With any unplanned pregnancy there are three choices available to consider:

**Abortion:** Be aware that this is a time-sensitive decision, and depending on how far along your pregnancy is, you may need to decide quite quickly if you want to have an abortion. The location, availability, and cost of having an abortion change as the gestation of a pregnancy increases.

**Adoption:** You may be thinking about continuing with the pregnancy and placing the child for adoption. An adoption order can only take place after the child is born.

**Parenting:** Continuing with the pregnancy and choosing to parent is the option chosen by around half of women experiencing unplanned pregnancy.

For some women the decision will be clear, while for others it may be a difficult choice to make.

While for some women the decision of whether to proceed with an unplanned pregnancy or not might be a clear one, for others the process is more complicated. Making a decision on an unplanned pregnancy can be complex, and women may find a lot of factors impacting on their decision in different ways.

One of these factors may be domestic violence and control. We offer some extra tips and thoughts for you on this below.

It's important to look at how you feel about each of your options and to examine your own values and beliefs on pregnancy, parenting and abortion, to come to the decision that is best for you.

If you're having trouble making a decision, or you feel conflicted about your decision, you might find working through these pages helpful. You can also call one of our counsellors at Children by Choice and talk it through with them.
Whatever decision you make, it's important that it sits as best it can with your own values and beliefs. Try not to let anyone influence you one way or the other - you are the expert in your own life, and you know best which option is going to work for you.

**A woman-centred approach to looking at pregnancy options**

This approach focuses on helping you, the woman, by looking first at you and your needs, thoughts, feelings and beliefs in relation to the options available to you with an unplanned pregnancy. This information is to help you decide between abortion, adoption and parenting in relation to an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy.

The reason that you need to focus on yourself first of all is that you are the most important person in the process of decision-making for an unplanned pregnancy. This is not to say that others are not important, but that it is vital that you don’t forget yourself and your own needs in making this decision. You can also download and print this page as a worksheet - maybe take it to a park or the beach or somewhere you feel comfortable and peaceful and take your time thinking through the questions.

**How do I feel about this pregnancy?**

Sometimes the first place to start is with how you feel about this pregnancy. Often an unplanned pregnancy raises a lot of different and sometimes confusing feelings and thoughts. This is very normal and most women experience these. These feelings are confusing as they often conflict with each other. For example, you may feel anxious because you can't possibly consider having a baby (or another baby) until you are financially able to support the child, scared because you don’t know how to parent or concerned since your current relationship is not very stable. At the same time you may also be overjoyed because this is what you have always wanted and excited since this may be a new opportunity for you. Even though these feelings are in conflict with each other they are all important and need to be considered carefully.

One way that may help you to address these different feelings is to write them down. Take some time right now to write down all the different feelings you are currently experiencing:

- I am feeling..............
- How do my values, beliefs, previous experiences or expectations around each of these pregnancy options - abortion, adoption and parenting - affect how I feel?

Your values, beliefs, previous experiences or expectations about the three options available to you can also affect how you feel. The following are comments women often make in relation to the three options. As you read them you may like to tick or just note which of them you agree or don’t agree with. You may also like to add to these lists as well. Once you have listed the values and beliefs you have about the three options, as well as any previous experiences or expectations, you may also need to consider if you need more information to help you with your decision. Exploring values can raise many questions for some people.

- I feel that every woman should have a child.
- It is important to have the support of others around you when having a baby.
- I couldn't consider having a baby at my age.
- Having a child would be the best thing to happen to me.
- My partner and I both want to have a baby.
- I believe single mothers struggle to support a baby.
- I believe that it is very important to be financially ready when having a baby.
- I like my lifestyle too much to change for a child.
• My own parents were ....
• Every child should have a mother and father.
• I don't think I could give up a baby after nine months of pregnancy.
• I'm against abortion but I don't want to parent.
• There are a lot of great people out there who would like to have a baby but cannot.
• The child might wonder where the biological parents are and why they did not want them.
• I do not like the idea that someone else will care for my baby.
• Even though I would always be the biological parent I would not have to parent the child.
• I might always wonder where the child is.
• Adopted children are not always treated well.
• The other family could give the child what I cannot.
• I (or someone I know) was adopted................
• My relationship is not stable enough to bring a child into it.
• Children need both a mother and a father.
• My religious beliefs are opposed to abortion.
• I don't want to be a single mother.
• I could be a parent later on in my life.
• I am afraid I may not be able to get pregnant again.
• I would like to have a child when I am more able to support the child.
• My partner and/or family is against abortion.
• My partner doesn't want a baby, and I want to consider his feelings.
• I had an abortion some time ago and I think I won't cope with another abortion.

