



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Support After Abortion

**Guest(s):** Lisa Rowe

**Air Date:** January 18, 2023

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

**Dr. James Dobson:** Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and as your January is in full swing now, I hope this new year is bringing you many new blessings, as well. Did you know that coming up this Friday, it's the annual March for Life event in Washington DC? With the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, you know the work to protect the pre-born is as important now as ever before. And supporting those who have been through the traumatic process of an abortion is also a big task because these women need lots of support, hope, and guidance, and so do their family members as well.

Today, we are welcoming our guest, Lisa Rowe, who is helping those who've been through that very difficult time after an abortion. Lisa is the CEO of Support After Abortion, a fast growing nonprofit organization that works with many other agencies to help provide people impacted by abortion with the support that they need, so the healing process can begin. Lisa Rowe is a licensed clinical social worker. She's also the co-author of the book called, *Unraveled Roots*, and she's spent over 20 years working to empower children, adults, and broken families to heal and restore their lives. Lisa has reached thousands with her speeches, conferences, and workshops. Sharing compassion and hope to those who need healing. Let's listen now to today's interview here on Family Talk.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Hello and thank you for listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and co-host here on the broadcast. My guest today is here to talk about a really difficult topic, something that probably isn't talked about as much as it should be, and that is post-abortion trauma and recovery. There are very specific reasons for that, and we're going to get into that during our conversation. Her name is Lisa Rowe. Lisa, thank you for joining us here on Family Talk.

**Lisa Rowe:** Thank you so much for having me, Tim. The work that you guys are doing is a phenomenal, and I'm grateful that you would see this as a necessary issue to discuss on your platform.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, the statistics are very sobering when you think about 60 plus million abortions since the *Roe v. Wade* decision-

Lisa Rowe: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In America alone. And then I saw a piece from the Guttmacher Institute saying that somewhere around 40% of American women have had an abortion, and it stopped me in my tracks. And I thought, "You're kidding me." In my mind, Lisa, that means a lot of women in everyday life, a lot of women sitting in the pews of our churches have had an abortion. For some of them, they suppress that, they repress that, they put it way back in there. And they don't even talking about it, but it's important that we do address this issue.

Lisa Rowe: Absolutely, and it's my goal, Tim. As a clinician, nobody ever trained me about abortion and the impacts of abortion. I was shocked when I began to understand the gravity of the pain, the hurt, the shame, the guilt that comes with abortion. And I didn't know how to talk, I didn't even know to talk about it. I was working in an anti-trafficking organization and I would do tons of trauma assessments, lots of clinical treatment, and we would talk about the most egregious situations. And never once, Tim, did I talk about abortion.

And I thought that I was alone in that. And what I quickly came to realize is that I'm not uncommon. There are a lot of clinicians and many people out there that because we have created this divide in the political and the religious realms, that we've made this a non-human issue like divorce or poverty or domestic violence or trafficking. We talk about those situations commonly, maybe at our living room conversation or wherever. But we're not talking about abortion that way, and it's not talked about in a professional manner either. And so it is my personal goal to help make this a conversation that feels like a human connection. That you and I, Tim, talk about this at dinner with our friends or with our family members. Because the more common we can make this conversation, the more people will feel like they can come out of the woodworks and talk about their abortion experiences.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, what are your thoughts on that Guttmacher statistic that 40% of American women have had an abortion? Do you find that to be true?

Lisa Rowe: Absolutely. We know that repeat abortion is very, very real. In fact, the impetus behind Support After Abortion is that if 50% of people are having a repeat abortion, that means out of the one million abortions that are happening nationally, 500,000 of those are happening on somebody who's already had an abortion. We believe that finding healing after that first abortion, if we can create the narrative, create the conversation at our dining room tables. That we could help to bring people to that healing place where they wouldn't go back in for that second, third, or fourth abortion.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, a lot of women, when this subject comes up, they might turn the radio down-

Lisa Rowe: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Or they might tune out a pastor because of that dark moment in their life, that difficult moment where she or they as a couple found themselves trying to figure out what they're going to do with this unplanned pregnancy. Lisa, can you take us back there and talk about why this is so difficult, too? I mean, I know we're going to talk more about post-abortive trauma and what that looks like. But just this calling on your life and this passion you have. Obviously, you have a real heart for these women in particular, who have gone through this horrific experience.

Lisa Rowe: Absolutely, and I think coming from my own personal experience, I carry many of the vulnerabilities that women that choose abortion carry. A lot of trauma in my childhood. A woman doesn't wake up at 18 years old and say, "I can't wait to have an abortion today." Just like a man doesn't wake up and say, "I can't wait to walk my girlfriend into that abortion clinic." These are men and women who have experienced great trauma, that aren't particularly supported by maybe a lot of healthy support systems that come into this situation unexpectedly with no tools. And so left to their own defenses and left to the cultural narrative, they feel like abortion is the best answer.

