



# Honouring the Loss



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*A Holistic Guide to Healing with Ritual and  
Herbal Medicine after an Abortion*

**India Elyn**

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A Holistic Guide to Healing  
with Ritual and Herbal Medicine  
after an Abortion

*Written and illustrated by  
India Elyn*

AEON

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*For my grandmothers who stand behind me, and for the women who  
will one day stand in front of me. I dedicate this book to you.*



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## PREFACE

### My story

My journey to writing this book has been a long and winding one. It all began high up in the French Pyrenees mountains where I came across a tiny self-published book about abortion and herbs. This discovery sparked a journey of delving into the more ancient uses of herbs for women, as well as exploring the topic of abortion and realising the total lack of resources that exists for women who have gone through one.

When the idea of writing a book about abortion began to form, I had not at that point experienced one, and I had absolutely no intention to, yet life had other plans. Several months later I went through one and felt all the grief and trauma associated with that experience. It took me a long time (and a return to my roots in the UK) before I could sit at my desk and consider writing about this topic. This book is a silver lining to come from that experience. I have lived through one and even though every woman's experience is different, I believe that all women who go through one can share similar threads of their journey. I feel that I made a contract with the little soul who so briefly rested in my womb, a contract to bring abortion out into the open and share with women some of the ways we can heal and be at peace with our decision.

As the months passed I began to feel that I was not writing a book but weaving a tapestry. A tapestry woven with threads of herbal lore, ritual, gentle words, and love. These threads were being woven from many sources by many women; I have not done this alone. Although a book can never replace the presence of a wise elder who is there standing next to you, offering medicine and guidance, as you journey through an abortion. My prayers are woven into every page, so that you do not feel alone in these challenging times. The plants are there to assist you at every stage of the process, even years after, and the rituals are for your soul, opening the door to the sacred in your life and sowing the seed for transformations to occur.

This is the book that I wish I could have held in my hands during and after my abortion. I hope that it finds its way to all the courageous women out there who are called to step on this path of healing and honouring the loss.



## CHOICE OF WORDS

When deciding which word to use for the action of ending a pregnancy, I have chosen the word “abortion”. Despite the fact that this word is laced with taboo, politics, and the underworld, it is the one that most clearly represents what a woman is going through. There seems to be no “right” word to use for this extremely sensitive subject, one that is both respectful towards women and is not shrouded in taboo.

However, there are gentler ways to describe having an abortion, such as “pregnancy loss”, which can be far less triggering for some women. If you do find yourself triggered by this word throughout the book, then by all means please replace it with words you are more comfortable using.

My choice in using this word was to open up a new space around it, one that is not spoken about and rarely created. This space is one of healing and supporting, which looks beyond how those in power choose to use it. By creating another dimension to the word “abortion”, it has the effect of softening the meaning and sound, almost like creating a hidden chamber, one in which only women know how to enter and where there is a place to heal.

I have included the etymology as I have found that looking to the root of the word shows that it is linked to all manner of endings that we

encounter in our lives. Sunset being the most beautiful form of ending mentioned. (“sunsets” is not in bold in the original quote)

Latin *abortionem* (nominative *abortio*) ‘miscarriage; abortion, procuring of an untimely birth,’ noun of action from past-participle stem of *aboriri* ‘to miscarry, be aborted, fail, disappear, pass away,’ a compound word used in Latin for deaths, miscarriages, **sunsets**, etc., which according to OED is from *ab*, here as “amiss” (see *ab-*), + stem of *oriri* ‘appear, be born, arise’.<sup>1</sup>

### What to call “the foetus”?

Another contentious and interchangeable word within the experience of an abortion is what to call the foetus. Each woman seems to have her own way of describing the growing ball of cells within her womb, each perfectly right for her own journey. I have heard many from; “embryo”, “the little one”, “it”, “tiny being”, “the soul”, “ball of cells”, to no name at all.

