**Prior Experience with Abortion**

Abortion may seem a difficult subject to talk about with young couples,

but it is essential that persons who have experienced abortion in this, or a prior relationship, be able to share openly and honestly with their future spouse, since if these experiences remain hidden, they can tragically affect the freedom to love each other completely.

**The World’s View on Abortion**

* Our society has declared that a mother has the legal right to abort her unborn child, for any reason, and those who oppose that right are hateful of women, and seek to "impose their morality on others."
* The world would argue that an unborn child is not a person, and therefore abortion does not end a relationship, just a mass of cells.
* Abortion provides an easy option for the father to avoid his responsibilities, both to the child, and to his relationship with the woman, teaching him he has the "freedom" to escape difficult situations.
* Unintended pregnancies are seen an impediment to personal, economic and career goals. Pregnancy is treated as a disease, with a simple medical solution, with no further consequence.
* The "right" to terminate inconvenient pregnancies is seen as a "freedom" to enter multiple sexual relationships.

**The Church's View on Abortion's Effect on Marriage**

* The Church has courageously defended the moral law and understands the deep emotional and physical scars that result from an abortion, particularly for the woman (i.e.: depression, inability to be open to an intimate relationship and potential for future problematic infertility). She also understands the important role of the father in a relationship and his obligations and duties; not only to the mother but also to the child.
* The Catholic Church has never minimalized the grave sin, which is abortion. She understands that sin is a form of bondage and does not allow for freedom. Yet, St John Paul II says in *Evangelium Vitae*, "Do not give in to discouragement, and do not lose hope."
* *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...You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord.*

**Can an Abortion be Forgotten?**

The burden still rests on the mother to undergo and deal with the pain of killing her child and its physical and emotional repercussions, often alone. Yet, fathers and mothers of aborted children often develop mental pictures of their daughters and/or sons, have named them, and some have even watched them grow through the years in their imaginations. This is especially true when they have another child and special events take place that trigger the memory of what might have been. These memories have a deep and personal effect on future relationships; especially when hidden from a prospective spouse.

**Can an Abortion be Forgiven?**

People often feel guilt and shame over a past abortion and some believe that it is an unforgivable sin. But, this is not true. Often times, simply going to confession can absolve a person from the bondage of their sin, giving them the freedom to share that part of themselves with their fiancé. Until they are free of this bondage, they may keep up a charade of participating in their faith and parish activities for fear of giving scandal or being rejected by loved ones. They find themselves sinking deeper and deeper into despair because of the guilt and shame they take on, known only to themselves.

**How to Address Abortion with an Engaged Couple**

This issue needs to be broached with every couple so that if they have participated in an abortion it will be something for them to address privately. For most couples this probably will not be an issue, but how devastating an impact that unconfessed sin can have on a marriage!

Suggest the couple discuss this issue in the following way, if applicable:

* First, pray about the situation and what God desires from you.
* Second, make an appointment with a parish priest, one whom you feel will listen carefully to your concerns and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that you know that you have been forgiven.
* Third, with the counsel of your pastor, discuss this issue with your future spouse.
* Fourth, it is likely the person or couple will need to seek counsel (i.e. Rachel's Vineyard);

If their future spouse cannot accept this revelation of their past, they are setting conditions on the relationship and aren't able to love the reality of who the person is today. If, on the other hand, the one who has experienced abortion chooses to withhold this from their fiancé, they, too, would not be entering marriage "freely, and without reservation."

In any case, they need to be treated with great sensitivity and compassion.