



We facilitate lifesaving research and apply the findings to
create messaging strategies to share
with others so together, we can
build a future where abortion is unthinkable.

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Men's Research Study

Addendum to the Medical Professionals Guide

Reaching Men for Life

While the pro-abortion lobby believes abortion is primarily a woman's issue, we know from our engagement with pregnancy centers that men play a significant role in pregnancy decision-making. The numbers back this up. A 2015 Care Net Lifeway survey¹ of 1038 women asked who the most influential person was in their abortion/pregnancy decision: 38% said the father of the baby, followed by medical professionals (26%) and their own mother (14%). Statistics like this confirm what we already knew to be true—the father of the baby has a major role to play in the woman's decision to choose or reject abortion. And it makes sense. The driving forces behind abortion involve isolation, shame and a lack of support. How many of those issues could be resolved if the father of the baby was present and motivated to empower her to choose life?

Ready for Responsibility?



As part of Vitae Foundation's 2025 study titled *A Few Good Men: Increasing the Masculine Presence* interviews were conducted with three different groups of men: those who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and strongly leaned one way (to choose life or have an abortion), men who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and said "I'll support you whatever you choose," and men who had no direct experience with an unexpected pregnancy or abortion.



The study identified three prominent responses to an unexpected pregnancy: fear, shock and excitement/happiness. These emotions are primarily tied to how men perceive the impact of the pregnancy on their lives. News of the pregnancy confronts men with a variety of issues, such as their relationship with their girlfriend/wife, their desire to have a baby, their self-identity, and their readiness/ability to have a baby.

Perceived readiness significantly affects a man's desire to choose life. Many men do not feel adequately ready or confident to take on the responsibilities of caring for a child. Reasons men gave for not feeling ready include immaturity, selfishness, age, financial insecurity, life-stage, relationship health, partner readiness, lifestyle convenience and the opportunity costs of having a child. For these reasons, many men decide to advocate or agree to have an abortion. Many men, however, don't perceive these obstacles as insurmountable and instead believe they present an opportunity to take responsibility.

Relationship health plays a significant role in perceived readiness. Unhealthy relationship dynamics are a large reason why many men either:

- 1) don't know how to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife
- 2) don't want to support her
- 3) don't feel ready for the responsibility of having a baby
- 4) feel unable to have a conversation about the pregnancy/feel like they have no say
- 5) and in some cases, desire to have an abortion.

Many men facing unexpected pregnancies are in low-trust, low-commitment relationships. They don't see a future with the woman and as a result, don't want to have a child with her. They see the child as an extension of a commitment they do not want to make. In contrast, men in relationships characterized by high trust and strong commitment are more likely to be excited about the pregnancy and/or willing to overcome the obstacles to start a family with their girlfriend/wife.

While most men acknowledge the humanity of the preborn child, the baby is rarely the deciding factor. Men's attention is mainly tied to the emotional

their preference for or against choosing life is either a more honest way of approaching the conversation, a more effective way of convincing the woman toward their preference, and/or a better way of supporting the woman in the decision-making process. Many of these men expressed a belief that they could influence her decision.

The Impact of Fatherhood

Men perceive fatherhood as a meaningful role. Their experience with father figures influences how they perceive their own roles as fathers. Fathers are seen as men who should be providers/protectors for their children, supportive of their girlfriend/wife, one who offers safety and presence, teaches valuable skills, etc. Men with children express a variety of emotions related to fatherhood including pride, joy, happiness, a sense of purpose and a sense of duty. Men with no father in their life had negative feelings about his lack of presence and viewed absent father figures with anger and disappointment. Men with absent/no father figure at all express a desire to parent their children opposite to the model they were given.

