

## **GRACE POWERS**

### **Uniformed Mother of a Teenage Abortion**



My name is Grace and I am from Roseburg Oregon. I have been married to the same man for 26 years, and we have 5 kids, 1 boy and 4 girls.

When my second daughter was in her senior year of high school, a relative came over and told us that our daughter had had an abortion and the news was all over the school. That was not a good day for our family.

She wasn't even dating anyone. There was no boy issue that we knew about, and then we were told she had had an abortion. So it didn't really click right away. I didn't believe it at first. The first thing that came to mind was "She's under 18, there's no way she could have a medical procedure done without us knowing." I went into this denial thing. Then we asked her if it was true and she broke down and said that it was. After we found out, we wept in the living room of our home for quite a long time and I just held her.

After the initial shock, tears and heart-wrenching pain the first thought that I had, after I had come to grips with what had happened, was that I lost my first grandbaby. That was very difficult for me because I obviously love children. I was watching my husband cry and that was very tough because he's not a person who cries. How could this happen? How could something like this occur with us not knowing?

I asked, "Why didn't you tell us?" and she said, "I didn't want you to be disappointed with me". That was really hard because we wouldn't have been disappointed. I think that I said that to her. I think I told her, "No matter what you do honey, we wouldn't be disappointed" and she said "Well I felt like that was my only option." A friend told her that's what she needed to do. Part of that was because she didn't have a boyfriend; it was a thing that had happened at a party.

Now, I remember the day the abortion happened, although then I didn't know why, she came home very sick and went straight to bed. I could not wake her up and I thought "Man, she's really sick." She said she had the flu. So I reminded her about it and said "Was that the day?" and she said "Yeah, that was the day."

Over the next several days, she relayed some very disturbing things to me. I was kind of outraged, not at her at all. I was outraged at the system. I didn't understand how something like that could happen...in our country? How could my daughter, just weeks before her prior abortion, have to bring me in to have her ears pierced, yet she could have THAT done. It didn't make sense to me. It didn't make sense to my husband. So, she did want to talk about the details. She wanted to tell me the whole process.

She went to family planning and was given her options: "You can have an abortion and your parents don't have to know about it. It's a law that they don't have to know, you don't have

to tell them and no body will find out” It was here that they completed the paper work for her to get on the Oregon Health Plan so that the state money would pay for her abortion.

Basically the woman behind the counter was filling out her Oregon Health plan info and my daughter asked her if she had ever had an abortion. The lady said, “Oh yes, I have, and it was a piece of cake” and my daughter said “Really...Hmm, well does it hurt?” and she said, “No, you’re just in and then you’re out. It’s no big deal, it’s no big deal at all”. That was a real sticking point for my daughter and that is why she had allowed me to talk about this story with you. She feels like she was very deceived. It hurt...It was extremely painful, and it shook her up. She’s still shaken up over it, and it’s been several years. She just said, “You know, I was scared mom, I didn’t want to disappoint you or dad and I was afraid of doing anything else but that”. She feels like that was her only path and that she was not counseled to do anything else. After the procedure, the clinic gave her medication to bring home. I didn’t think that was a legal thing either.

Parental Notification, for her, would have taken the pressure off to rush and I think that would have been a good time for her to reflect with us. I don’t know if she would have still chosen an abortion, she may have. I just feel that it would have been a choice that was a well rounded choice that she would have had the information about breast cancer increase and risk, and she would have had more information about her options. Maybe even talk to other people who have gone through the same thing. That is one thing she has expressed time and time again. She didn’t feel that she was properly informed about what was about to happen to her. Kids don’t know how to ask medical questions. They don’t understand that they can ask. She was a student, and students are in a mode that they’re being taught by the adults.

She’s expressed to me that she didn’t have the life experience and she didn’t understand the feelings that she was having. I think she was having hormonal changes because she was 10 weeks along. That’s a good way into feeling morning sickness and things like that. I remember when I was pregnant. Within 8 weeks I was feeling really odd about life and myself. That’s a lot for a student, a child, a young woman to handle alone, without anybody to talk to. She only told one friend. She didn’t tell anybody else. She was carrying a huge adult burden on her shoulders and I don’t think any child should have to do that.

She can’t really talk about it now, which is very sad because I want her to be healed and better and it just doesn’t work that way. The day the news broke (so the abortion had already taken place), she dropped out of school. She was three weeks from graduating. It took her 2 more years to finish high school, even though she’s a very smart girl. My daughter is still experiencing deep grief and depression associated with making a decision to abort her baby. Children don’t understand that, although they can conceive a child, to terminate a life is a whole other facet of emotional consequence. I don’t think I could handle it as a 45 year old woman. I could not handle that without some serious help. Most girls, in Oregon, who have abortions and their parents never find out, who is going to help those girls? Who is going to take care of them? When they start having symptoms of depression or they start trying to compensate or when they’re trying to deal with their grief through alcohol or drugs or even sexual promiscuity. I know my daughter went that way. She got even wilder after her abortion. She went through a period of remorse and deep pain and then she started acting out.

It’s unbelievable how we would expose our children and have such a double standard in place. The double standard is they cannot have their ears pierced if they are under 18 and

they cannot be given aspirin in any kind of school setting without parental consent. It's ridiculous to think that they would allow children to undergo a medical procedure, have risks to their long term health, without a parent knowing. It doesn't make sense.

Parental Notification is important for our girls because even though they are old enough to conceive a child, they might not be mature enough to understand the consequences of a decision. When they are given information by a perfect stranger, who doesn't know them, who doesn't understand them, who doesn't love them, they're getting just maybe a tiny slice of information from a person who maybe doesn't have their best interests at heart. I think that's the key. Parental notification is an important step for Oregon because our children need the very best care.

I'm asking Oregonians to take care of our girls and keep them safe. They need to know their parents are there in every way. Good times and bad times. Parents are very good resources for our kids. We're trusted to do everything else for our children. WE take care of them from the time their born until it's time for them to go to college. And in this particular case of an unplanned pregnancy, we would do really well to be considered and to be brought into the loop. Parents can support their daughters by supporting Parental Notification in the State of Oregon.

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Grace Powers currently lives in Roseburg, Ore. with her husband Larry. They are enjoying their 26 years of marriage and are deeply grateful for their five children—four daughters and one son. Grace is the proud grandmother of her one-year old grandson. Grace currently works on staff at Roseburg Christian Fellowship. Along with activities in her church ministry, she is currently active in RCF high school student lives, several non-profit organizations, and spending time with her family. In her free time, she enjoys reading, painting, and snowboarding.

