

The Fireweed Project abortion aftercare resource booklet

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HONOURING YOUR JOURNEY



**HELPING INDIGENOUS
PEOPLE NAVIGATE THE
ABORTION JOURNEY**



HONOURING YOUR JOURNEY

**HELPING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE NAVIGATE
THE ABORTION JOURNEY**

**PUBLISHED IN 2025 BY THE FIREWEED PROJECT
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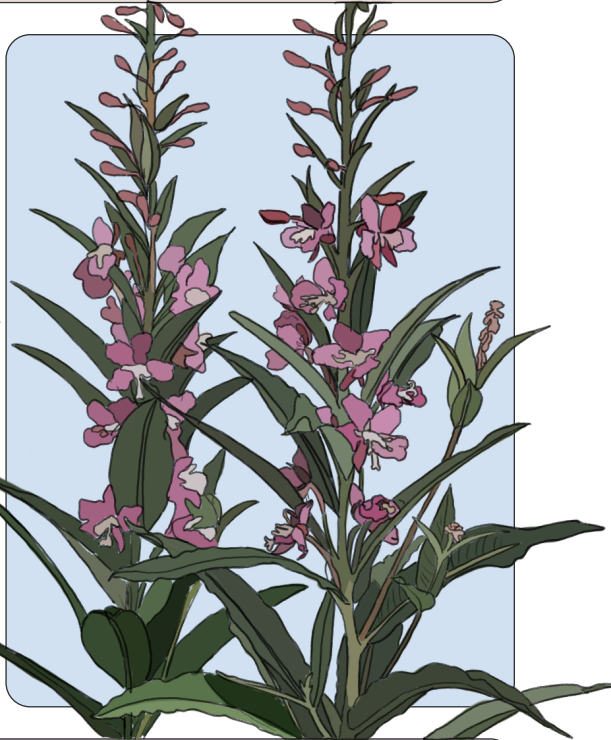
INTRODUCTION

For some, once all the appointments are finished and everything is said and done, the post-abortion experience is the first time they are able to catch their breath.

THIS IS A TIME TO BE GENTLE ON YOUR BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT.

Below you will find information about what to expect and look out for after an abortion as well as a resource for further aftercare information and support.

This information was prepared by the Fireweed Project Team, whose members are not medical professionals. It has been reviewed by abortion advocates and medical professionals from our advisory circle and community partners. These guidelines are not a substitute for your healthcare provider's advice. The information was sourced from the following websites:



SHORE CENTRE

CLINIC.SHORECENTRE.CA/MEDICATIONABORTION/



SEX AND U

WWW.SEXANDU.CA/ABORTION/



PLANNED PARENTHOOD TORONTO

PPT.ON.CA/FACTSHEETS/ABORTION/

For a downloadable version of this booklet and the postcards found on the last pages, go to the fireweedproject.ca.

FIREWEED PROJECT

WWW.FIREWEEDPROJECT.CA

MEDICATION ABORTION

WHAT IS A MEDICATION ABORTION?

A medication abortion refers to ending a pregnancy through taking medication. Two different medicines are used, **Mifepristone** and **Misoprostol**, also known as **Mifegymiso**®.

NAUSEA, VOMITING & DIARRHEA

Nausea and vomiting are common, especially after the 2nd dose, and may last for two days. Diarrhea may also occur, more commonly after the 2nd dose as well. In this case, make sure to drink water and stay hydrated.

HEADACHES, DIZZINESS & WEAKNESS

Headaches, dizziness, and weakness are common side effects. Headaches and weaknesses may last for two days while dizziness usually only lasts for one day.

BLEEDING

Bleeding is not a symptom but rather a sign that the pills are working. Bleeding lasts on average 10 to 16 days.

FEVER & CHILLS

Fever and chills are common but should only last for one day.

PAIN

Pain in the abdomen typically occurs within the first 3 hours of taking the 2nd dose, although it's possible to experience cramps after the 1st dose too. Pain may be similar to period cramps, with those who usually have more painful periods potentially experiencing more discomfort.



NORMAL VS ABNORMAL SYMPTOMS

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If **any of these symptoms** occur, you could be experiencing a medical emergency or a complication - **seek medical attention right away!**

VERY HEAVY BLEEDING

Very heavy bleeding is defined by soaking through two maxi pads in two hours, or passing very large blood clots the size of a golf ball or bigger. It is also a concern if blood clots are passed for more than 2 hours.

HIGH FEVER

A high fever greater than 38°C (100.4°F) that lasts longer than 24 hours after taking the second dose.