Each woman will have her own reason for the name she consciously or unconsciously chooses. This may be dependent on a variety of factors from her belief systems to her desire to connect with the foetus. Another factor may be how far along the pregnancy was, before the abortion took place; as women who end a pregnancy only a few weeks in may have a different relationship to the foetus to those who go through the procedure many weeks later.

Within this book I have thought long and hard about which term to use. In the end I have decided to work with two interchangeably depending on the context. I am using both the “foetus”, and “the little being”, as I feel that both resonate with the different aspects of the life that was growing in the womb.

If this terminology does not resonate, then just allow whichever word feels best for you to replace the ones that I have chosen.

## HOW TO WORK WITH THIS BOOK

Whether you have had an abortion, are considering one, or are simply curious, this book will gently guide you through this journey and beyond, with the help of many healing herbs and simple rituals.

I have separated the book into 3 main chapters;

- The first travels along the journey of the abortion experience, to guide those women who have yet to go through one and are intending to.
- The second is for the hours and days after an abortion, when the experience is still present in both your mind and your body.
- The third is for the months and years after an abortion, where the focus is less on the physical symptoms and more on addressing the emotional side of the experience.

I made this separation of the experience due to different symptoms being present at different times, therefore my suggestions of herbs for that time is unique to that period. However, there are many crossovers, so have a look through all the herbs suggested to see which ones resonate with you and your needs.

I also wanted to open up the possibility for this to be a guide for both women who are choosing to have an abortion imminently and for

women who have had one years ago. We are all at different stages of our journey.

I have compiled all the rituals together, so that it is easy for the reader to pick and choose which ones they feel called to. I will specify any that may be more suited to either before or just after an abortion. Woven throughout are recipes and tips of self-care that are there to ease you along this journey. I thoroughly recommend reading through the Herbal Medicine chapter so that you are familiar with the preparations, and how to use the herbs, so that you may use them safely. They are powerful healers and must be treated with full respect.

Please pay attention to any dosages that I give, if in doubt please contact a fully qualified Medical Herbalist for further advice.

Aside from the main chapters, I have included smaller ones on:

- The importance of nutrition for healing the body; how we can nourish our bodies back to balance by including the right vitamins and minerals in our diets.
- Acknowledging the men and the partners who stand by as women go through an abortion. Although many women go through one alone, there are many others who travel through this journey with a partner, who is often left out of the healing equation. He or she is also likely to be affected by the experience, yet can feel at loss about how they can support their loved one through this challenging time.
- Miscarriage. First and foremost a very different experience from abortion. However, many women go through both in their lives and experience similar emotional and physical after effects. I am choosing to acknowledge the similarities within these two experiences, and how all the tools and rituals in this book can be adapted by any woman who has experienced baby loss in her life.

### Inclusivity

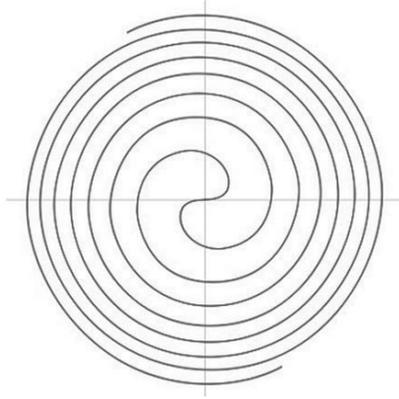
Although throughout the book I have used the terminology of “women/ woman”, I acknowledge that there may be people who have had an abortion who identify in other ways. If this is you, please know that this space is for anyone and everyone, regardless of gender, who is seeking to heal from their experience.

