



MEN AND PREGNANCY

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Unplanned pregnancy can be a time of increased connection and understanding as partners support each other to explore and manage their situation.

It might be that both partners feel the same way about the pregnancy in which case the woman will find her partner a good source of support.

Even when they are not agreed about whether or not to proceed with a pregnancy, it can be helpful to hear each other's opinions. Hearing a woman's reasons for continuing with the pregnancy or choosing abortion can help the man sympathise with her situation and dilemma and give him a better insight into her thoughts and feelings. This may enable him to support her in her decision even if it isn't what he would have wanted her to do.

References:

- Education for Choice 2005. www.efc.org.uk
- Men and Pregnancy 2001-2002. Planned Parenthood Association of Edmonton.

Why a woman might be anxious about involving a man.

A woman who is undecided about her pregnancy might feel she is vulnerable to pressure from other people and might want to talk to a professional to clarify her own thoughts and feelings before she talks to anyone else.

She might think she already knows what the man will think or say about the pregnancy.

She might think he will not be supportive of her decision.

Reasons why others may become the sole decision makers

Sometimes a man who is behaving in an abusive or controlling way in a relationship with a woman might use the threat of violence to make her choose an abortion or prevent her from having one.

Fear of intimidation and violence within a relationship can make it increasingly difficult for a woman to act on her right to make a decision about either sex or pregnancy, leading the man to become the sole decision-maker. Recent evidence suggests that the incidence and severity of domestic violence often increases when a woman becomes pregnant.

Sometimes family members may prevent a woman from having an abortion or try to force her into one because of their ideas about pregnancy, young people and sex, sex outside of marriage or abortion.

Why men want to be involved in making the decision

Most men accept that the final decision about pregnancy should rest with the woman, but need an opportunity to express their feelings about the pregnancy. If a man has a chance to say how he feels he might feel satisfied that the woman has heard his feelings and can take them into account as she makes her decision.

Men generally accept pregnancy as an experience they share with women. A responsible man will want to find ways to help himself and his partner or the woman involved deal with their pregnancy. This is true whether the pregnancy was planned, unplanned, wanted or unwanted. Men can greatly benefit themselves and their partners by openly receiving and giving needed support. It is important for men to recognise and share their feelings and in turn receive understanding and support.

Sharing feelings does not always go as planned. Like women, men can react to a pregnancy with many different or conflicting emotions and feelings. There are many reasons why men may find it difficult to express their feelings about pregnancy. Understanding the basis for some of these difficulties may help men discuss the pregnancy and options more openly.

Although men are encouraged to take an active role in supporting a woman in making her decision, they sometimes believe that sharing their feelings will hurt a woman. Many men believe that they have to be 'cool' and 'rational' about the pregnancy to get their partner or the woman through it. This may lead the woman to believe that the man has no understanding of how painful the situation may be for her. The woman may feel that her 'usual' support is no longer available to her.

Men will sometimes hold back their feelings because they fear if they express them they will overly influence the woman's decision regarding the pregnancy. They might hold strong views one way or another, but this situation can be improved by telling the woman you are afraid of affecting her decision. Once this concern is expressed, both may find the talk that follows easier to deal with.

Some men see no purpose in discussing the problem. They may be reluctant to discuss 'emotional stuff' or to share what could be difficult feelings. By choosing not to discuss or share their own feelings, they may give the impression that they do not take the matter seriously. This situation might be helped by the man stating that he is taking the situation seriously and offering other ways he can show this, such as assisting in obtaining information about all the options or attending appointments together etc.

A man may sense 'no feelings' coming from the woman. Women sometimes conceal emotions similarly to some men. Some of the reasons for this may be that they may not want to burden the man, they may be angry with the man, or they may handle tension by withdrawing to clear their own thoughts and strengthen themselves.

Men's rights: Pregnancy, Parenting and Abortion

Men have the right to avoid conceiving unplanned pregnancies either by choosing not to have sex, or to use condoms. Currently condoms are the only form of contraception over which a man can take full responsibility.

It is a woman's right to make the decision over what happens to her body and whether she chooses to continue a pregnancy and parent, or have an abortion.

If a woman chooses to continue with a pregnancy, the man has a legal financial responsibility for the upbringing of the child, regardless of the relationship or his part in a child's life.

If a woman chooses to have an abortion, she may do so without the man's agreement.

A man's views may very well influence a woman's decision, however, under Australian law he has no legal right to make her have an abortion or prevent her from having one.

Involving men in pregnancy decision making

Men's experiences of involvement in decision about pregnancy vary widely.

Some men may be very supportive of the woman in a decision that is mutually agreed.

Some men may express their opinion but also clearly state they will support the woman to make her own decision.

Some men have no involvement because she may choose not to include him in the decision making

Some men, through coercion or abuse attempt to become the sole decision-makers.

Some reasons why some men are consulted and involved

Men and women in relationships or an intimate friendships that has mutual respect for one another may feel more able to talk to each other about their feelings, opinions, and anxieties.

They may have talked about their current circumstances and how children could impact on their lives. They may have discussed their hopes for the future and how and when children fit in this picture.

A woman may feel more confident in involving her partner if they both understand that when faced with an unplanned pregnancy, and an unsure outcomes, that it may not be possible to agree.

Most people accept that because the woman will be more directly affected by the pregnancy, she is the best person to make the final decision, having listened to the man's thoughts and feelings.

Some reasons why some men are not involved

Some women are anxious to conceal pregnancy if they feel they will be blamed or punished by their partner.

Women who become pregnant as the result of casual sex might choose not to tell the man she has become pregnant

Some women are discouraged from involving a man by family or friends, for example, if they disapprove of the relationship.

Some women do not believe that the man has any right to participate in the decision, as it is her body that is affected by the pregnancy.



For further information contact:

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