SIGNS OF AN INCOMPLETE ABORTION

Signs of an incomplete abortion, although rare, include cramps, prolonged pain, continued bleeding in the weeks following abortion, and pain after pressing down on the abdomen area.



PROCEDURAL ABORTION

WHAT IS A PROCEDURAL ABORTION?

A procedural abortion refers to ending a pregnancy through an internal procedure. The two types of procedural abortions are suction/aspiration and dilation & evacuation (D&E).

LIGHT TO MODERATE BLEEDING

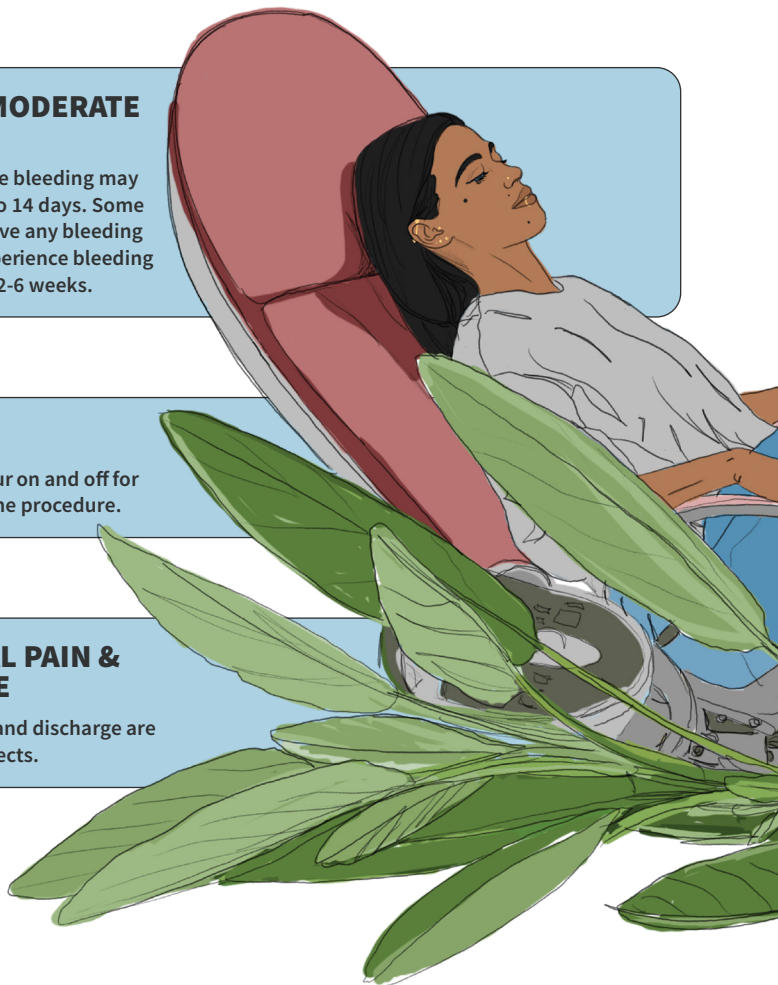
Light to moderate bleeding may continue for up to 14 days. Some people do not have any bleeding where others experience bleeding lasting between 2-6 weeks.

CRAMPS

Cramps may occur on and off for 2-3 weeks after the procedure.

ABDOMINAL PAIN & DISCHARGE

Abdominal pain and discharge are common side effects.



NORMAL VS ABNORMAL SYMPTOMS

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

If any of these symptoms occur, you could be experiencing a medical emergency or a complication - seek medical attention right away!

FEVER, NAUSEA, VOMITING, OR DIARRHEA

Chills and a fever of 38°C (100.4°F) the day after the procedure, and nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours are abnormal.

