

A Mother's Journey

My name is Susan Swander; I'm a 70-year-old who lives in Waldport, Oregon. This is the story of my 3 abortions and my healing from Post-Abortion Trauma. I have two goals in sharing my story. First, I want to tell all post-abortive parents that there is hope and healing. Second, I want to make sure that anyone considering an abortion is aware of the horror that awaits them. The abortion providers will not give out the relevant information; they will not mention Post Abortion Trauma.

After 3 abortions and 1 miscarriage, I spent years drinking, drugging, over-eating and living a promiscuous, sinful life. I had no idea that the pain in my life had anything to do with the abortions.

My healing began in small ways – in 1981 with the birth of my son, in 1985 with God's gift of sobriety, and in 1997 with my return to my Catholicism. In the fall of 2003, I saw a box ad in a St. Anthony's bulletin for Rachel's Vineyard Retreats for post-abortion healing. I went to the Rachel's Vineyard web site—www.rachelsvineyard.org—wept buckets of tears as I read it. It was the first time in 36 years that I really looked at my abortions for what they were – the loss of my 3 children.

It took me awhile to get up the courage to call, but thank God I did. I attended a Rachel's Vineyard Retreat in April 2004. What a remarkable, healing experience this weekend was. Words do not do justice to the love, compassion, and understanding I found during the retreat. Perhaps most importantly, I met and named my four children—Luke, Grace, Teresa (miscarried), and Benjamin. I found forgiveness—from them and from God. I am learning to forgive myself. Each time that I share my story, I heal a little more. At my retreat, I promised my children that I would no longer hide them and that I would share our story whenever I could.

If you are reading this and are contemplating an abortion, please reconsider. It will cause you untold pain and heartache. If you have had an abortion, please know that healing is available. None of us has to live alone with the shame, guilt and pain that come after an abortion.

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