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**Goals**

* + To increase understanding among mothers who are sex workers of the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional developmental milestones of children
	+ To strengthen parenting skills to nurture and support childhood development within the context of maternal sex work
	+ To increase mothers who are sex workers’ ability to prevent, recognize, and mitigate common maternal and child health risks
	+ To increase sex workers’ sense of empowerment and confidence in their ability to be good mothers, supporting them to thrive both as mothers and sex workers

**Learning Objectives**

*By the end of this session participants will be able to:*

* Explain the options a woman has if she becomes pregnant
* Express personal feelings about unplanned pregnancy and the options a woman has if she becomes pregnant
* Describe the process of choosing what to do when pregnant
* Explain the concept of abortion
* Explain the concept of foster care
* Identify ways to re-obtain custody of a child if that child is placed in foster care
* Explain the concept of adoption

**Session Preview**

* Introduce the concept of options counseling
* Help group members express their individual feelings about becoming pregnant and recognize that feelings/opinions differ between women
* Help group members think through the process of choosing what to do when pregnant
* Introduce the concept of abortion and help group members talk about this subject
* Introduce the concept of foster care and help group members identify strategies to re-obtain custody if desired
* Introduce the concept of adoption and help group members talk why a woman might choose this option
* Encourage group members to share personal stories related to options counseling and receive feedback/support from the group

**Materials Needed**

* Facial tissue
* Ground Rules from Session 1
* Flip Chart 1 – Birth Control from Session 2
* Flip chart paper
* Marker for facilitator
* Ball
* Tape
* Game Sheets:
	+ Game Sheet 1: Hot Seat

**Preparation Needed**

* Arrange chairs in a circle
* Hang Ground Rules from Session 1 in the room
* This session may be emotional. Have facial tissue sitting around the circle of chairs for group members to use if they begin to cry.
* Prepare the following materials before the session begins:
	+ Game 1 – Hot Seat
* Ask someone from Women’s Legal Centre to attend the session and answer questions the group members may have.

**Possible Facilitators**

* Options Counselor
* Nurse or doctor that can talk about abortion
* Social worker
* Adoption agency
* Foster care and/or adoption families
* Other women who have had an abortion and are willing to tell their stories
* Other women who have dealt with the foster care and/or adoption system and are willing to tell their stories
* Women’s Legal Centre staff

**Instructional Time**

120 minutes (2 hours)

**Activity Minutes Needed**

1. Introduction……...……………………………………………………………...10 minutes
2. The Choice…………………………………………………………………...…10 minutes
3. Abortion……………………………………………………………………...…55 minutes
4. Foster Care……………………………………………………………….…..…15 minutes
5. Adoption……………………………………………………………………...…10 minutes
6. Stories and Support..………………………………………………………..…..15 minutes
7. Closing…………………………………………….……………………………..5 minutes

The following pages contain material that was taken verbatim or adapted from Soul City’s *Grants for Children* booklet with permission[1]:

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**Activity A**

Introduction

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To welcome the participants and talk about the three options a woman has when she becomes pregnant.

**Materials**

* Ground Rules from Session 1
* Flip Chart 1 – Birth Control from Session 2

**Time**

10 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* After all the group members are in the room, start to sing a song. Have everyone stand up and sing/dance with you. Do not let this go on for more than **3 minutes.** Then, welcome the mothers to the group by saying:

Welcome to our third group meeting of Mothers of the Future! I’m glad to see you here today! In the last session we talked about planning to become pregnant and keeping ourselves safe during sex. Can someone describe what an unplanned pregnancy is?

* Let **1-2 group members** explain unplanned pregnancy.

Thank you for your responses. An unplanned pregnancy is when a woman becomes pregnant even though she didn’t mean to get pregnant. She might not want to be pregnant. Last week we also talked about things women can use to not become pregnant, which is called birth control. Can anyone list a few birth control methods or things women can use to not become pregnant?

* Let group members list contraceptive methods for **1 minute**.
* Answers **could** include:
	+ Injections / Depo / Shot
	+ Pills
	+ Female sterilization / surgery
	+ Male condom
	+ Female condom
	+ Male sterilization / surgery / vasectomy
	+ IUD
	+ Diaphragm
	+ Abstinence / no sex
	+ Vaginal ring
	+ Breastfeeding
	+ Birth control implant
	+ Withdrawal / pull out
	+ Spermicide
* Hang up Flip Chart 1 – Birth Control from Session 2 and use this to explain the next part.