PROLONGED HEAVY BLEEDING

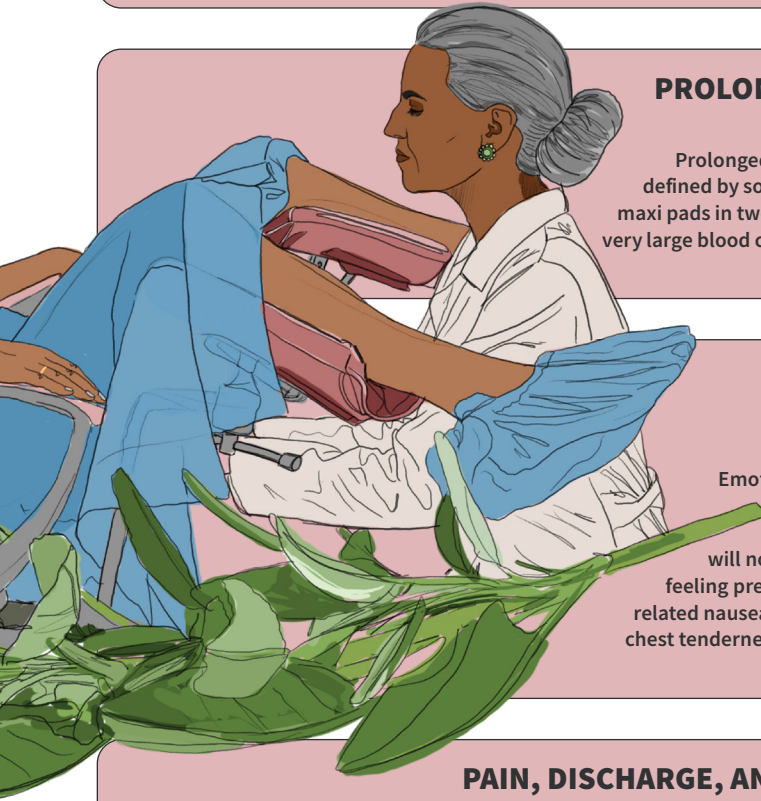
Prolonged heavy bleeding is defined by soaking through two maxi pads in two hours, or passing very large blood clots the size of golf balls or bigger.

EMOTIONAL & PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Emotional and physical symptoms such as depression that will not go away and still feeling pregnant (pregnancy-related nausea, sickness, breast/chest tenderness) for more than 2 weeks afterward.

PAIN, DISCHARGE, AND FAINTING

Severe abdominal pain that doesn't feel like uterine cramps and is not reduced with medication, vaginal discharge that smells bad, and any episodes of fainting post-procedure are abnormal.



MANAGING POST-ABORTION SYMPTOMS

FATIGUE

It is normal to feel tired for the first few days afterwards, but you should begin to feel back to normal as the days go on.

REST AND COMFORT

Most normal side effects can be managed by rest, try to give yourself comfort where possible.

HEAVY EXERCISE OR WORK

Avoiding heavy exercise or work for several days is advised by some.

BREAST/CHEST TENDERNESS

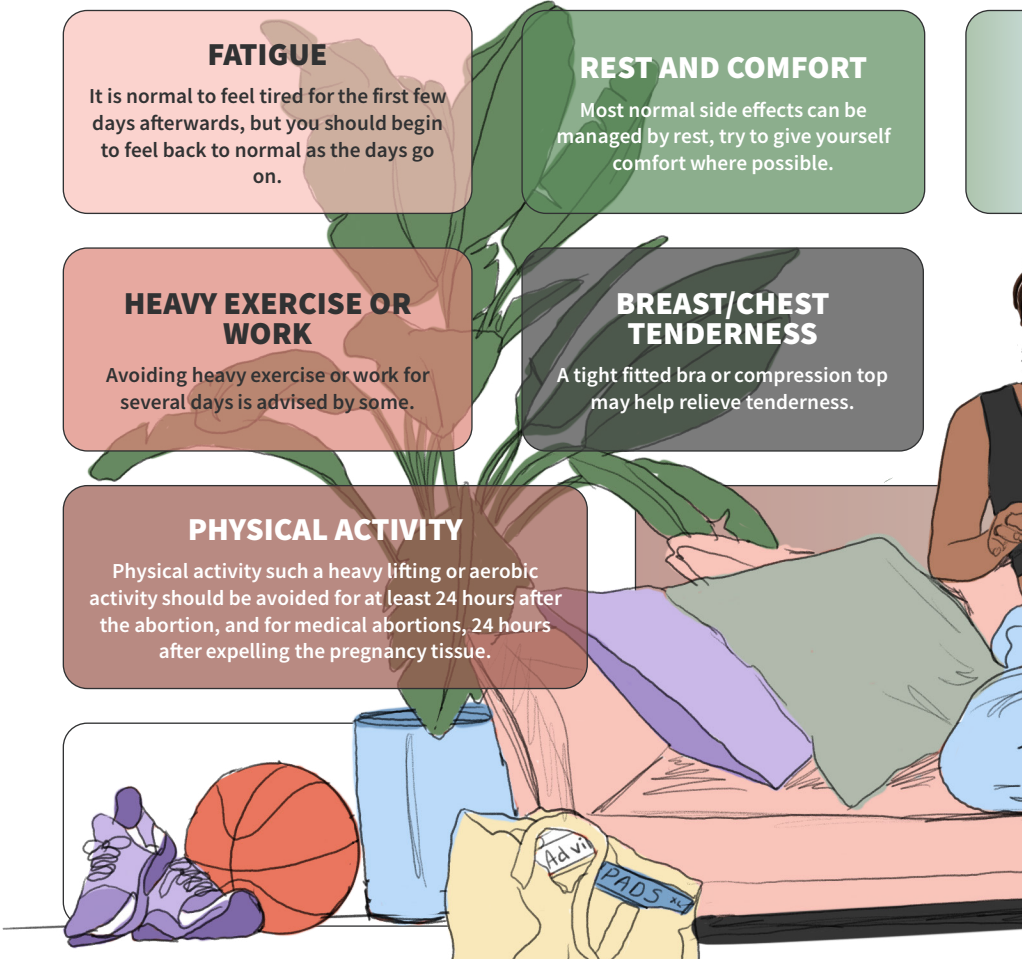
A tight fitted bra or compression top may help relieve tenderness.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity such as a heavy lifting or aerobic activity should be avoided for at least 24 hours after the abortion, and for medical abortions, 24 hours after expelling the pregnancy tissue.

