one understands them, and fear that everyone condemns them.

Reducing Judgments

- By increasing our understanding and compassion, we help to reduce feelings of shame.
- Our Christian obligation is to help them find peace in God's forgiveness.
- Such a strategy also brings them to a fuller understanding of what it means to respect life.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA, 2004

Overcoming shame leads the way to repentance. They will not overcome shame in a "healing" way unless they first trust us. Understanding their choice to abort does not mean we agree that the choice was a good one. But it does make them feel understood, and this will free them to trust that we really will help.

Reducing Judgments

- It is imperative for the prolife/pro-woman movement to concentrate on counteracting the media-imposed image that pro-lifers are self-righteous, right-wing snobs.
- We must wear our compassion on our sleeves!

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

- It is imperative for the prolife/pro-woman movement to concentrate on counteracting the media-imposed image that pro-lifers are self-righteous, right-wing snobs.
- We must wear our compassion on our sleeves!

What's the Clergy to Do?

- Without condoning abortion you must:
 - Give whole sermons on the need for understanding and compassion for those who have abortions.
 - Begin by talking generally about not judging others while judging objective moral content of specific acts; Love the sinner, hate the sin.
 - Clarify the distinction between objective evil and subjective culpability.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

Approach the topic slowly, so that when listeners figure out what you're talking about, they already know you're not condemning them. Use examples of testimonies of those who have chosen abortion.

What's the Clergy to Do?

- Build a basis for understanding the many pressures women face which make abortion appear to be their 'only choice.'
- Back it up with a testimony.
- Preview some emotional baggage by those who have been involved in abortion and suffered from it
- Close with an appeal to compassion and understanding to alleviate the shame which obstructs healing and reconciliation.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

- Build a basis for understanding the many pressures women face which make abortion appear to be their 'only choice.'
- Back it up with a testimony.
- Preview some emotional baggage by those who have been involved in abortion and suffered from it.
- Close with an appeal to compassion and understanding to alleviate the shame which obstructs healing and reconciliation.

What's the Clergy to Do?

- Direct the homily to those who have not had abortions. Those who have had abortions will then feel freer to listen without feeling alienated or condemned.
- Reinforce the need for sympathy and understanding, and the desire to promote healing and reconciliation.
- Discuss how despair can be used to lead us into error and to keep us away from God.

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

- Direct the homily to those who have not had abortions. Those who have had abortions will then feel freer to listen without feeling alienated or condemned.
- Reinforce the need for sympathy and understanding, and the desire to promote healing and reconciliation.
- Discuss how despair can be used to lead us into error and to keep us away from God.

What's the Clergy to Do?

- Describe the psychological problems caused by unresolved abortion guilt.
- Note the difficulty of overcoming avoidance behavior. Acknowledge that this is difficult, but there is help.
- End with reaffirmation of the community's support.
- Give them the number for Project Rachel,
- 888-456-HOPE

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

On some level most post-abortive people do understand the truth that abortion destroys a human life. Many dare not admit that, and our attempts to force them to confront that fact will cause fear, anxiety, resentment, and anger. Walls will go up. Showing them we know the truth of what abortion does to *them*, how abortion hurts women, helps the walls to come down, helps them break through the denial that their abortion isn't affecting them.

For More Information

- Office for Family Life:
 - 703.841.2550
 - familylife@arlingtondiocese.org
- Project Rachel:
 - 1.888.456.HOPE
 - projectrachel@arlingtondiocese.org
- Gabriel Project:
 - 1.866.444.3553
 - gabrielproject@arlingtondiocese.org

© Office for Family Life,
Diocese of Arlington, VA 2004

- Office for Family Life:
 - 703.841.2550
 - familylife@arlingtondiocese.org
- Project Rachel:
 - 1.888.456.HOPE
 - projectrachel@arlingtondiocese.org
- Gabriel Project:
 - 1.866.444.3553
 - gabrielproject@arlingtondiocese.org