

*C.P.R.*

*Choice Processing and Resolution*



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*Facing Grief After Abortion Without Fear*

**TRUDY JOHNSON M.A., L.M.F.T.**



**Outskirts Press, Inc.**  
**Denver, Colorado**

*Jesse Lynn, the missing piece to my heart*

*To the disenfranchised voices of “vpt”*

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# **Acknowledgements**

To my faithful friend and editor, Barb

To the constant inspirations of my life,  
my two sons, Jobie and Jerret

To my soul mate and encourager, my husband, Lonney

THE HARDEST PART OF THE JOURNEY OF 1,000 MILES  
IS THE FIRST BRAVE STEP.



## **What Others Are Saying:**

“Trudy helped me through a difficult time in my life. The compassion she has for the “vpt” woman is evident. This resource has calmed the storm in my soul. I am so grateful she had the courage to broach this subject.”

“Jill” “vpt” woman, Colorado

“Finally! I am so grateful for “CPR.” It is so nice to know that I am not crazy! It was hard to look at my “vpt” but once I did with the help of this book, I am in a whole new place with my life.”

Liz “vpt” woman, California

“This is the book I wish I would have found ten years ago. Finally! I’ve found a common sense way to process my past abortion. This resource was very helpful for me to get to the bottomline and work through to a better place with my “vpt.”

Mary “vpt” woman, Texas

“CPR” is a wonderful combination of compassion and professionalism that speaks to the “vpt” woman in no other way. I am so grateful for this resource that I will be giving out to my future clients.”

Terrie Lenzini, LPC, Colorado

“I have one girl I’m working with who stopped counting at five “vpt” decisions. She is having a hard time processing anything. Wow, I loaned her the “CPR” book. I believe she is starting to feel again. Thank you!

Robin P., RN, Indiana  
(*STARS* Leader)

“Trudy, Bravo! I’ve long known about the need for grieving voluntary pregnancy termination. I’ve also written about this, but you’ve taken the subject to a whole new level. I’ll be featuring *C.P.R.~ Choice Processing and Resolution* as a resource in my new revised book, *Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom*.”

Dr. Christiane Northrup, M.D. F.A.C.O.G.

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# Notes to the Reader

## Are you reading this book in a library?

**GOOD.** Your local library is always the best place to start when researching information. Please understand this book is intended for use individually. Additionally, this book is meant to be interactive. There are actual exercises you will be doing to work through the process of grief concerning a choice decision. For this reason, please either make copies of the pages you will need to answer or write the questions down on a separate piece of paper. **Under no circumstance should you answer the exercises in the actual library copy of the book. Failure to comply will keep others from getting this very needed and valuable information so please cooperate with this simple request. You have the author's permission to make copies of the pages you will need to help you process through your choice decision.**

## Why is this book different?

This is the only book available in the history of choice that addresses *only* the grief component of choice decisions. It is a non-judgmental presentation for all faiths and cultures. *C.P.R. ~ Choice Processing and Resolution* is literally a “first aid kit” that helps process and resolve your voluntary pregnancy termination in a compassionate, safe atmosphere. Tears are allowed. Judgment and condemnation are *not*.

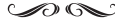
# YOU NEVER HAVE TO FEEL ALONE IN THIS JOURNEY

## VIRTUAL “C.P.R.” SUPPORT GROUPS

YOU WILL NEVER BE ALONE IN THIS PROCESS USING BLOG AND TWITTER! You can have instant dialogue by signing up for my blog at [www.choicepr.blogspot.com](http://www.choicepr.blogspot.com) or by going to my Web site, [www.missingpieces.org](http://www.missingpieces.org) and choosing “blog” in the nav bar. Please come join the “C.P.R.” virtual support and community as you travel this journey. Share and see others’ thoughts in a non-judgmental atmosphere.

### “C.P.R.” TWITTER:

Additionally, you can have community by receiving communication every single day as you work through your “vpt.” You never have to feel alone in the process. Sign up to join the virtual community of “C.P.R.” at <http://twitter.com/cprvpt>



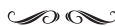
Every choice, every decision has its own unique set of circumstances. The life situations we were in were so varied. But our commonality is the same.



For so many women, it is hard for them to connect themselves to the “A-word” for fear of condemnation or because of shame.