These are all options to help us plan when we want to have a baby. Remember, not all birth control methods are equally effective, meaning some methods are better at preventing pregnancy than others. No matter what method you use, make sure to make it as effective as possible by using it correctly.

Besides preventing pregnancy, we can also use two of these birth control methods to protect us from STDs and HIV. Does anyone remember what we can use to keep our bodies safe?

* Let **1 group member** answer the question, then say:

We can use male or female condoms to protect us from STDs and HIV. It’s important to use condoms with clients every time we have sex.

However, no matter how careful we are, accidents can happen. Maybe the condom breaks while we’re having sex, we get carried away in the heat of the moment with our partner, or our client forces us to not use protection. Whatever the reason is, sometimes women mean to get pregnant and sometimes they become pregnant by accident or force. This pregnancy could be wanted or unwanted. This could happen to any woman, not just sex workers, and it doesn’t make us bad people. It just makes us human.

Being pregnant and not sure what to do can be scary, but we are all here today to support each other, no matter what we choose. Today we’re going to be talking about options once we become pregnant, whether this pregnancy was planned or not.

When a woman becomes pregnant she has three choices she can make. She can choose to get an abortion, place the child for adoption or foster care, or raise the child herself. Today we will talk about choosing to get an abortion or placing the child for adoption or foster care. After today, the rest of our meetings will talk about choosing to become a mother.

Let’s begin with a short activity. Can everyone please close your eyes?

Great. Now, with your eyes still closed, pretend you just found out you are pregnant. You didn’t get your period this month, so you told a nurse at SWEAT. She gave you a pregnancy test, and you are pregnant. Think about how this would make you feel. Would you be happy? Sad? Nervous? Excited? Stressed? Or would you feel something else? I’m going to say 1, 2, 3, scream! When I say scream, start screaming everything you would feel if you just found out that you are pregnant. Scream everything you would feel until you can’t think of any other emotions. Ready?

1…2…3…SCREAM!

* The facilitator should scream how she would feel along with the rest of the group. Let group members scream until it sounds like people are starting to run out of things to scream.

Thank you all for sharing your feelings. As sex workers, we all have a lot of things in common. However, it’s also important to remember that we are all different people at different points in our lives. Finding out you are pregnant might make some of us feel happy and excited, while others might feel nervous, trapped, unsure, unemotional, or any other feeling. These feelings are all normal, and one is not better than the others. The important thing is to talk about how we feel. This will help us decide what the best choice is for each one of us.

This choice can be very hard, so as a family of sex workers we must try to support each other. Today we will talk about a lot of things that everyone might feel differently about. Please try to keep an open mind and don’t judge others. Just because you choose to get an abortion, place your child for adoption or foster care, or parent your child doesn’t mean everyone in Mothers of the Future has made or would make the same choice. We are all here to learn from each other. Please remember to follow the ground rules we made during our first meeting.

* Point to where the ground rules are hanging in the room. Read them out loud if you think this is needed.

**Activity B**

The Choice

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To talk about how women chose what to do once they are pregnant.

**Materials**

* Flip chart
* Marker for facilitator

**Time**

10 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Continue the session by saying:

When a woman becomes pregnant, she might have to think about a lot of things before choosing what to do. This may be a difficult decision and she will probably ask herself a lot of questions. For example, she might think “Is this the right time for me to bring life into the world?”

What do you think are some of the other questions a pregnant woman might think about when she is trying to choose what to do?

* Let group members talk about this for no longer than **4 minutes**. Write these ideas on flip chart paper.
* Answers **could** include:
	+ Do I want to have a baby?
	+ How do I feel about being pregnant?
	+ Do I have enough money to support myself, my other children, and any of my friends or family I take care of?
	+ Is the man who got me pregnant the right man to father one of my children?
	+ Will the father of the child help me with whatever option I choose? How will he help?
	+ Can I raise a child by myself?
	+ Who will support me if I choose to get an abortion, place my child for foster care or adoption, or raise my child?
	+ What will happen to my goals, my hopes, and my life?
	+ How will this affect my other children?
	+ Do I have somewhere to live where I feel comfortable raising a child?
	+ Am I safe? Would my child be safe?
	+ Would the child be healthy?
	+ Is my body and mind healthy enough to get an abortion, deal with the foster care or adoption process, or give birth and raise my child?

