Values Clarification & Options Counseling for Unintended Pregnancy

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Identify aspects of patient experiences with unintended pregnancy that cause emotional challenges for the health professional;
- Evaluate personal feelings about abortion to better provide informed, compassionate care for patients; and
- Apply a four-step options counseling model for providing emotional support and relevant tools for patients making decisions about unintended pregnancy.
Ground Rules

- Be honest and open
- We may not agree with everything discussed here today and that is just fine
- Everyone’s opinions are valid and worth listening to and respecting
What obligations do health care providers have to their patients’ access to reproductive health care services?

- What factors have influenced your opinions throughout your career? Has anything changed?
- How do you define “medically necessary”? 
Individual Activity

I may feel uneasy about a person having an abortion who...

- Focus on your internal feelings, not on whether or not you would support this person or provide their abortion care
- List any specific words or phrases that brought up emotions for you
Examining Circumstances of Each Person’s Abortion Decision

- Which words or phrases provoked your emotions?
- Did you notice trends among the situations that made you uneasy?
- Can you think of any other challenging circumstances that you have encountered?
- Is it useful to be aware of what might make you uncomfortable?
Small Group Activity

- Read through the stories on your own, and select your first emotional response to this person’s decision
- Nominate one person to take notes on the discussion and share some highlights with the audience
- As a group, discuss these cases and the questions at the end
Patient Stories

- With whose decision were you most comfortable? Least?
- Were you more comfortable with one pregnancy outcome over another?
- Did any of these stories remind you of a circumstance in your life, or a past patient?
Patient Stories

- What did you fill in about each story?
  - Gestational age
  - Support systems
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Race, ethnicity
  - Safety of mother and/or child
  - Consent vs. coercion
  - Level of drug use
  - Maturity
  - Belief system of pregnant person
  - Sexuality, marital status
Large Group Activity

- What caused you to stand where you are?
- What reasons can you imagine for choosing the opposite response?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
Think of a time when you talked to a friend about an important decision you had to make. What did you feel like you wanted from that friend?

The goal of options counseling is to act as a sounding board so the patient can express her feelings out loud, and to provide tools with which the patient can make a decision.
Conversation Structure

- Learn about the Situation and Empathize
- Discuss Options
- Explore Decision-Making Resources
- Make a Plan
Learn about the Situation and Empathize

- **Timing**

- **Start with general questions**

- **Use counseling skills**
  - Clarify feelings (open ended questions)
  - Normalize and validate
Discuss Options

- **Background information**
  - “What thoughts do you have about what you might want to do?”
  - Make sure information is complete and accurate
  - Give information that relates to her medical history
Discuss Options

Ask questions to provoke thought:

- How did you feel about each of these options before you became pregnant?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your life right now?
- Who else’s life will be affected by your decision?
- How do you feel about the man involved in this pregnancy?
- What would be the daily impact of choosing each option?
- What financial arrangements would you need to make?
- What are your goals? How would each option help or hinder you in achieving them?
- How would people who are important to you react?
Discuss Options

- Summarize conflicting values and priorities

“It sounds like you really want to have a second child because you would like your son to have a sibling, but you are worried that the resulting strain on your finances would affect your relationship with your husband.”
Explore Decision-Making Resources

- Support – who can she talk to?

- Recommend activities
  - Imagine/draw a picture
  - Resource assessment
  - Listing goals

- Give referrals
  - NAF Hotline
  - Backline
  - Pregnancy Options Workbook
Make a Plan (Not a Decision!)

- Who will she talk to?
- What activities will she do?
- Will you be following up with her?
Wrap up and evaluation

- Personal Reflections and Questions
- 3, 2, 1 Takeaway
  - Three things I want to remember from this workshop
  - Two things I still want to explore within myself
  - One thing I will commit to trying or doing
- Evaluation
Thank you!

Interested in the National Abortion Federation bringing our Values Clarification and Options Counseling Workshops to your facility?

Contact naf@prochoice.org or speak to us after the presentation!

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