POST-ABORTION PREGNANCY SYMPTOMS

These symptoms will end a week or so after the abortion. Nausea is usually the first symptom to end. Some may experience tender breasts/ chest and they may leak a milky discharge or lactation.



BLEEDING

Using pads for bleeding will help with keeping track of how heavy the bleeding is.

PAIN RELIEF

For easing abdominal or back pain, use a heating pad or hot water bottle, massage painful areas gently, or ask a clinician about medication like ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) or acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®).

STAY HYDRATED

Stay hydrated, especially if experiencing nausea or vomiting.

REDUCE INFECTION RISKS

For 1-2 weeks after an abortion you can reduce the risk of infection by not inserting anything into your vagina, such as douches, and by not sitting in water, such as hot tubs.

SOOTHE STRESS

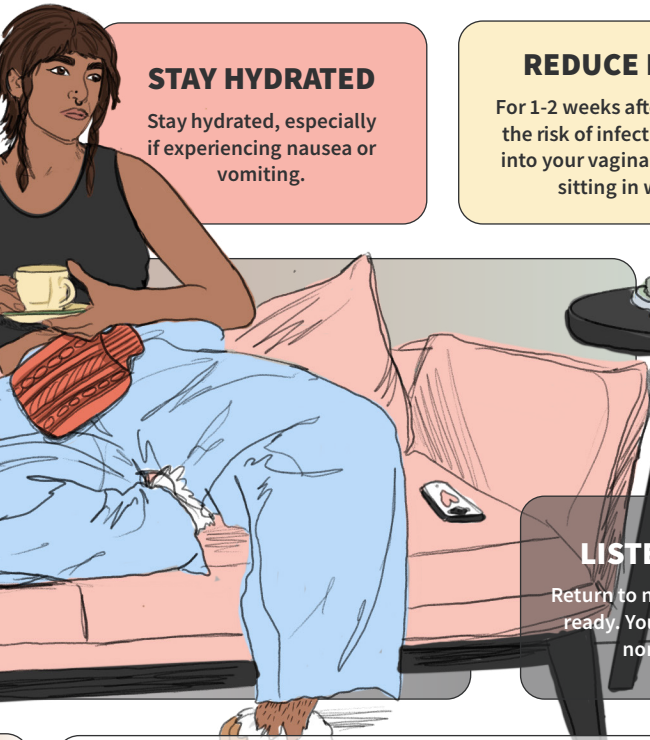
Soothe stress with tea, rest, and comfort.

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Return to normal activities when you feel ready. You should begin to feel back to normal as the days go on.

WWW.MYPOSTCARE.CA

This website includes information on abortion's medical side effects and symptoms, an abortion emotional support tool, a contraception explorer, and sexual health resources, as well as personalized support through email notifications addressing the natural states and changes in the post-abortion care journey.

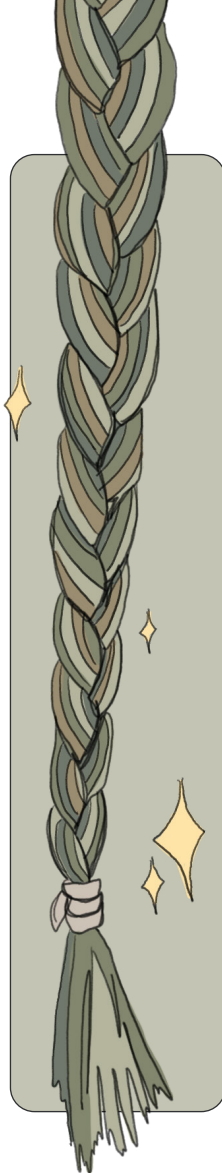


HONOURING YOURSELF

Accessing an abortion can leave us with all kinds of feelings. There is no one right way to feel! You might feel relieved, sad, flat, happy, frustrated, or a mix of all of these emotions at the same time.