# INTRODUCTION

## Opening the circle

Welcome,

I open this circle of warm smiles and listening ears, a space where women can let go of their burdens and rest knowing that they are supported, free from judgement and held by their sisters. As you journey through these pages and arrive where you feel most comfortable, may you feel heard and honoured for choosing this path of healing. This is not an easy path to step on. But one that follows the moon across the night sky, into the deeper recesses of your soul, then the rising of the sun brings you to a place of peace and acceptance. Take care on this journey. Reach out for support whenever you need, there are always listening ears somewhere and breathe deeply, knowing that you are more worthy of healing than you can ever imagine.



honour is the antidote to shame<sup>2</sup>

The act of honouring is ancient; our indigenous ancestors knew how to honour every aspect of their lives, from the soil they walked on to the deaths of loved ones. Nothing escaped this honouring. Yet how often do we hear this word spoken in today's world? We have similar words such as celebrating, admiring, or appreciating; however, all of those fall at the feet of honour, they do not bear the weight that honour does. Which is why I have chosen it as a doorway into how we can heal from an abortion; in a way that is heart centred, ritual orientated, and sacred. Let us create a new story for women who have had an abortion, one that offers the chance to heal and move through the waves of emotions, and in healing our own stories we create a space for the women around us who may need a helping hand and some kind words. Calling on the strength of ourselves and each other we can collectively as women move forwards, towards a place of peace and acceptance for all we have been through.

Abortion lives in the underworld of our society; despite many women going through at least one, our society still shuns this experience and many countries even refuse to offer this basic right to women. What is the effect of this shaming on women? It means that we must also go underground in our journey, in both having and recovering from one. Women have a history of going underground; this aspect of living sits deep in our bones, we know how to do this, to keep our stories safe and ancient wisdom secret. Yet what goes under must come up. And now is the time that abortion must come to the light. As I look around me more

and more women are talking about their experiences openly, there are courses available for women looking to heal, and meditations available for anyone who has experienced baby-loss. This is a sign of positive change and slowly a wider acceptance from our communities.

This book was born out of a deep belief that we as women are allowed to honour our abortion(s) as part of our life's journey. I believe that when we allow ourselves to take the time and space to heal from our experience, we are creating a new story for women and for the generations to come. A story that celebrates the freedom of choice and empowers us to take full responsibility for our healing journey.

This belief has been founded from my own journey with abortion, as well as listening to the many stories from other women who have also experienced one. There was a common thread woven through their tales, a void that existed in the weeks, months, and years that followed. I heard a yearning for support, healing, or a way to honour the loss. As so often happens the resources were not there, so these women, like many others, were left to navigate the often bumpy terrain of the aftermath alone.

Once the abortion is over, we are left standing outside the clinic with a myriad of possible emotions from relief to shock coursing through our veins. As effective as the process of a medical abortion may be, there is very little spoken about regarding after-care. Depending on the clinic and method of abortion, you may receive a small booklet that goes through the physical aspects of what to expect after an abortion, however that is all.

What about the hormones that are running ragged through the body at the sudden change, or the ache in the womb where once there was a small being that has now gone. It is these aspects that I have chosen to acknowledge, I see them as the shadows of the experience, which are easily repressed yet are calling to be transformed into peace and acceptance.

As I moved through the months after my own experience, I began to realise that I wanted to create a space that could offer solace to anyone who has gone through or is approaching an abortion. When I see this space, the invisible world surrounding this book, I see an old kitchen cabinet filled with herbal remedies, a circle of candles gently flickering, each flame representing a little soul that passed through the veil, and an ancient wise woman who represents part of every women, sat in the corner offering her rituals to honour the losses that we all have faced.

Throughout the weaving process of this book I have felt the presence of my own grandmothers and the wise women from centuries gone, who held sacred space for women to cross over the thresholds of life and death. These womb experiences of birth, abortion, miscarriage, death, were treated with absolute respect and reverence. All of life was sacred and valued; these women understood the importance of creating ritual for these transitional moments, and the healing herbs that were woven throughout their work. We all hold this wisdom inside of us, let us return to a place of reverence for ourselves, our wombs, and other women. We are all on this path together.