Just as a voluntary pregnancy termination shouldn't be available only from a backroom entrance, *processing and resolving that choice* shouldn't have to be done in secret for fear of disclosure not being a safe place or of minimizing, condemnation or shaming confrontation.



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# 1

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## **An Introduction to C.P.R.**



It is no accident you are reading this book. You may have taken many roads in your life. Now you're at an intersection. This book brings you answers to help you care for a deep place in your heart that might be painful and confusing for you. Pain is a universal language that needs no interpreter. It doesn't matter your race, your religion, or your geographic location, pain is now the common bond you hold with other women who feel a need to re-visit a time and place from their past.

There is one thing you need to know: "*You are not alone.*" There are many, many others who relate to your heart's cry. My journey started where you are right now. Others' journeys are starting this same day in the same way your journey is beginning this very moment. We are women who are "keepers of the secret" and we all need a safe place to cry. You need to know you are not alone. I myself have "been there" just as countless other women all across the world.

Voluntary pregnancy termination is not anything we set out to do as a "goal" *per se*. It was never any of our basic desires to have to *choose*. Just like we were all on different roads and now we are here

## C.P.R.

at this intersection, so are the choices we've made. Every choice, every decision has its own unique set of circumstances. The life situations we were in were so varied. But our commonality is the same.

There were other choices we *could* have made. Single-parenting, "having to get married," adoption or in the case of a tough medical outcome...none of the options available provided perfect answers. For many of us perfection was demanded from us, either by ourselves or by others. Choices, decisions are hard. There is never any easy answer.

Every single one of the roads we *could* have chosen involve loss and grief. The only difference in "our choice" and the other choices we could/would/should have made is that the "other choices" have external results. All of the other choices available to us had elements of connection to them. Single-parenting, marriage, adoption...there is some component of human attachment and/or bonding to them. In voluntary termination, we take the solitary road.

We take the road alone and for most of us we are unable to talk to anyone about it. The world in general, others, and even we "assume" we are fine. And well we may be. In voluntary termination, there is no evidence of a baby...there is no "missing person" in our lives and the father may already be out of the picture. We get up and go on with our lives... without relationship. We are in one sense relieved to "get on with the business of living" and we file our decision away as anything from "barely a blip on the radar screen," to "I'm so sad I could die."

As time passes and our lives return to balance---it may be a day, weeks, months or even several years---an unusual thing starts happening. A deep sense of loss may begin to surface. The craziest thing might "trigger us." For me, it was a cold March day. I was

## AN INTRODUCTION TO C.P.R.

in the super market shopping, rounded the corner and ran into another shopper with a beautiful little girl seated in her cart. Her curls looked like angel curls and her eyes were the bluest I've ever seen. Suddenly a sense of sadness overcame me that I was unable to shake off.

I ended up leaving the store, running out to my car and crying. It wouldn't be until a few years later that I realized this incident coincided with the anniversary of the voluntary termination of my pregnancy. That too happened to be a "cold March day."

I've talked with many other ladies, including many clients who detail to me similar experiences. One person was walking through the baby department in a big clothing store. The other lady drove by a playground and saw the children playing on the swings.

This sense of loss is very normal and it may take years before experiencing it. After the supermarket incident I began to think about the termination, but of course did not dialogue with *anyone*. After all, exactly *who in the world* could I talk with about my feelings? I eventually came to the dead end conclusion that there was no way I had a "right to grieve" a loss that I was responsible for. What I'd done was legal. I must be crazy to be feeling so sad.

So I walked the road alone realizing that voluntary pregnancy termination is a choice I made on my own. I concluded therefore that processing any overflow emotional responses regarding the termination of the pregnancy were also up to me, just as much of the choice decision had been.

Feeling the responsibility of the choice and feeling like there is no allowance for grieving a loss one has *chosen* are a few of the various reasons women don't talk about their voluntary termination of pregnancy. For the most part it is for fear of condemnation, discounting and minimizing our situation. We even have the conversation with *ourselves*. "I chose this as a solution to my crisis,

## **C.P.R.**

so why should I feel bad, why should I feel sad, why should I feel anything at all?” Unfortunately, there are no answers and no one to voice any sort of hopeful message about the turmoil going on in the inside.

I myself found nowhere to run when I began feeling confusion and pain because of the loss I experienced years ago. It is for this reason I feel compelled to send down a lifeline to my sisters of choice. I hope this book will bring some answers for your questions and give you a helpful plan for resolution to the voluntary termination of your pregnancy.