Everyone has different ways to process their emotions. Some people find it helpful to have someone to talk to or may want some direction for how to nurture their emotional and spiritual well-being during their experience. If this resonates with you, the following resources may be helpful to access at any stage during your abortion experience. Each will support your emotional well-being during this time and be accessible from anywhere in Canada; support topics vary from abortion-specific, Indigenous-specific, and general wellness.

While looking for support services elsewhere, **beware of information from 'crisis pregnancy centres'**. These clinics have been criticized by pro-choice organizations for using deceptive and manipulative practices to convince people that they were wrong for having an abortion. A list of these crisis pregnancy centres can be found on ARCC's [website](#)¹ under 'List of Anti-choice Groups in Canada'.



Link 1 — ARCC's List of Anti-Choice Groups in Canada

<https://www.arcc-cdac.ca/media/2021/09/list-anti-choice-groups-CPCs-only.pdf>

RESOURCES FOR EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL WELLNESS



ACTION CANADA- ACCESS LINE

ACTION CANADA-ACCESS LINE

The Access Line² is a toll-free, confidential, phone, text and email line provided by Action Canada. Their peer support staff/ volunteers provide a compassionate unbiased ear to hear you out and talk things through. Other discussion topics include next steps around sexual health; pregnancy options; abortion; safer sex; factual information; and referrals.



PHONE

1-888-642-2725



TEXT

613-800-6757



EMAIL

ACCESS@ACTIONCANADASHR.ORG

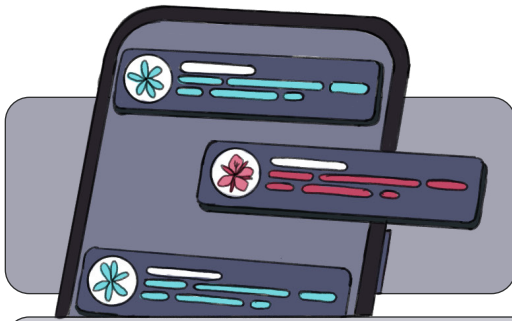


AVAILABILITY

7 DAYS A WEEK — 9:00AM-9:00 PM EST

Link 2 — Action Canada-Access Line

<https://www.actioncanadashr.org/call-access-line-1-888-642-2725>



EXHALE PRO-VOICE TEXTLINE

EXHALE PRO-VOICE TEXTLINE

The Exhale Pro-Voice Textline¹ is a confidential textline staffed by trained peer counsellors offering judgement-free after-abortion emotional support. They will follow your lead and support you in tending to your wellbeing in the ways that feel best to you. This textline is open to all people who have had abortions and the people who want to better support them. Service in Spanish, French and Mandarin is available upon request.



TEXT

617-747-2948

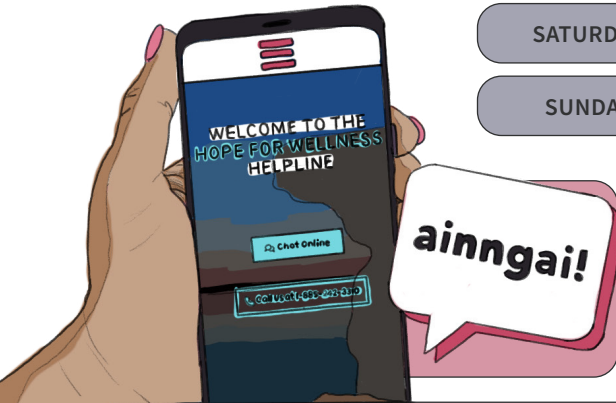


AVAILABILITY

WEEKDAYS — 3:00PM-9:00PM PST

SATURDAYS — 1:00PM-9:00PM PST

SUNDAYS — 3:00PM-7:00PM PST



HOPE FOR WELLNESS HELP LINE

HOPE FOR WELLNESS HELP LINE

The Hope for Wellness Helpline² is a free, confidential telephone and online chat help line offered to all Indigenous people across Canada, staffed with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and non-Indigenous counsellors trained in crisis intervention and cultural competence. They provide support for any experiences or challenges that may leave you feeling distressed, and can assist you with finding other wellness supports. Telephone and online chat services are available in English and French, and telephone support is also upon request in Cree, Ojibway (Anishinaabemowin) and Inuktitut.



