

When I first experienced lost fatherhood to abortion I was a few weeks shy of graduating high school. I protested, but her mother was insistent. I fell into what society demands of men in such situations. I was to be supportive no matter what the mother of the child decided.

A few days later I found myself sitting on the steps of an abortion clinic...my girlfriend and her mother inside. I was lost and confused and anxious and scared. That day changed the direction of my life though I wasn't aware of it at the moment.

Behaviors (sometimes called Acting Out Behaviors) followed. I continued to struggle with anxiety, though it was unnamed and untreated. The thing is I felt in my gut that the abortion was wrong. But I did what I thought I was supposed to do and tried to be supportive. The months and years that followed that day on the steps were a series of attempts to avoid the pain and confusion.

I changed jobs often, changed geography often, engaged in a long string of very short relationships and started dabbling in extreme sports. See, the pull from one side was to avoid feeling the emotions I couldn't name. On the other side, I went cliff diving, kayaking, whatever shock-to-the-system activity I could find in order to feel "something."

Then at the age of 22 I was living in west-central Nebraska and working construction. I had dated a girl shortly before moving out there. Several weeks after I settled in I received a call. The girl I had dated was back home in Chicago and she was pregnant. She told me not to worry as she intended to have an abortion.

I lost it.

I told her I'd move to Chicago and we could get married. She said she didn't want to marry me. I offered to raise the kid on my own without her involvement at all. She said no. I suggested we go the adoption route. She said no. At this point I was in a panic. I said, "Please don't kill my baby." She responded that it wasn't a baby and it was her choice.

I told her I would get in the car and be to Chicago by first thing in the morning. She told me not to bother...that her appointment was first thing in the morning and I wouldn't make it in time. Then she got off the phone.

It would be close to 16 years from that day before I found abortion recovery. That was a revolutionary moment! To be able to process through the feelings and pain and regret and years of running was freeing and liberating.

I have spent the past 15 years continuing to pursue healing. I suspect that's a perpetual journey of growth and self-discovery...and I welcome it. And with healing comes a tender heart towards those who have yet to choose abortion and especially those who have experienced loss through abortion. And it comes with a desire to help other men find their path to healing.

I can't change what happened. I can't bring back either of my lost children. I can't take back all the wrong decisions that often hurt others as I muddled through life in the years that followed the abortions. But I can share my experience, strength and hope so that others may learn from my mistakes and find their own healing.

And for that, I am thankful.

Submitted by: Gregory Mayo, author of "Almost Daddy: The Forgotten Story."