### What does it mean to heal from an abortion?

“If we are going to find our way out of shame and back to each other, vulnerability is the path and courage is the light. To set down those lists of *what we’re supposed to be* is brave. To love ourselves and support each other in the process of becoming real is perhaps the greatest single act of daring greatly.”<sup>3</sup>

To heal means to “become whole”, to return to the wholeness of your unique self. So by choosing to step on the path of healing after an abortion, you are making the conscious choice to return to a place of balance and harmony in yourself.

### Why heal from an abortion?

To heal after an abortion is to address any imbalances that may have occurred as a result of this experience. These imbalances may manifest in either the physical or the emotional, often both. The choice to step on this path of healing is a bold one, particularly in a society that does not recognise the after effects of an abortion as “real”. You are paving the way for generations of women to come, showing them that abortion is no “sin”; it is an experience that many women go through in their life, and one that we have every right to honour as a part of our journey as women.

There may be many reasons for a woman to choose to step on the path of healing her experience; but I believe the core of this desire, is a seed of light that is telling her she is worthy of healing. It is like a whisper from spirit to bring up all that has been repressed for genera-

tions, summoning it to the surface to be released. There seems to be a collective desire growing among women to no longer ignore the darker shadow sides of having a womb.

One of these aspects is shame, a common feeling when ending a pregnancy. This can be both personal and collective shame; the collective comes from all the other women both past and present who felt unheard and unloved around their abortion. When there is a desire to confront this shame and look straight into its ugly eyes, we begin to unravel ourselves from this complex web of what “we should have done/said/not done/felt”. Thus it begins to lose its power over us, as we dig deep into our own stories and pull out the strands of truth from our hearts. In doing so, we become a beacon for all other women, who are seeking another gentler and truer way to honour their abortion.

### Ancestral healing

Have you ever asked your mother or grandmother if she had an abortion? It is likely that for women of older generations, going through an abortion was more commonplace due to the lack of contraception available. Furthermore, depending on which country this occurred, the experience is likely to have been very underground, resulting in a potentially harrowing time. Often when talking to older generations about the more challenging aspects of life, we hear how there was less tolerance and acceptance surrounding grief and the outward showing of emotions. This resulted in the suppression of many intense feelings that were maybe never given the space to be released or accepted. When emotions are withheld from their desire to flow through the body, they are then stored within the cells causing an imbalance in the natural flow of energy. This creates a block that can result in a physical manifestation of illness.

We who were born from the womb of our mother, who was born from the womb of our grandmother and so on, can hold all this unexpressed pain, trauma, and grief that these women experienced in their lifetime. If we consciously chose to work through any pain, grief, shame, or trauma that arose from our abortion, we are not only healing ourselves but we are releasing these emotions from all those women that came before us. I cannot testify enough how powerful this is, and what an opportunity we have to send love and blessings down the line of the women who came before us.

Working through generational layers of unexpressed emotion is not a one-step journey, but an endlessly unfolding one, where each time you successfully release one aspect, another will be revealed. As you travel this path, the layers will emerge more readily and the healing will deepen. By engaging on this level of ancestral healing, you are lessening the burden and creating a new blueprint for the future generations of women, see it like wiping a slate clean. During this process, even without sharing your journey with your mother or grandmother, there may be significant shifts within your relationships. This is a sign that you are doing great work and to be patient as you continue gently holding space for yourself.

### Changing times

Over the last few years, abortion has been coming to the light, as women begin to realise that this is an experience that must not be buried underground and kept secret for evermore. We have seen this with the recent winning of the right to have a legal abortion in Ireland, campaigns on social media such as #shoutyourabortion, as well as common place discussion of the topic on popular radio shows. There is no denying that abortion is political, this word is laced with legalities, rights and wrongs, and strong opinions. However, I am looking past this side of abortion, to the women who have gone through one and are seeking help, guidance, and healing. This is what matters; how can we move past a place of judgement of each other, into one of true acceptance and grace that we are all here doing the best we can, learning from our experiences and growing along the way.