PHONE

1-855-242-3310



AVAILABILITY

7 DAYS A WEEK — 24 HOURS A DAY



POST-ABORTION THERAPY

POST-ABORTION THERAPY

Post-Abortion Therapy offers one-to-one sessions with clinical counsellors, both in person and virtually, across Canada. You can book a free session to be matched with one of their experienced and non-judgemental therapists—usually within the same week! Pricing for sessions will be discussed during the first call, sliding scale rates and discounts are available. Their therapists are licensed, so services may be eligible for extended health insurance coverage and NIHB coverage. Book an intake call for more details by filling out the form on postabortiontherapy.ca



WEBSITE

POSTABORTIONTHERAPY.CA



POST-ABORTION WORKSHOP SERIES



POST-ABORTION WORKSHOP SERIES

The Sexual Health Options, Resources and Education (SHORE) Centre offers free, anonymous, and judgement-free virtual workshop sessions open to individuals who have previously had an abortion. The intention of the group is to give individuals an opportunity to share and explore their diverse experiences of abortion. The sessions are facilitated by two facilitators from SHORE's counselling team.



AVAILABILITY

ONLINE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



CAPACITY

12 PARTICIPANTS PER SESSION



WEBSITE

[CLINIC.SHORECENTRE.CA/PA-WORKSHOP/](https://clinic.shorecentre.ca/pa-workshop/)

Link 1 — Exhale Pro-Voice Textline
<https://exhaleprovoice.org/>

Link 2 — Hope for Wellness Help Line
<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>



ABORTION RESOLUTION WORKBOOK

A GUIDE FOR THOSE SEEKING EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL RESOLUTION

Created by Southern Tier Women's Health Services LLC and Cedar River Clinics, the Abortion Resolution Workbook is a free, inclusive workbook that can be used to guide you through some basic steps to feeling better emotionally and spiritually after an abortion experience. This workbook makes occasional references to a higher power, but uses many terms such as God, The Divine, Allah, Brahma, Creator, Holy Spirit, Greater Truth, Voice Within, Inner Light, Loving Spirit, Infinite Wisdom and more in order to recognize the many faiths and beliefs that may interplay in understanding and processing abortion experiences.



[PREGNANCYOPTIONS.INFO/ABORTION-RESOLUTION-WORKBOOK](https://www.pregnancyoptions.info/abortion-resolution-workbook)



INSIGHT TIMER

INSIGHT TIMER

Insight Timer is a website that provides many free guided meditations. These meditations may be used in conjunction with many of the other resources listed here. We encourage you to browse the website to find something that works for you. If you're not sure where to start, these guided meditations may be of interest, they have been recommended by some of our Fireweed team members:

- [‘2 Minute Sacred Breath Meditation - ehewin’, from the Cree Meditation album, enâtawâstemikweyahk¹](#)
- [‘You are Good’, by Dr. Hillary McBride²](#)



[WEBSITE](https://www.insighttimer.com/en-ca)

[INSIGHTTIMER.COM/EN-CA](https://www.insighttimer.com/en-ca)

Link 1 – 2 Minute Sacred Breath Meditation - ehewin'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PVZnucB38o&list=PLMB4NeH1G_LAGYeHfzFNBsDpU4HZtPNyH&index=7

Link 2 – ‘You are Good’, by Dr. Hillary McBride

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/rachel-haley/episodes/You-are-Good-e16ofoj>

RECLAIMING ABORTION AS TRADITIONAL

The following reclamation statement has been inspired by Indigenous community members who have accessed an abortion and shared the teachings that helped them during their recovery. From them, we heard a desire for abortion aftercare to be a time for tending to their spirit with compassion and for processing everything in a good way. Spiritual wellness was closely linked to making meaning out of their abortion and creating space for emotions to be felt and honoured.

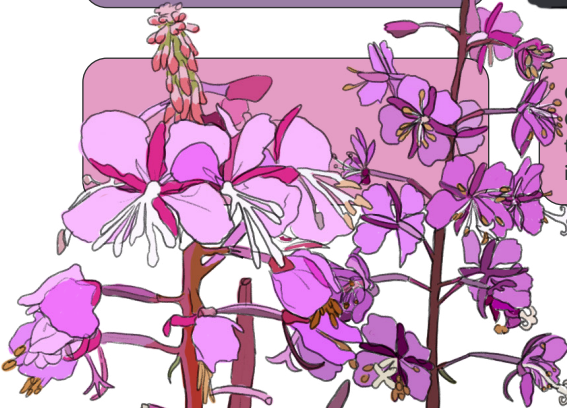
There's no time frame for when this reclamation statement may be helpful to you, immediately afterwards may be too soon, while for others it's great timing; we trust that you know when is best for you. Whenever that time comes, we offer the following teachings from other community members as an invitation for you to take what you need and leave whatever doesn't sit well.