As you can see, choosing what to do once you become pregnant is not always easy for every woman. There are a lot of things we must think about and this can be a very hard decision.

What do you think a woman could do to help her make a decision?

* Let group members talk about this for no longer than **2 minutes**. Write these ideas on flip chart paper.
* Answers **could** include:
	+ Talk with someone you trust, like a friend, family member, priest, mother, sister, boyfriend, husband, someone at SWEAT, one of us in this group, or anyone else you think could help.
	+ Give yourself time and space to think.
	+ Learn more about your options.
	+ Pray for help and guidance.

Choosing to be a parent, get an abortion, or place the child for adoption or foster care can be a hard choice for women. Some women choose to make this decision by themselves without talking to anyone. They might believe since their body is pregnant, they should make the final decision. Or they could be too afraid to tell anyone else they are pregnant, and feel like they have to make the decision alone. Whatever the reason is, what do you all think are some good and bad things about making a decision without talking to anyone else?

* Let group members talk about this for no longer than **2 minutes.** Write these ideas on flip chart paper.

Those are all good points. On the other hand, some pregnant women choose to talk about their options with other people in their life. These people can include the woman’s mother, boyfriend or girlfriend, friends, pimp, the father of the child, or others. Some pregnant women may want to listen to what important people in their lives have to say, and then make a decision with or without actually following other people’s advice. What do you think are some good and bad things about talking to other people and then making a decision about your pregnancy?

* Let group members talk about this for no longer than **2 minutes.** Write these ideas on flip chart paper.

Those are also all good thoughts. Sometimes a pregnant woman may feel supported and helped by the important people in her life. Other times a pregnant woman may feel judged or even pressured to choose an option she does not want because other people in her life are telling her what to do. Every woman and every situation is different. Some women might want to talk to their friends and family about their options while pregnant, and other women may not. The important thing is to figure out what works best for you and how to get the support you need.

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To explain abortion and have group members talk about the subject.

**Materials**

* Game Sheet 1 - Hot Seat
* Ball
* Tape

**Time**

55 minutes

**Activity C**

Abortion

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Start this section by saying:

Now that we have talked about what goes into a pregnant woman’s choice, we are going to start talking about her options. One option is abortion. Before we have an activity, let’s talk more about abortion.

An abortion is stopping a pregnancy. If you are pregnant and do not want to be pregnant, a doctor or nurse can give you a safe, legal abortion in a clinic. The doctor or nurse will either give you a pill that will stop the pregnancy or remove the pregnancy from your body with surgery. After an abortion, you will no longer be pregnant.

Abortion might be the right choice for some women, but not for other women. It is OK to feel confused or afraid about abortion, just like it is OK to feel confused or afraid about continuing the pregnancy. Let’s do an activity to learn more about abortion and talk about our feelings on the topic. Can everyone please reach under their chair and grab the piece of paper that is taped there?

* Let group members grab the piece of paper taped under their chair.

On each of your pieces of paper there is a question about abortion. I’m going to toss one of you this ball. Whoever has the ball will read their question out loud to the group, and then I’ll answer the question. If you don’t want to read out loud for whatever reason, when you get the ball you can hand the paper to me and I’ll read it for you.

After you read the question and I answer it, toss the ball to someone else. I will then ask that person a question about what we just learned, so everybody should pay attention!

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

* Answer any questions the group members have, then toss the ball to a group member. Remind her she can read the question out loud, or she can pass the paper to you to read. Find the person’s question below and then read the answer out loud. After the question and answer is read, ask her to toss the ball to another group member. Then ask this group member to answer the follow-up question. After they say their answer, read the follow-up answer. Ask the person holding the ball to toss it to someone else, then have that person read the next question on their paper. Repeat this until all the questions have been read.
* *Facilitator’s Note:* If time is an issue, you can skip asking and answering the follow-up question.

