Healthy relationships
In a healthy or supportive relationship there is usually a shared approach to decision-making. You may like to explore your options for an unplanned pregnancy together. It is a good idea to set some ground rules to ensure you are both respectful of each other's rights and responsibilities.
If you are in a relationship where you feel disrespected, threatened, pressured or abused, see Unplanned pregnancies in violent or abusive relationships. It looks at decision-making in these situations.

Women-centred decision-making
The law in Victoria recognises that it's a woman's right to make the decision about her unplanned pregnancy. Some women feel they can make a shared decision with their partner and this may be straightforward. For other women, it can be tricky. Some couples used to making decisions together may find that this decision is an exception.

Respect
Research shows that women cope well with abortion when they feel ‘in control’ of the situation and when they aren’t the subject of gossip, blame or criticism from friends and family. Before you tell anyone about the pregnancy, it may be useful for you and your partner to decide which family and friends you can turn to for support. Some women and couples prefer to make the decision by themselves, while others choose to talk to significant others in their lives.

When you and your partner don’t agree
You can get counselling for individuals and/or couples facing an unplanned pregnancy. There can be challenges in the decision-making process, so a trusting and respectful space will make it easier for women to make the best decision. Sometimes the challenges are less about the pregnancy and more about other issues in the relationship.

Exploring the options together
It is not uncommon to think you would respond one way to an unplanned pregnancy and then feel another way when it happens. You may experience certain feelings and thoughts that surprise you. This can be difficult in relationships if you had already decided what to do in such a situation, but now find one (or both) of you feels differently.
This experience may highlight both strengths and difficulties in your relationship. Making difficult decisions in relationships is often stressful but they can also help you to better understand your partner (and vice versa). Sometimes an unplanned pregnancy becomes the ‘cross-roads’ for the direction of a relationship.

Who else can support me?
Other people can help support you during this time. It may be useful to think about who else could support you – family, friends, colleagues, community members? Consider:
- What sort of support do I want from someone to make my decision? List some important needs
  - Do I want someone with good listening skills – who won’t necessarily give advice?
  - Is it helpful for me to hear someone’s own experiences with unplanned pregnancy?
  - Or would I prefer not to hear about them?
  - Do I feel comfortable with this person?
  - Do I want someone who also has the ability to challenge my thinking?
- Who do I think might keep my news confidential?
- Who might give me unwanted advice?
- Who do I think I need to tell? Do I need to tell anyone?
- Who might come with me to medical appointments?
- What, if any, professional support might I need (e.g. doctor, counsellor, legal advice?)
Counselling services and contacts

Numerous organisations and individuals offer relationship counselling. Some also specialise in pregnancy options counselling.

Support for women
- **Pregnancy Advisory Service (PAS)** at The Royal Women’s Hospital – 03 8345 3063. PAS also provides referrals to private counsellors who may see couples together.
- **WIRE Women’s Information** [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au) or 1300 134 130
- **Family Planning Victoria** [www.fpv.org.au](http://www.fpv.org.au) or 03 9257 0121

Finding a counselling service to help you
- **Australian Association of Social Workers** [www.aasw.asn.au/membersdirectory](http://www.aasw.asn.au/membersdirectory) or email mentalhealth@aasw.asn.au
  Ask for Medicare Rebate for pregnancy counselling.
- **Australian Psychological Society**
  (Tick the ‘Non-directive Pregnancy Support Psychologists’ box and search for psychologists in your local area)
  Ask for Medicare Rebate for pregnancy counselling.
- **Psychotherapy & Counselling Federation (PACFA)**
  [www.pacfa.org.au](http://www.pacfa.org.au) or 03 9486 3077

These services may also provide counselling for couples.

Counselling for men
- **Men’s Referral Service** – [www.mrs.org.au](http://www.mrs.org.au)
- See also above counselling services.

References

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