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 – the patient may be making the most responsible decision by NOT continuing the pregnancy.

5. **REASSURE AND ENCOURAGE** the patient to trust and respect themselves and their decision.

HELPFUL EXERCISE FOR AMBIVALENT PATIENTS

Day 1
Have the patient spend one day writing a list of all positive and negative feelings about keeping the pregnancy.

Day 2
Encourage the patient to spend the day with ambivalent feelings, not making any decisions.

Day 3
Have the patient spend one day writing a list of all positive and negative feelings about not keeping the pregnancy.

Day 4
Make a follow-up appointment with the patient.

(Of often, one recurrent theme or feeling will emerge to help the patient to make a decision.)

OTHER TIPS

1. Be **conscious of time** – you do not need to know everything about the patient to help with the decision.

2. Refer to the pregnancy, not the baby.

3. Elucidate that the patient’s choice not to be a parent **now** does not = choosing not to be a parent 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 patient’s feelings. Don’t make assumptions.

7. You may not come to a resolution at the end of the first visit. You can always schedule a **timely follow-up** appointment.

Courtesy of Virginia Reath