### **Why Do I Refer to the “A-word” as “vpt?”**

There are a few parameters for processing and resolving your pregnancy termination through the use of this book. First and most important is that you understand that you are not alone. I know I keep saying these words, but just realize that the “A” club we belong to is much greater than one might think. You may be alone reading this book, but you are not alone with your questions, confusion and/or pain.

Secondly, I am *choosing* not to use the “A-word” in this book. The “A-word” has the potential of adding to the confusion as you process and reconcile your choice. I’ve crafted the term “Voluntary Pregnancy Termination” or the acronym “vpt” as a way to refer to the “procedure.” This gets the terminology out of the realm of any preconceived ideas you might have about your “vpt” resolution. The “A-word” incites many heated discussions.

It is much more important for you to be able to face your choice and process the grief and reach resolution than for you to dialogue political and religious arguments in your head. For so many women I’ve worked with, it is hard for them to connect themselves with the

## AN INTRODUCTION TO C.P.R.

“A-word.” They are at a different place in life and they are unable to look at themselves in the present as “that person.” There can be so much shame and condemnation involved. Again, we walk the solitary road when it comes to talking about our choices.

I will always remember a 62 year-old client who was coming to me for grief resolution. She disclosed that on all the medical forms she'd filled out through the years, she had never written the “A” word on her intake information. She could not make the connection from her head to writing the word on the paper.

“Vpt” was our personal decision; it is the common bond that unites us. We are the ones who know what “vpt” is about. “Vpt” is my personal journey and my own unique experience that has nothing to do with political discussion. There is no doubt in my mind that many news commentators don't understand what “vpt” has meant to me on a personal heart level. Most professional counselors don't understand, the majority of pastors don't understand, many of my friends don't understand and I would say *all* of my family members don't understand. You the reader, however, understand what I am saying. I the writer understand your journey, your heart. We have commonalities that those who speak like experts, yet who couldn't possibly understand, don't. So “vpt” is what I will refer to from here on out. I hope this change in label will help you move out of that vague place of denial. You now have permission to process your loss. You are free to look at the grief you might be experiencing over your “vpt.”

Just as a voluntary pregnancy termination shouldn't be available only from a backroom entrance, *processing and resolving* our choice shouldn't have to be done in secret for fear of disclosure. My personal journey of resolution involved several years. I was confused and in pain but only received answers from random sources. We shouldn't have to risk rejection, condemnation, misunderstanding

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or disapproval just because we are searching for resolution. Also, I believe that keeping all concepts of “vpt” in the political realm stops us from allowing processing when the time comes for that.

Those who’ve chosen “vpt” shouldn’t have to assume that if we even ask questions we are putting choice in jeopardy of losing its legal status.

This mind-set is an archaic one. Imagine if a person suffering from alcoholism were afraid to get help because it might cause the nation to go back into the era of prohibition. It should not only be “OK” to get help to process “vpt” - it should be absolutely acceptable in the eyes of our culture.

*C.P.R. ~ Choice Processing and Resolution* is a way for those struggling with their grief to finally “have permission” to “go there” with their emotions and their questions. Finally, those who’ve chosen all over the world can grieve, process and reconcile the loss incurred through “vpt.” Again, no more hiding about the grief that accompanies a voluntary termination of pregnancy!

You will read my story in the next chapter, but for right now, just know that when it came my time to grieve there was no one available to help me. I went to a professional counselor and two pastors and only walked away with more sadness and confusion. It is important for you to know that “*you are not alone*” and others have been in the exact same place you are right now. I was also one of those women.

### **Understanding the Importance of Safety**

I hope you will let this time of intersecting roads be a place of safety and comfort. It is very likely that only a few people, if *anyone*, know about your experience with “vpt.” Processing and reconciling your choice, your secret, might bring up some emotion

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you've pushed down for years. You may be bringing up and out some feelings you have *never* allowed yourself to have. For this reason, you need to be very safe physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually while you read this book.