What they don't, and what we're not informing them is how much pain is going to follow that experience. And so that's the first thing that we're trying to do at Support After Abortion is create compassion that this is not somebody who ... you see all the commercials or the people out there that are holding signs, "Her body, her choice." A lot of those people have experienced abortion and are trying to find a space to defend their own choices and their own trauma.

And so we just want people to understand that this is a very hard decision for most everybody I talk to. And when met with the controversy of the religious conversations, murder and then the political conversations, it narrows people into a corner that says, "Well, okay, I thought this was something that the culture supported. But now I want to talk about it and the abortion clinic doesn't want to talk to me about it. But the person holding the sign with the murder and the baby dead, I don't know what to do now. So I'm just going to go into my private place because that's all I was ever taught is to stuff everything. And here I am now with another trauma on top of the rest of my traumas." And so substance abuse increases, divorce increases, suicidal ideation increases, you name it, every vulnerability becomes more intense.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, the moment that I get this news and say that I grew up in a pretty difficult home situation. Out of nowhere, I get hit with this and I've got 24 hours to make a decision. I remember a phone call that I received in my office a few years back, and it changed my life on this very topic. Because a mom was driving her daughter to an abortion Planned Parenthood clinic, and she said, "Tim, your

name popped into my head and I just dialed your number and I wanted to tell you what we're doing. And I want you to talk to her." Meaning her daughter, "And would you do that right now?"

And Lisa, I mean, I was like completely caught off guard, but here's a moment. And I was thinking about what it must have been like for her, as a young girl in the midst of this, with shame, with confusion, with chaos going on. And maybe getting a lot of pushback from her boyfriend, et cetera. That's not a good place to be, is it?

Lisa Rowe: What a difficult situation, Tim, for you to be in and to be invited in. I mean, the number one thing that I heard is that somebody knew where to turn to get your support. So thank you for being a soft place to land for people. Because what my experience is that there isn't that for many people. There isn't a safe place for people to go. They're worried about the condemnation or the shame. And so your experience is so uncommon.

But I'm glad that you would share that because that's what we want to do with abortion healing. We want people to understand that there are places to have this conversation ahead of time and afterwards. But in that midst and mental health wise, when we have trauma and we have emotions flaring, like our whole entire morality, our value system, any sort of intellect that we might have, our faith is so fogged. Because we're in the situation and it's like you can't see the forest through the trees. So what we always want to do is create that pause. Let's just talk about this, let's give it more than 24 hours to have that conversation because we want you to get that stuff to clear in order to make the best decision for you. Sometimes people still choose abortion, but that isn't where we are going to stand in judgment. We're going to be there no matter what.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, the abortion industry indicates that abortions don't hurt women or affect them emotionally. They have to stand behind that. They have to. That lie is straight out of the pit of hell. We know that. It's straight out of the pit. And Lisa, can you respond to that? What would you say to a young woman who may be listening right now, to a family, maybe some parents. And this is their moment, they're in this and they're trying to deal with that. What do you tell young women?

Lisa Rowe: A woman who's facing an abortion decision, same with a man that's facing that. My first stop is to create relationship, to create a non-judgmental connection. "I'm so sorry that you are in this situation. I know it sounds like it's very hard for you, and this decision seems very difficult for you. My best advice is to take time, never make a decision in an emotional crisis, always get as much feedback and as much insight." And then, Tim, what I would love to do for most people is give them a referral to somebody who's already experienced an abortion. The consumer research we have says that people want to talk to people who've already experienced the pain that they're about to experience, and if they can

hear stories or connections to elements in this story, they likely will listen and listen longer.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, I'd like for you to talk a little bit about the trauma side of this and what you've heard from women as they explain their stories. I remember being in a counseling session one time, and this lady took weeks. She said, "Tim, if I tell you this piece of my life, you won't like me anymore." And she kept setting me up, setting me up, and I just kept, just working and just coming back and saying, "When you're ready, I'll be ready." And I remember her telling me about having an abortion, and she said, "Tim, here's the big issue. I hear babies crying every night when I go to sleep." And then she wept uncontrollably. Lisa, can you tell me some narrative about what you're hearing?

Lisa Rowe: Yeah, it's so similar, and I'd love to give somebody who's listening the tools about how to do this. And so we talked about creating that space for compassion to be that soft place to land. But the best thing to say to somebody who's just exposed their abortion experience to you is to say, "I'm so sorry for your loss. You are not alone." Those two phrases are impeccable on so many levels. Because what it does is validate the human life that that particular individual lost. So to say, "I'm so sorry for your loss." You might be the first person who ever acknowledged the loss. And then to say, "You're not alone." Further validates that they're not the only one on this journey.