Considerations for Medical Professionals

- It is important to understand the emotional landscape men inhabit in the face of an unexpected pregnancy. Because readiness is often a complex and multi-faceted emotional state, medical professionals should help men they encounter feel both understood and supported.
- We know that the conversation about the pregnancy plays a significant role in whether a woman will carry to term. An honest, clear and authentic conversation between the man and the woman will leave her feeling supported, loved and confident about carrying the pregnancy to term. Medical professionals should consider the emotional impact of healthy communication as they educate and encounter men whose girlfriends/wives are facing an unexpected pregnancy. Let men know that they don't have to make the final decision right away—he has time to collect himself, talk and look with her at all their options.
- Most men acknowledge that it is their responsibility to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife but struggle to reconcile this knowledge with a decision for life. Attempts to help men fulfill their responsibilities should take into consideration that while most men know they

should be responsible. they struggle with what this means (abortion or something else?). Medical professionals are more likely to encounter men who have already decided they want to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife. Among those not sure about their stance, help them understand their role in the pregnancy as a privilege and a blessing, how supporting her choice for life is something they should *want* to do. Equip them with the tools necessary to feel capable of taking responsibility.

- Men who attend medical appointments or prenatal exams are likely to be supportive but may be unsure about what exactly this looks like. Medical professionals should ask questions about any specific anxieties and walk him through what it would look like to confidently address these concerns. Identify potential gaps in his knowledge about fetal development, the effects of pregnancy, and how he can support his girlfriend/wife. Offer trusted resources, whether they are locally or digitally available.
- Empower men to advocate for their girlfriend/wife. Help him feel included in the pregnancy and explain how they have a vital role in helping her feel supported and secure. Know his name. Express interest in his experience throughout the pregnancy process. Create a space where he feels comfortable to ask questions about her health. Encourage him to be involved in “big moments,” like her ultrasound appointments. For the men unable to attend medical appointments due to either time or other barriers, have prenatal/educational resources for their pregnant girlfriend/wife to pass on.
- Identify dynamics/issues that cause misunderstanding, mistrust, ambiguity, and/or discord with his pregnant girlfriend/wife. Develop and/or identify resources that can help men effectively engage in healthy communication as they seek to meet their girlfriend/wife's needs.



- Primary care physicians who care for and treat older boys or young men can describe healthy relationships and how to communicate in positive, healthy, chaste, loving, responsible ways. Hearing this from a trusted and respected medical professional will help foster better communication between young men and women. This study demonstrates that good communication is a key to healthy relationships which respect the dignity of all human life (of the man, woman and children (expected or unexpected)).
- Nearly all of the men in the study were woefully informed about fetal development and how a child develops in the womb. This lack of knowledge contributed to their willingness to consider abortion at certain, subjective points such as “prior to a heartbeat” (which they had no idea can start as early as Day 16). Some medical professionals may be in a position to teach courses or do volunteer presentations at schools or youth groups which would greatly benefit a pro-life outlook for older boys and young men.

To read the rest of *Pro-Woman Approach for Medical Professionals: Applying Vitae Foundation Research to Healthcare*, visit vitaeresearchinstitute.org/research/guidebooks/



dynamics evoked by the unexpected pregnancy. Their view of the pregnancy fluctuates between perceiving the preborn child as a burden or a blessing. Men who consider the unexpected pregnancy a “mistake” or feel incapable of being a father are more likely to view the baby as a burden. Men who welcome the emerging obligations of fatherhood, on the other hand, see the baby as a blessing. Many fall in-between these two poles. Some who accept fatherhood expressed more concern over the responsibilities of being a father than excitement over the emerging life.



Key: The Pregnancy Conversation

Most men feel that abortion is primarily a woman’s choice and it is not their “right” to make the final decision. They perceive that the woman is the one carrying the burden of the pregnancy and therefore, *she* has the right to determine what to do with the preborn life. Most men perceive abortion as a decision where they have minimal or no say, though many men believe they *can* and *should* have some influence on her decision.

Most men feel that in the face of an unexpected pregnancy, both the man and the woman should be involved in the conversation about what to do. They express a desire to support their pregnant girlfriend or wife, but as noted before, many do not connect this desire with a decision in favor of the preborn life.

What happens during the conversation is important. When approached with news about an unexpected pregnancy, many men who desire to support their girlfriend/wife perceive that “I’ll support you whatever you choose” is most supportive thing to say. They believe it respects her autonomy, is non-confrontational, and in some cases, communicates an indirect openness to abortion (even if they recognize that the burden of the decision-making then falls on the woman). Some men disagree with this approach, believing it places an unfair burden on the woman. They feel that communicating