I fear that revealing how tough my abortion was gives fuel to those who want to make abortion illegal. I can admit it was tough, and simultaneously know that it was the right thing for me to do at that time. I believe all women should have access to this medical care, and my prayer is that they also have access to the support and love and experience of other women.

—C.G.

Around 1 in 3 women go through an abortion at least once in their lifetime.<sup>4</sup> Abortion is still illegal in many countries and in others its allowed only under certain conditions.<sup>5</sup> This can endanger the lives

of the women who choose to have one, as she must find underground ways to go through one or leave the country and seek help elsewhere. This statistic demonstrates how normal abortion is, yet our societies reflect back a very different view on the subject. It is a tragic fact that women are still losing their lives to backstreet abortions, and we can only hope that more governments wake up to the basic human right that is legal abortion.

### The womb

The womb is the creative powerhouse sitting deep in our body. This space is where new life is created, and even without the desire to birth a baby, our wombs are always leading us towards a creative and fulfilling life. Although the uterus is the centre of the reproductive systems, it is the ovaries that hold the potential for life. If you no longer have a physical womb, the energy and essence of this space is still fully present in your body.

Ovarian energy is a woman's creative fire energy. It is the energetic source of life force energy utilised in making children, as well as making any creation a woman brings into the world.<sup>6</sup>

When we are centred in our womb space, we are living our life from a deep and grounded place. We have the capacity to flow effortlessly around obstacles in our path and honour our inherent creativity, whilst balancing the masculine and feminine energies. When our wombs are out of balance, physically or energetically, our whole beings are out of sync. To be clear, a physical imbalance may be a uterus which is sitting in the wrong position within the body, and an energetic imbalance could be a trauma that is still held energetically within the womb space. As the Belizean medicine man Don Elijio says, "a woman's center is her uterus. If a woman's uterus is out of balance, so is she".<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this focus on our wombs being an important centre for women is not a widespread belief within our culture; instead it is our minds/brains that are the centre of attention. It is an interesting concept to dwell on for a few moments. If our womb is our centre, then instantly anything that has occurred within our wombs must cause repercussions to our whole self.

For generations past women have had their wombs cut from their awareness, they were simply a place to grow babies. Little was spoken

of the “taboo” that was periods, more often called “the curse” (and still are in many cases/cultures). This was the era when women would go to the doctor with symptoms that we could now diagnose as severe premenstrual tension (PMT) and she would be classified as hysterical, mad, and “not right”.

When we think of the simple fact that our wombs have the ability to hold, nourish, and birth new life, that in itself is a miracle. However, our relationship to our wombs can quickly turn sour as a result of challenging experiences, such as an abortion. As a result of any pain, shame, or trauma we go through, this cuts us off from our wombs, which consciously or unconsciously severs our relationship to this part of ourselves.

For some women they will never have considered cultivating a relationship with their womb, simply seeing it as just a part of our body. What if we began to create a new kind of connection with our bodies? We would be amazed at what they tell us, and their extraordinary capacity to heal. In turn this would inspire a new level of care and respect for this flesh and bones that we are.

Occurring in our womb space, abortion is amongst the web of reproductive stories that we experience throughout our life as women. Even for those women who feel no need to heal after their experience, there is still a physical imprint upon the body of what happened. The most important aspect is to turn your attention inwards and listen to what your body needs, this will be different for everyone and will vary dramatically depending on all the different elements that were involved in the experience. In these pages I introduce many different ways that you can connect with your womb, from a gentle massage, to creating a womb balm or even having a vagina steam. All these practices are there to help you to create or nourish a connection with this beautiful centre of our bodies.

### Cultivating the power to heal ourselves

The freedom to be able to easily choose to have an abortion is one that can leave you feeling empowered. In the UK we are able to freely make that decision, which is a reason to be grateful. However, as the weeks and months pass after the experience, the initial relief of no longer being pregnant may give way to feelings of shame or grief.