What are my goals, plans or dreams?

When making the decision as to which choice is best for you, something else to consider would be where the pregnancy fits with your goals, plans or dreams. The following questions may help you to look first of all at your goals, plans and dreams, but also where the pregnancy fits within these.

• What do I want out of life for myself?
• What do I think is important?
• In the next five or ten years I hope to have achieved ..............
• How would having a child now help/hinder achieving these?
• How would adopting the child out help/hinder achieving these?
• How would having an abortion help/hinder achieving these?
• In five years time I am planning to be ............
• How would having a child now change these plans?
• How would adopting the child out change these plans?
• How would having an abortion change these plans?
• What interests and activities do I feel are important to me?
• If I was to parent would I have to give up any of my interests and activities?
• How would having a child affect my health and wellbeing?
• Would having a child change my educational plans?
• Do I have the energy to raise a child and further my education at the same time?
• Would having a child change my career plans?
• Do I have the energy to raise a child and continue to develop my career at the same time?
• Am I willing to give a great part of my life, at least 18 years, to being responsible for a child?
• Am I willing to spend a large portion of my life being concerned for my child’s well being?
On the scale below, where would you say you are right now? Why?

Definitely want an abortion------------------Definitely continuing.

On the scale below, where would you say you are right now? Why?

Definitely want an abortion------------------Definitely want to parent.

On the scale below, where would you say you are right now? Why?

Definitely want to place my child for adoption------------------Definitely want to parent.

Do I need more information on any of these options?

Sometimes not having enough practical information on all the options makes it difficult to decide. You may like to explore our detailed info on abortion, adoption, or parenting, which include links to relevant organisations. Alternatively, you can contact us to discuss any issues or concerns or information needs.

Now that you have looked at your feelings, values and beliefs, goals and dreams AND gathered further information on the three options, sum up how you are feeling about each of these options.

If I was to sum up my feelings and thoughts it would go like this...

The idea of having an abortion makes me feel ………………………… because ………………………… and I'm thinking…………………………

The idea of continuing the pregnancy and placing the baby for adoption makes me feel …………………………… because …………………………… and I'm thinking ……………………………

The idea of having a baby now and becoming a parent makes me feel …………………………… because …………………………… and I'm thinking ……………………………

Now that you have looked at how you feel and what your thoughts are about this pregnancy, let's look at the other people in your life.
Significant others in your life

Children: how will this affect my kids?

Often women are concerned about how another child will affect their children. This is sometimes a concern, especially when there is a gap in the ages of the children and when the mother does not want to parent another child. When a pregnancy occurs shortly after the birth of a child, it can be an overwhelming experience for a woman. Whilst some women may plan to have their children close together, other women may want to have a bigger space between their children, or may only ever have wanted one child. The following questions may help you decide:

- Ideally when would I be ready to have another child?
- I only ever wanted one child. Am I open to considering having more than one?
- What are my feelings around having more than 1 child? 2 children? 3 children? More than three children?
- What age gap do I prefer for my child or children?
- Can I cope with another child now? How do I deal with sleep deprivation, physical tiredness and emotional upheaval?
- Do I have the energy to raise another child?
- Who would support me if I have another child now?
- How would having another child now affect my growth and development?
- Would having another child change my educational or career plans?
- Could I handle another child considering my current workload?
- How would my child/ren deal with another child?
- What would my child/ren gain if I had another child?
- What about future children?

Sometimes women are concerned about the risks associated with an abortion and if having an abortion will affect their ability to have children in the future. A review of the medical evidence shows that there is no increased risk of infertility from having an abortion in Australia, where abortion is performed safely and lawfully by a skilled doctor.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has stated that "abortion is safer than carrying a pregnancy to term and that complications are uncommon." However, the surgical abortion procedure does carry some risks, such as infection and perforation of the uterus, and it is very important that you understand these fully if you do opt to have an abortion.

Partner

This section is for those women who want to include the man involved in the pregnancy in the decision-making process. It is important to remember that the final decision rests with you, the pregnant woman.