As a licensed professional therapist, I have become increasingly aware that our women are suffering greatly from lack of care, comfort and nurturing. Many women did not get this from their mothers, much less their fathers. Somewhere in their quest to “have it all” women have lost the fine art of comforting themselves. In her book, *A Gift from the Sea*, Anne Morrow Lindbergh makes the very wise comment, “What a circus act we women perform everyday of our lives. This is not the life of simplicity, but the life of multiplicity that the wise men warn us of. It leads not to unification but to fragmentation. It does not bring grace; it destroys the soul.” Women run on empty fumes in their tank. As a result, they get less and less efficient, less and less at peace with their souls.

While you are reading this book, just know that now is your time to be safe. You are reading words penned by a writer who has compassion for you. This book is a safe place to read about and process your secret. So let this journey be one of safety and comfort as you walk with others who are in the exact same life situation as you.

I would suggest reading this book in the privacy of your own home. Reading while you are on a plane or at work would not be the ideal setting for delving into your resolution process. Creating safety is something you can do on your own. I actually have what I call a “safe place” in my home.

My hope is that you might be able to create such a place in yours. Actually, all the homes I've lived in over the past couple of decades have had a “safe place.” Will you think me strange if I admit to you that at one point I lived in an apartment that had a *huge* bathroom and I was able to make this my “safe place”? I put a

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wonderful pillow on the floor and beside me was a small stereo that provided soothing music when I needed it. Anytime I wanted to get away I could always go into my bathroom and close the door.

Presently, my “safe place” is much more practical, but still very simple. It’s a small sofa in my office with a soft lamp sitting on a table with probably anywhere from six to twenty books lying nearby. The most important component of my safe place is “my blankee.” Again, I am being very vulnerable here...me a grown woman admitting that I have a “blankee.” It is amazing the softness of baby blankets these days. I have an actual real baby blanket that I can sit and cover myself with. The blanket was expensive for a baby’s blanket...around \$20.00...but all in all one of the best investments I’ve ever made. It is soft like a cloud and just plain *exudes* safety and non-judgment. I add to this a nice cup of French vanilla coffee and I have my safe haven, an instant vacation from the worries and insanity of the world. And so it is that I would suggest you also be creative in finding your own little slot, a corner that you can call your own as you walk this journey. Again, you may have to be very creative in making your nest, but if I can turn a bathroom into a sanctuary, I know you can also find a place where you can pull away from the distractions around you to start your own choice resolution.

This book is in your hands for a reason. It is “your time” to courageously face what your soul already knows. You made a choice in a circumstance that demanded you make it. Choosing means you took one road and left another road behind. You have permission, now is the time!

## **Who Are We?**

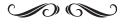
I keep mentioning the fact that you are not alone. I think it important to interject information about the demographics of

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the woman of choice in our nation. Women who've voluntarily terminated pregnancies are everywhere! We consist of every ethnicity, every religion, every economic class. We are career women, we are moms, we are grandmothers, we are aunts, we are sisters. We could be your next door neighbor or even your pastor's wife.

Planned Parenthood does an excellent job of keeping track of how many procedures are performed throughout the years. You can go to the statistical gathering arm of their organization called the Alan Guttmacher Institute ([www.agi-org](http://www.agi-org)) to find any mathematical information you would like. For simplicity sake, though, let me help you understand the facts and figures of voluntary pregnancy termination.

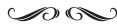
For the past years since the legalization of choice in 1973, there has been an *average* of 1.2-1.5 million "vpt" decisions every year. In a world where trillion is a household word, I think a word picture of actual warm bodies would be helpful. Let's look at pro-football to give you an idea of just how many of us have made choice decisions. At the writing of this book there are ten National League Football teams and ten American League Football teams. Each team's stadium holds anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 plus fans. If we (for sake of this word picture) say the average stadium holds 60,000 fans, then you can look at the number of "vpt" choices in our nation each year *as every single football league's stadium full of people at the same time*. That would be all 20 stadiums filled to the brim with women! Now I can't quite imagine the amount of words or the number of potty breaks you would count in a scene like this, but I hope you get the picture. Women who've made a decision to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy are the largest demographic in our nation. As you can see, *you are not alone!*



I made my choice decision at age twenty,  
so “vpt” has been a part of my entire adult life.



I had a horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach but I felt like this was my only way out. I didn't think about the pregnancy as a pregnancy. Mostly, it was an inconvenient situation, a crisis that I really needed out of my way as soon as possible.



I didn't feel like I had the right to grieve my loss --there was no external evidence of a baby... and I didn't feel like I should be allowed permission to grieve over a loss that I had chosen.