When we decide to have an abortion we willingly sign ourselves up for the medical process, putting our bodies into the hands of others, trusting them to stop the pregnancy in the safest way. Once the procedure is complete, either in the clinic or at home depending on the method of abortion, it is then assumed that the experience has ended and we can move on. However, for many women this is not the case. Although the initial feeling could be relief, in the days to come other more painful emotions may surface. In extreme cases, symptoms emerge that are not dissimilar to post-natal depression. Initially we may feel empowered that we have been able to have an abortion, however, as our bodies begin to react to the sudden change, this empowered feeling may be replaced by a feeling of powerlessness.

The word power conjures up a feeling of a dominating (often male) force that exists outside of us, as we live in a world where “power over” others is present and little is spoken about the “power—from—within”.

As Earth Activist, Starhawk says “power-from-within is the power of the low, the dark, the earth, the power that arises from our blood, our lives”.<sup>8</sup> This refers to the feminine power that back in the history of time; women were initially revered, then later feared for this power that comes from within them. Yet this source of power that we have within is the power of change, transformation, and revolution. True power comes from a heart-centred and grounded place and when we tune in to this force it can impact our lives in a multitude of magnificent ways. As Lucy Pearce, author of *Burning Woman* writes, “Our power is a natural force, intimately connected to the force of nature, and rooted in our bodies”.<sup>9</sup> This power can change the lives of the generations that follow us, as we remember how we are sovereign to that power and it is our right to honour that which is rightly ours. There is a special kind of force that comes from a woman who recognises the power in her body, it is an energy that we are rarely exposed to, yet is becoming more and more common as women begin to take back that power and live their lives from this place of strength.

Irrespective of their abortion experience, each woman holds the power to heal from it. I do not mean you must go shouting from the rooftops, though do so if that is your path in healing. Rather by opening up a space inside of yourself to sit with your experience and allow everything to surface that wishes to, is a small but significant step to carving a new path of acceptance around abortion.

## Sharing of our stories

The root of the word courage is “cor”, which is Latin for heart. The original meaning of courage was to speak your truth from the heart.<sup>10</sup> If we apply this way of thinking about the word to our lives, we may be able to see how in moments when we were courageous, this strength came from our hearts.

Breaking the silence of an abortion takes courage, courage to step on the path of healing; how many mothers and grandmothers before us weren’t allowed to speak up about what they went through. As women we are carrying those ancestral pains, they run through our blood and rest in our wombs. Know that though you carry their pain, you also carry their support. Now is the time to acknowledge that you are worthy of healing from the grief, the pain.

Opening up about an abortion is a difficult thing to do. But by sharing our stories with those close to us, and by accepting each other without judgment in those moments of radical vulnerability, we can begin to break the silence caused by this painful taboo.<sup>11</sup>

Breaking the silence of an abortion does not necessarily mean in the literal sense of using the voice, it is more subtle than that. Instead it is about women acknowledging the way that this experience affected their lives, how it changed them as women. Who are you since you went through an abortion? It is about casting your mind back to that challenging time and beginning to recognise what it is that you needed then that you were not able to give to yourself. What small act of healing could you do now, after all the time that has passed, that would help soften your thoughts of that experience.

These small acts of recognition may not sound significant, but through the gentle releasing of any pain/shame/anger attached to an abortion, you are bringing in shards of new light into this space of shadow.

## Death

We are birthing/dying women<sup>12</sup>

As women we dance the gossamer line between life and death. Our wombs are a sacred space serving as a container for life, a place of nourishment and enormous creativity. Yet woven into that same space of life

is the spiral of death, manifested through our periods each month as the uterus sheds her blood. There is no separation between these polarities of life, they are one of the same to be embraced as a whole. This concept in today's world we may find hard to grasp, yet it is one our ancestors took for granted. Within a community there was often a wise-woman who knew the ways of herbs, midwifery, and assisting souls as they left this world to go onto the next. She would be the one to hold ceremonies and rituals for both a birth of a new soul and the death of another, there was fluidity between both and an acceptance of how we as women can have a foot in each realm.

