

TALKING ABOUT YOUR WORK WITH OTHERS

You and/or your staff may occasionally feel some awkwardness about if and how to talk about providing abortion services. In “Abortion and Options Counseling,” Anne Baker from the Hope Clinic provides helpful examples of responses to questions and comments that may arise inside or outside the clinic environment. Below are excerpts from her text.

“There are approximately four categories of reactions we receive: positive regard, silence, expressed disapproval, or dark humor. Here are some examples of each reaction and possible responses.

Expressed Disapproval

“I think abortion is just terrible!”

(Our response): “Well, from all my experience working with many good people who have chosen to end their pregnancy, I see it in a different light.”

“I just don’t see how anybody can do such a thing!”

(Our response): “That’s the beauty of legal abortion – everyone has the right to act upon his or her beliefs. Some people do not believe that having an abortion is the same thing as killing a baby. The people who don’t believe in it never have to use the service. For others, clinics like ours are a godsend!”

“How can anyone kill her own baby?”

(Our response): “Not everyone believes that removing a fetus from a uterus is the same as killing a newborn. You can ask a room full of priests, ministers, biologists and physicians if abortion is killing a baby, and you’ll get as many answers as there are people in the room. Everyone has the right to his or her own opinion.”

“Those women should put their babies up for adoption!”

(Our response): “Many women say they could never part with their baby once they went through nine months of pregnancy and then gave birth. Could you give up YOUR child for adoption?” (This is especially effective if they have children of their own. They often look at you as though you’re crazy to suggest such a thing. In other words, once the shoe is placed on the other foot, the idea doesn’t sound so simple after all.) OR “Some of the women I see seeking an abortion have been adopted themselves, and they say they could NEVER do that to someone else because they know what it feels like. And that’s even from the women who state they have good adoptive parents! Other women seeking an abortion have placed a baby for adoption in the past and say they could NEVER go through it again! They say that they could cope better emotionally after an abortion than after another adoption experience. Adoption is only a viable alternative for those women who feel they can get through it emotionally.”

“Abortion goes against God and nature!”

(Our response): “God and nature have always allowed abortions to occur in the form of spontaneous abortions, or miscarriages.”

If someone goes on continuously about the horrors of abortion, and you tire of hearing it, you can state this is an issue theologians and scientists can't agree on, and you'd prefer to put your energy elsewhere.

"Why don't those people use birth control? There's no excuse for abortion nowadays!"

(Our response): "Most of the people we see HAVE used birth control – often they have used several different kinds of contraception in the past. I've seen every type of birth control fail since I've been at the Hope Clinic – even vasectomy and tubal sterilization. Then there are people who have not had any education about fertility, and they're using ineffective methods. Some women don't use birth control and get pregnant because their doctors told them they COULDN'T get pregnant. And there is no method of birth control that is 100% effective, 100% available and 100% side-effect free."

(Another response): "One of the services we offer to every patient is information on contraception. We feel strongly about educating people to help them avoid the sad situation of an unplanned pregnancy."

"I think it's horrible that women use abortion as birth control, as if it's no big deal."

(Our response): "Since I work in an abortion clinic, let me tell you from one who knows: it's a myth that women supposedly use abortion as birth control in this country. I don't know where you get your information, but your idea of abortion patients and the reality are two different things."

"I can see maybe one abortion, but those people who repeat are just disgusting!"

(Our response): "Some of those people feel just as unhappy about it and place the same judgment on themselves as you have; that they're disgusting because they failed. But I ask you, is there any area of your life you have repeatedly failed to control – like quitting, smoking, losing weight, never procrastinating? Their area happens to be fertility; yours may be something else, and mine, something altogether different. We're all human, and we all deserve compassion and help, not condemnation."

"I hear that Planned Parenthood runs the largest chain of abortuaries in the country!"

(Our response): "Oh? How interesting. And did you also know that Planned Parenthood is the one organization that helps to prevent more abortions than any other organization in the world?"

Dark Humor

"I bet your doctor really pulls in the money!"

(Our response): "Any doctor who has the courage to perform abortions in a time when doctors are kidnapped, stalked, and murdered for doing so deserves every penny he or she gets. And quite frankly, they could make a lot more money without any personal danger if they were in another field of medicine."

(Another response): "You must have no idea what medical procedures and surgeries cost these days. An abortion procedure is one of the least expensive surgeries there is! Getting your wisdom teeth removed costs more than an abortion."

"What's it like to kill babies for a living, ha ha!" Or, "I guess you're in charge of the rusty coat hangers!"

(Our response): "You know, because I see so many tragic situations where people have agonized over this decision, it doesn't strike me as funny." The people who make these remarks might be mocking the anti's rhetoric, but there are enough people who think we're cold-blooded, callous humanoids. I don't like to perpetuate these myths by engaging in dark humor with acquaintances.

"How's business? Booming?"

(Our response): "Are you asking how many people are in need of our service?"

Silence

Silence can mean just about anything. They may be at a loss for words. They may be wondering where they've heard of your clinic. Perhaps they are reflecting on the abortion they had, or they may be expressing total disapproval.

In that moment of silence, you can make a favorable statement about your work: "I'm lucky to work at a place where at the end of the day I can say I really helped people when they needed understanding the most. It's a good feeling."

(Another response): "You know, working at the Hope Clinic is really a window to the world. I've talked to people from all walks of life, all religions, all races...and to people who say they would never have dreamed they'd have an abortion."

(Another response): "You know, I'm glad to be a part of an organization where people are treated with dignity and respect, and there they can receive excellent patient care."

You can also choose to let the silence stand, go on to talk about something else, or ask them what they believe about abortion (if you want to know).

Positive Regard

"That's wonderful! I believe in your cause!"

"I'm sure your job isn't easy, but I'm glad there are places like yours."

"I admire people who work in the abortion field, especially when the opposition is so violent and crazy!"

"More power to you! What you're doing is a needed service!"