

PREGNANCY OPTIONS COUNSELING POINTS FOR THE AMBIVALENT PATIENT

1. **CLARIFY** the facts – the actual timing of pregnancy and possibility that the patient may not need to decide today.
2. **NORMALIZE** feelings of ambivalence.
3. **ACKNOWLEDGE** common feelings such as shame, disappointment, guilt and regret.
4. **REFRAME** the situation – she may be making the most responsible decision by NOT continuing the pregnancy.
5. **REASSURE AND ENCOURAGE** her to trust and respect herself and her decision.

HELPFUL EXERCISE FOR AMBIVALENT PATIENTS

Day 1

Have the patient spend one day writing a list of all her positive and negative feelings about keeping the pregnancy.

Day 2

Encourage the patient to spend the day with her ambivalent feelings, not making any decisions.

Day 3

Have the patient spend one day writing a list of all her positive and negative feelings about not keeping the pregnancy.

Day 4

Make a follow-up appointment with the patient.

(Often, one recurrent theme or feeling will emerge to help her make a decision.)

OTHER TIPS

1. Be **conscious of time** – you do not need to know everything about the patient to help her make a decision.
2. Refer to the **pregnancy, not the baby**.
3. Elucidate that the patient's choice not to be a mother **now** does not mean she is choosing not to be a mother in the **future**.
4. Ask about other **supports** in the patient's life.
5. You may not have time for therapy but just **talking is therapeutic**.
6. **Investigate** the woman's feelings. Don't assume anything – she may not be experiencing shame or guilt.
7. You may not come to a resolution at the end of the first visit. You can always schedule a timely **follow-up** appointment.