Death is always present in our lives and not always in a form that we may recognise. The earth and the seasons are constantly reflecting back to us the cyclical changes of life, nothing is ever constant. By tuning into to this wisdom of nature, and watching the trees symbolically die each winter to only return bursting with life each spring, we may have small insights into how death is nothing more than a transition. For every death, something new is always born. When considering abortion as a death, we could consider what has transformed in our lives as a result of the experience? This may seem like a big question when caught in a place of grief and could take months or years to emerge, and be different for every woman. However, this insight into how we have changed as women, or how something has shifted in our lives may become an essential key to healing from the experience.

Think of the Dandelion, who despite the odds pushes up through the one crack in the pavement and the desolate waste site where Lilac flowers bloom and Mugwort thrives. This is nature trying to tell us that against all logic, the pulse of life is ever present.

There is no denying that abortion can be an incredibly hard decision to make and carry through with. The nature of women is to create life, whether that is through a physical child or through her way of living; our wombs are our creative centre, which when tapped into has an immense power. So, when we choose to end a life, this decision can be filled with trauma and grief.

“Through her choice to terminate a pregnancy, the post-abortion woman comes face to face with her abilities to create and destroy.”<sup>13</sup>

The Indian goddess Kali is sometimes known as the “essence of Night”<sup>14</sup>, she who is both a creator and a destroyer of life, representing the true reality of being a woman. The example that Kali sets is one that

our society shies away from, yet when we engage with this shadow side of being a woman, we are taking a step towards reclaiming the power that we are all born with. We are not just the caretakers, mothers, and daughters, but also the ones who are capable of saying “No” to what is no longer serving us. By letting go of all that does not nourish us, whether that is experiences, people, or dreams, we are standing up to our *truth* as fierce and powerful beings. Kali is not the only goddess who can help us see our dark side; the New Moon is another portal into communing with our shadow. With the guidance of this wisdom that is available to us all, we can begin to love and embrace the multi-faceted beings we are.

### Types of abortion

There are two types of abortion that most women go through:

1. Medical—this involves taking two pills. The first one is mifepristone, which works by blocking the hormone progesterone, an essential hormone for the womb to maintain the pregnancy. The second one is misoprostol, which makes the womb contract, causing cramps and bleeding as the pregnancy releases from the womb and leaves the body. I refer to this type of abortion as “The Pill Method”.
2. Surgical—this involves being under anaesthetic and the use of suction to remove the foetus from the womb.

Throughout the book I shall sometimes refer to the different methods of abortion due to the varying after effects that each one causes. I shall not go into the medical side of them, they are simply there to describe the difference in experiences between the two methods.

### The soul

In very brief words, a soul is the eternal essence that is in our every cell, it is an essence that we all have and remains alive in a non-physical form beyond our death. This can be demonstrated by those who are able to connect and tune in with those who died, conveying their messages back to us. When a woman conceives, that moment when the egg and the sperm meet and become one can be seen as the moment a soul enters into a woman’s body. However, this is a much debated topic with

many varying opinions. Firstly for some people the concept of a soul is too far out in which case this may not be relatable. However, for those who believe that there may be more than just the small growing ball of cells in the womb, I shall talk about the significance of recognising that “other life”.

The spiritual part of a person that some people believe continues to exist in some form after their body has died, or the part of a person that is not physical and experiences deep feelings and emotions.<sup>15</sup>

### Why is this relevant to an abortion?

If we choose to recognise that the foetus has a soul, this can bring a layer of comfort to the experience of an abortion. Despite the physical foetus being removed from our body, there is a life that lives on past that experience, in the form of a little spirit. This spirit can be called on and communicated with at any point for the rest of our lives, often remaining near to the mother and acting as a guardian. Some women who have had an abortion believe that when they have children later on in life it is the same soul who has returned to be born again.