And then the third step is to say, "Would you like to share your experience with me?" They probably carried this by themselves, like that woman, I mean, she probably thought she was crazy saying, "I go to bed every night hearing these babies. I must be crazy." And it's like, no, this is your reality. You are grieving. So it's echoed times infinity.

And then the fourth piece is to refer for support. But what you just conveyed is so common. The aftermath of abortion, it's just nothing like I've ever seen. Because it's so confusing to people. We have women that are 19 years old that just took an at-home abortion pill and say, I didn't think ... they just said it was going to be a period, but I delivered my baby and I held her in my hand. And I couldn't draw myself to flush the baby down the toilet, but it was a baby. I could see the eye sockets and the limbs and oh my gosh, I didn't know this was going to happen. So we have this compound trauma, Tim, where it's like, "Okay, I made the decision to end my child's life and then I have to flush it down the toilet." It's a reality that I don't think our world is even ready to embrace.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I remember that woman in the counseling session saying to me, "Tim, do you think God will forgive me?" And she just said, "Will God forgive me?" Forgiveness is a big issue here. God's forgiveness, personal forgiveness and more, isn't it, Lisa?

Lisa Rowe: Oh, it's a huge part, and it's a huge part of every healing program that's being offered right now. Because it is, I mean, there's so many layers to forgiveness. And there's just so much that comes with that. It's like everybody tells you, it's

the unforgivable sin. Abortion is the unforgivable sin. It's my encouragement to pastors listening right now, that if you're not talking about this from your platform, you're encouraging that message, that it is the unforgivable sin. We've got to talk about abortion and abortion healing with compassion, so that people know that that's not true.

Dr. Tim Clinton: This woman that I was talking about too, Lisa, was married.

Lisa Rowe: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I saw some of the sobering statistics that you guys talk about related to relationships. What do you see happen to couples when they go through an abortion? And they're trying to figure out how to get on the other side of it. What usually happens to them?

Lisa Rowe: Well, almost never does the relationship last. And so that's the biggest piece of this. So an abortion usually is ... a lot of times people decide for an abortion because they're like, "I don't want to lose my significant other." And the majority of the time, the relationship is lost anyways.

Another significant piece of this journey that we've been on at Support After Abortion is understanding the male's role. Our culture has villainized men and has said that they're the reason, they're the perpetrator. And the research we did last year actually showed a very different message. It showed that men 50% of the time didn't feel like they had a right to say anything. So there's a different situation at play now that we understand that. How can you, as a leader, the protector of your family, really step up and be that, when you don't even feel like you can say anything about your child's life and defend your child's life? So it's creating this really interesting understanding and paradigm for us at Support After Abortion on how do you really support a man who's walked through an abortion experience? It's a very uniquely entangled situation that we're just beginning to understand.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, the good news here is that a lot of women are now coming forward and they're talking about their stories, that it's becoming more acceptable. Meaning they must feel more safe and more comfortable walking their way through it, or they recognize the fact that if they don't, they're going to stay stuck in this pain and chaos in their life. And so we've got to do something.

And organizations like your organization, Support After Abortion, are stepping up to help make this a reality. Tell us a little bit about Support After Abortion. You guys started in 2020 and you're exploding. It's amazing what God's doing. But give us kind of the lay of the land on the organization and what you're trying to accomplish.

Lisa Rowe: So what we're doing at Support After Abortion is helping to be a vehicle for the men and women who are hurting across the world to find the place of healing

that fits them. Up until now, we've had these siloed experiences where somebody bursts a program in California and New York and Minnesota. And it's great for their community, but those leaders aren't communicating, they don't know that there's other people to walk this journey with them and walk the struggles and learn best practices. And so what we really learned the industry needed was a place for us to connect leaders, deliver best practices, and then get people connected to the services across the world.

And so that's what Support After Abortion is doing. We're helping to create that compassion message, helping people understand that abortion is a very real issue. But then we're creating collaborative opportunities for leaders to come together from California to India to China to New York, to better understand what's working for them. This virtual world that we're living in was a huge shift for the Abortion Healing Movement because much like the counseling world, they wanted to meet in person and they thought that was the only way they can. And we're hearing that it's better in the virtual space.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, so in other words, I can confidentially call the hotline and I can be anonymous and just say, "Hey, I wanted to call and talk to someone. I've been trouble with this." Who are calling the hotline? What age range are you receiving?