First of all, “abortions are cultural too”. Ending a pregnancy is not a betrayal of your ancestors or your community. Abortion is a longstanding traditional practice that our ancestors commonly used.

Land-based medicines were used to end a pregnancy, suggesting that Indigenous cultures have always valued bodily autonomy.



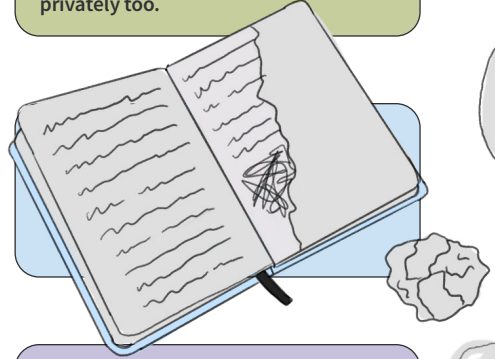
Our cultures have never been rigid. Ceremony can be whatever you need it to be, it does not need to be structured in any certain way.



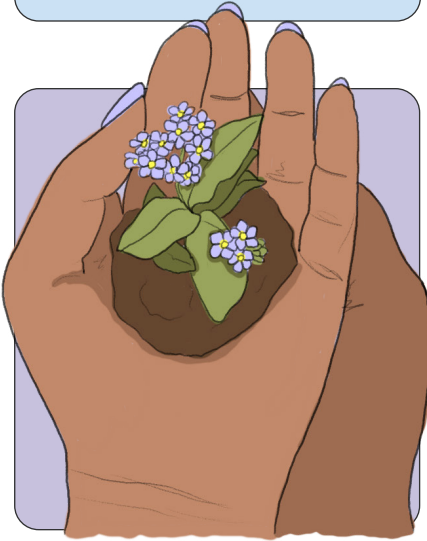


You also don't need to feel any certain way to merit taking time to tend to your spirit. There is no expectation to reach out to cultural or community supports if that isn't what is best for you: you are allowed to process things privately too.

Your ceremony, or how you process, may not go exactly how you planned, but that does not discount the value it may bring to you or the peace you may feel afterwards.

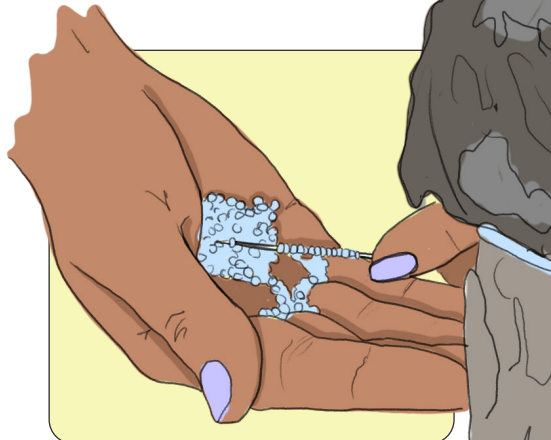


For some, abortion is viewed as birthing life into a different world, into the spirit world. Sometimes a baby's spirit isn't ready to be in our physical realm so they choose us to support them during their transition into the spirit world.

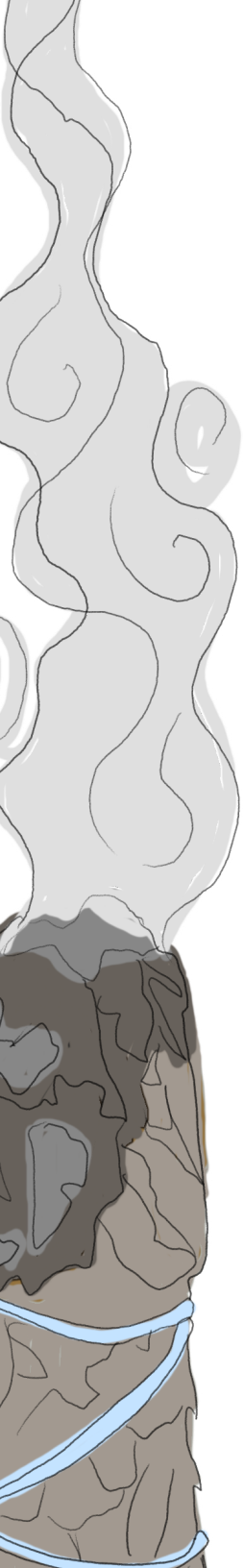


These teachings show how the spirits we carry with us for a time chose us for a reason, we did not betray them, there was always a purpose.

The practice of feeling your emotions and processing them is a part of your abortion experience, and is just as important and valuable as the abortion itself.



Engaging in such a practice is considered a way to honour the spirits that came during a pregnancy and acknowledge letting them go.