This feels relevant to mention because the experience of abortion can take on another level of meaning, if a woman believes that the soul of the tiny being inside of her has not died, only the foetus has. When you believe in a soul, you believe in life being eternal. When we die, it is our soul that moves over to the other side as the physical remains of our bodies remain on Earth. The concept of a soul can bring huge comfort to some women who have experienced an abortion; it can open up avenues to communicate with the soul who so briefly resided in the womb.

From the perspective of a soul, I believe that before we are born, we consciously choose both our parents and the experiences we need to evolve here on earth. Although certain aspects of our life may be seen as predestined, as humans we always have free-will to make our own choices. Within the context of abortion, if there is a soul that would like you to be its mother, and comes in during conception however you choose to end the pregnancy, there is no judgement from that soul. I feel that the soul is entirely respectful of your decision, especially if you have taken the time to communicate why you wish to end the pregnancy. This may not be a widespread belief; however, I am sharing it as a way to broaden the perspective of life and in hope to lighten the

load of any women who caught up in the very real space of guilt after an abortion.

Often the most challenging times in our lives are opportunities given to us so that we can grow and evolve. Who knows how the abortion will change you and impact your life, life works in mysterious ways. I am not saying that there is always a silver lining to this experience that is so often fraught with feelings of shame, pain, anger, and regret. Instead, I am opening up another way to see these difficult times in our lives as places to learn, and become even more compassionate and heart-centred beings.

### Finally

My hope is for this book to be part of a gentle yet powerful revolution amongst women who are calling on their power and choosing to heal themselves after their abortion. Each time a woman steps on this path, and any path of healing herself, the light of the world becomes stronger. Let us become the beacons of peace and strength we were born to be.



## A Holistic Guide to Healing after an Abortion

Weaving advice on plant medicine, ritual and ceremony with testimonies from women across the world, *Honoring the Loss* provides a new and vital guide to healing after abortion. Offering a sensitive insight to the experience, while creating the much needed space for women to release trauma and pain in its aftermath, author India Elyn opens up a way towards peace and acceptance for those that have ended a pregnancy.

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*“Honoring the Loss* is a vitally important and much-needed guide, breaking the silence on a journey that so many women travel alone. This wise, compassionate and caring companion offers support and healing resources to accompany you every step of the way.”

**Lucy H. Pearce**, author of *Moon Time*, *Burning Woman* and *Medicine Woman*.

*“This loving little book has an important message, that we can know and heal ourselves and others better, through loving kindness. It is an honest and generous sharing, with practical and specific healing strategies”*

**Anita Ralph**, MSc MNIMH MCPP, Medical Herbalist and co-author of *Native Healers*

*“With grace and truth Elyn’s book has brought a lifeline to women everywhere. Her words open the heart to release the pain, suffering and shame that is often accompanied with the subject of abortion. A must-read to lead the way into the future to shift the abortion conversation.”*

**Dr JJ Pursell**, author of *The Woman’s Herbal Apothecary*

*“Honoring the Loss* is an important and much-needed book, tackling the delicate topic of abortion with sensitivity and understanding. Weaving together herbal wisdom, ritual, meditation and gentle practices of self-care, India’s book is a valuable resource to assist women in their healing and recovery.”

**Carole Guyett**, herbalist, teacher and author

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**INDIA ELYN** studied herbal medicine for four years as an apprentice and was immersed into the world of plant spirits, ceremony and herbal medicine. After a decade of sitting in circle with women and experiencing the transformations that can occur when we hold compassionate space for each other, India was inspired to create this book as a place for women to connect with their wombs, feel supported and honour their experience of abortion.

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