Lisa Rowe: Oh, Tim, we get calls anywhere from a 15 year old to an 80 year old woman. A 15 year old who's laying on the table at an abortion clinic who's saying, "I really don't know if I should be doing this." We've had women hop off of the abortion table so that she could make a different decision. And we've had 80 year old women that said, "I'm facing the end of life and I can't live with this secret anymore. I need to tell somebody." And everything in between, Tim. We've had women that said, "I am the wife of a very significant political figure, I don't want anybody to know in my community that I've had an abortion. Can you talk to me?" We've had men call and said, "My girlfriend wants to have this abortion. I don't want her to have this abortion. What do I do? How do I support her?" Moms, grandparents, I mean, you name it.

And they are calling and they're speaking to people who understand that journey. And then ask this very specific question, "What is it that you would like your healing journey to look like?" Because for so long, it's been a one size fits all. And so what we're learning now is that a lot of people don't want to be in person, or they don't want a faith-based version right away. They want to walk this journey a little bit more tentatively. And so we are finding that there's a way to meet everybody right where they are, just like Jesus did and get more people to those healing programs.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Lisa, if I'm driving down the road right now, and I just want to put this in my mind, we need that website. We need that 800 number. What is that information for them?

Lisa Rowe: So SupportAfterAbortion.com is the best place for you to go because what you get to see is what it is that we're doing, you're not alone, you can listen to a podcast there, read a blog. And you can contact us right off of that page. You can go to our Facebook page or Instagram and you can connect with us there, you can follow us, share the information so that people in your circles. Because Tim, one out of four people will experience an abortion before their 45th birthday. Tim, that means that our friend groups have somebody in them that's experienced an abortion. And so even just showing like you were that soft place to land, if we begin sharing this conversation, having this conversation out loud with compassion. Can you imagine the influence that we could have?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, I'd like to close this way. We'd be remiss again to think that there probably isn't someone listening right now who got a phone call. Maybe it's a mom or dad, and they don't know what to say to their daughter in this moment. Or maybe she's listening, she just found out that she has an unplanned pregnancy. And she's horrified, she's embarrassed, she's ashamed. What do you say to them?

Lisa Rowe: I am so sorry that this is your journey. You are not alone, and there are people that want to help you and that want to help you make the best decision for you. And so right now, if you need a resource, please connect with us at SupportAfterAbortion.com. Or you can call us at 844-289-HOPE. You also can text us, it's confidential. Nobody needs to know but you and the person you're speaking to about your circumstances, what you're walking in. But please don't make this decision all by yourself. Talk to somebody.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lisa, it's been such a delight to have you. That organization, again, is SupportAfterAbortion.com. That's the website you can go to and they'll connect you, they'll minister to, they'll pour into your heart. And it's all about help, hope and encouragement. Lisa, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team at Family Talk, we really appreciate the great work that God's doing in and through the organization and in through you. Thank you so much for joining us.

Lisa Rowe: Oh, Tim, it's been a pleasure. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Wow. Abortion truly has been a difficult topic for many and has affected so many women. We hear these comforting words in Ephesians chapter four, verse 32, and we take heart. Paul writes, "Be kind and compassionate to one another. Forgiving each other just as in Christ, God forgave you."

If you find value in our programs here at Family Talk, consider getting your own copy of our 2022 Best of Broadcast Collection. The digital download or six CD set includes 18 of our most popular programs from the previous year. For a suggested donation of \$50, we'll send you your own copy or you can download your digital copy right away. This collection is yours to enjoy or to share with loved ones. Visit [drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022](http://drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022) to secure your copy. That's [drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022](http://drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022). Now to order by phone, simply call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.



We love hearing from you, so please feel free to send any of your questions, comments, or even your prayer requests as well. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, have a blessed day. You've been listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. James Dobson: When I was in college, I ran a long distance race that I will never forget. I didn't win it, but I did learn a valuable lesson about myself and about marriage.

Roger Marsh: Dr. James Dobson for Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: It was my freshman year and I really wanted to win my first race badly. Although I hadn't trained properly, I bounded onto the track full of energy and optimism. At the sound of the starting gun, I tore off as fast as I could run, and I left the pack far behind. By the second lap however, my side was splitting and the pack was closing in behind me. Somewhere near the halfway mark, I was sucking air frantically and my chest was heaving like a great gray whale. I soon collapsed on the infield grass in a sweating heap of failure, losing the race and my pride in one great disaster.

But I did learn a lesson that has stuck with me to this day. Marathons are very different from sprints, and you have to learn to pace yourself if you're going to endure to the finish line. And isn't that true of married life too? You have to set a pace that you can maintain through all the ups and downs of everyday living and make up your mind to let nothing knock you off the track. It's called lifelong marriage, and it sure beats an early collapse on the infield grass.

Roger Marsh: To get involved, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).