SMUDGING WITH SAGE AND SWEETGRASS

Smudging is a ceremony that can help us feel closer to the Creator and connect with our ancestors' strength. The smoke produced can help purify and protect our bodies, spirits and living spaces. Smudging is practiced in many different Indigenous communities around Turtle Island and beyond. As such, there are just as many different ways to smudge. We encourage you to practice this ceremony in any way you feel comfortable, but we have also added a couple of notes below to assist you. If you have other medicines from your community, you are welcome and encouraged to use those instead or in addition to!

Sage is a great cleanser of negative energy, it can be used to purify homes, objects, yourself, and others. It can release what is troubling the mind and remove negative energy. This isn't to suggest that everyone feels grief or negativity after their abortion, smudging can also be done to welcome positive energy, love, and renewed strength. Sweetgrass is a great communicator as it helps us to speak our truth. It has also been called a kindness medicine, offering an opportunity to explore self-compassion for yourself and others. These medicines offer an invitation to cleanse, explore your inner world, welcome in a new chapter of your life, let go of an old one, or to simply feel calm and grounded.



HOW TO SMUDGE

Begin by setting your intentions aloud or silently for your smudging.

Light the end of the sage or sweetgrass with a match or lighter*. You may wish to use a dish or shell to catch any burnt pieces.



*As with any sacred medicine, we urge you to exercise caution and be careful when lighting anything. Consult with a doctor if you have a history of breathing problems or any concerns about smoke.



Cup your hands and bring the smoke to the following areas of your body, inhaling if you'd like:

Cleanse your eyes, to see good things;

Cleanse your ears, to hear good things;

Cleanse your mouth, to say good things;

Cleanse your head, to think good things;

Cleanse your heart, to feel good things.

Proceed with smudging around your surroundings, pushing the smoke around using your hand or a feather.

Some other ways to burn medicines is during prayer, meditation, journaling, breathwork, or during a body scan practice.

MEDICATION ABORTION SYMPTOMS



QUICK REFERENCE

NORMAL SYMPTOMS

Bleeding is a sign the pills are working. Lasts on average 10-16 days.

Diarrhea may occur after the second dose — stay hydrated.

Abdominal pain typically occurs within 3 hours of second dose — may be similar to period cramps.

A fever and chills are common but should only last 1 day.

Nausea and vomiting are common, especially after the second dose, may last for 2 days.

Headaches, dizziness, and weakness are common. Headaches and weakness may last for 2 days, while dizziness usually lasts 1 day.

Pregnancy symptoms should end a week or so after the abortion. Nausea is usually the first to end. Some may experience tender breasts/chest and may leak a milky discharge or lactation.

ABNORMAL SYMPTOMS

If any **ABNORMAL SYMPTOMS** occur, you could be experiencing a medical emergency or complication — **SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION RIGHT AWAY!**

Pregnancy-related nausea and sickness, and breast/chest tenderness lasting for more than two weeks afterwards.

Although rare, signs of an incomplete abortion include cramps, prolonged pain, continued bleeding, and pain when pressing down on the abdomen area that persists in the weeks following the abortion.

Signs of infection include a high fever, pain, and severe bleeding.

Very heavy bleeding — soaking 2 maxi pads in 2 hours or passing large, golf ball size clots, or passing clots for more than 2 hours.

A fever over 38°C (100.4°F) lasting longer than 24 hours.

Nausea lasting 2 weeks after the abortion.

PROCEDURAL ABORTION SYMPTOMS



QUICK REFERENCE

NORMAL SYMPTOMS

Normal smelling vaginal discharge is common.

Abdominal pain is common after the procedure and may last 2-3 weeks off and on.

Light to moderate bleeding is common and may continue for up to 14 days. Some may experience bleeding for 2-6 weeks, while others may have no bleeding.

Pregnancy symptoms should end a week or so after the abortion. Nausea is usually the first symptom to end. Some may experience tender breasts/chest and they may leak a milky discharge or lactation.

ABNORMAL SYMPTOMS

If any **ABNORMAL SYMPTOMS** occur, you could be experiencing a medical emergency or complication — **SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION RIGHT AWAY!**

Vaginal discharge that smells bad.

Still feeling pregnant (nausea, breast/chest tenderness) for more than 2 weeks afterwards.

Chills and a fever of 38°C (100.4°F) the day after the procedure.

Depression that will not go away.

Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours.

Prolonged heavy bleeding, defined as soaking through 2 maxi pads in 2 hours or passing large blood clots the size of a golf ball.

Severe abdominal pain that does not feel like uterine cramps and is not reduced with medication.

Fainting after the procedure.