- Does my partner want to have a child? Another child?
- Have we talked about our reasons for wanting/not wanting a child? Another child?
- Is our relationship a happy and strong one, which would give a child a good home?
- Could we share the work of looking after a child? Another child?
- How well do we know each other – especially in relation to our views on parenting?
Could we share our love with a child or with more than one child without being jealous?
How well do we currently communicate with each other and how may this be affected by having a child?
Another child?
If my partner does not want a child/another child does that change how I will decide?
If my partner says he will leave me if I have an abortion does that affect my decision?
If my partner says he will leave me if I continue with the pregnancy does that affect my decision?
If my partner says he will leave me if I adopt the child out does that affect my decision? (be aware that the birth father is required to formally consent to an adoption in Queensland)

Family and friends – support

Often it is good to talk to someone close to you when making the decision which option is the best one for you. This person may be your partner, close friend, mother etc. If you are unsure of a partner’s, family member’s or friend’s view on abortion, adoption or parenting, you may like to find out how they feel about these issues before confiding in them.

The decision about whether to continue a pregnancy or not can become an issue of control in a relationship. This occurs particularly between daughters and their parent/s and women and their partners or ex-partners. It can also occur between friends or between women and the professionals they consult in making their decision, such as their doctor, counsellor or teacher.

In these circumstances, the decision about the pregnancy becomes a way for someone to exercise control over another. For example, an ex-partner may try to force a woman to continue a pregnancy as a way of keeping her attached to him and the relationship. Or a young woman who feels her parents are trying to force her into having an abortion may want to continue the pregnancy to prove to them that they cannot control her life. A teacher may refuse to keep the confidence of a young woman who is considering an abortion, taking control of the decision away from the young woman.

When a pregnancy decision becomes an issue of control, it is extremely destructive and does not lead to good decision-making. You will need to let the people around you know that this is your decision. Try not to let the pregnancy decision become a battleground, with one party winning and another losing with whichever pregnancy outcome is chosen.

Making a decision about whether to continue a pregnancy or not can be extremely stressful for all involved in that decision. The shock of an unplanned pregnancy or a pregnancy that has had medical complications can greatly add to this stress. This may be placing an enormous strain on you and those around you making it difficult for everybody to act as understanding, considerate and supportive friends to one another.

Remember, seek out people who will be supportive and understanding without pressuring you to make one decision or another.

Decision making and violence

For many women violence may start or become worse during pregnancy. It may lead to women who experience such violence and control to consider ending a pregnancy that was originally planned. Violence and control and their effects can make it hard to make a decision whether or not the pregnancy was a planned. Here are some questions it may be useful to ask yourself:

- He keeps changing his mind all the time about this pregnancy. How can I hold on to what I want when he does this?
• Does he know I am pregnant? Is it safe to tell him?
• If he knows about the pregnancy, is it safe for me to make a choice about this pregnancy? What might be the consequences for me and others if I do not do what he wishes?
• Will I be safe while I am pregnant?
• Will the violence affect the health of the pregnancy?
• If I go ahead with the pregnancy will I be able to keep the baby safe?
• Will staying pregnant and having a baby make it harder for me to leave if and when I am ready?
• What if things get bad again and it is too late for me to end this pregnancy? How much time can I give myself/how much time have I got to make this decision?
• He says now that there is a baby on the way that he will change. Things have been much better since I told him I was pregnant but can I trust his promises?
• Who else do I trust that could support me with this decision?

Can I make a decision now?

Now that you have considered and explored your choices and feelings, values and beliefs, expectations and previous experiences regarding all of the options available and received more information about those options you may be ready to make a decision which is right for you. Or you may not.

Remember throughout the decision making process that many women have decided for and against abortion, adoption and parenting. An abortion, adoption or parenting decision does not put you in a world of simple good and bad. However you reach your decision, whatever choice you make may leave you with some worries or uncertainties. Therefore, although you may believe you have made the right decision for you, it still may feel that it is not perfect decision. It is natural for you to continue to have some mixed feelings. What you will have to do in this case is ask yourself, “Can I live with this decision?” and maybe “What can I do to manage these feelings?”.

If you are still undecided, you may like to explore the information on this website further or you may like to contact us to discuss the situation further. Take your time remembering that it is important for your health to decide as soon as you can - to access pre-natal care if you are continuing or to access an earlier termination.

Remember, you have considered this decision and you have done your best. Despite the fact that others around you may be trying to make the decision for you, the decision is yours and you will make the best decision possible.

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