Is an abortion safe?

* **Answer:** Abortion is very safe when it is done by a trained nurse or doctor in a health facility, hospital, or clinic. Researchers have found it is actually more dangerous to give birth than to have an abortion. The earlier in pregnancy you get an abortion, the safer it is. However, this is only true if you get an abortion from a safe, legal clinic. We have all seen lots of signs and stickers that say you can get an abortion for cheap or really late into the pregnancy from an untrained provider. These are called backstreet abortions and they are not legal or safe. Abortions are only safe when you get them from a trained nurse or doctor in a safe clinic or hospital.
* **Follow-Up Question:** You see a sticker in the metro that says you can get an abortion for 500 rand up until you are 8 months pregnant. Do you think this would be safe?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** No, this is not safe. Abortions are only safe when you get them from a trained nurse or doctor. The sooner you get an abortion, the safer it is. It is not safe to wait until you are 8 months pregnant to get an abortion. The people who hang up these stickers are not trained and can put you in great danger.

Is getting an abortion legal?

* **Answer:** Yes, getting an abortion from a trained doctor or nurse at a safe clinic is legal in South Africa. Any girl or woman can get an abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The woman does not need permission from her parents or her partner. If she is 13 to 20 weeks pregnant, she can also get an abortion if being pregnant puts her health or her unborn child’s health at risk, the pregnancy will cause her social or money issues, or if she is pregnant from rape or a family member. Women can also get an abortion after 20 weeks if their health or the unborn baby’s health is at risk. No matter what, getting a backstreet abortion from someone that is not a nurse or doctor in a clinic is unsafe and illegal.
* **Follow-Up Question:** Who can get a legal abortion in South Africa?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** Any girl or woman can get a safe and legal abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The woman does not need permission from her parents or her partner. If you are 13 to 20 weeks pregnant, you can also get an abortion if being pregnant is dangerous for you, will cause you major social or money issues, or if you are pregnant from rape or incest. Women who are over 20 weeks pregnant may be able to get an abortion if their health or the unborn baby’s health is at risk.

How is a safe and legal abortion done?

* **Answer:** There are a two main ways a safe and legal abortion is done. If you choose to get an abortion within the first 9 weeks of being pregnant, you can get an abortion pill from a trained nurse or doctor in a clinic. This pill will may make you bleed and have cramps for a few days, and then you will get rid of the pregnancy in your body. You can only use this pill during the first 9 weeks of pregnancy and it must come from a safe doctor or nurse in a clinic. You can also get a surgical abortion if you are 20 weeks pregnant or less. This means a trained doctor in a safe clinic will put a small tube inside of your vagina and up into your uterus where the pregnancy is. The doctor will then use the tube to gently empty the uterus and end your pregnancy.
* **Follow-Up Question:** What are the two ways an abortion is done?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** You can have a trained doctor in a safe clinic give you a pill or you can have a surgery to empty your uterus using a small tube.

Will a safe abortion hurt?

* **Answer:** We all have different experiences of pain. What hurts one person might not hurt another. Doctors have different ways to help us control the pain. Normally you will get some medication to help with the pain during the abortion. After an abortion you will probably have cramps, meaning your tummy will feel tight, like you’re getting your period. It is normal to be afraid of pain, but fear of pain should not be the most important thing you think about when making that choice.
* **Follow-Up Question:** What will an abortion feel like?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** Everyone feels pain differently, so it is hard to say. It may hurt you or it may not. Most likely you will feel cramps afterwards, but the doctor can give you medicine to help with the pain during the actual abortion.

Can I give myself an abortion?

* **Answer:** It is safest to get an abortion from a trained doctor or nurse in a clinic. If you or someone else who is not trained tries to give you an abortion, it can hurt or kill you. We might know people who have given themselves an abortion and lived, but this does not mean giving yourself an abortion is safe. It is extremely dangerous. Why should you take this risk? Abortion is safe and free in South Africa if you visit your primary healthcare clinic. Please call a clinic or the SWEAT hotline if you need more information on where to get a safe abortion.
* **Follow-Up Question:** If a woman doesn’t want to see a doctor because she is ashamed, should she give herself an abortion?
* **Follow-Up Answer:**
* Let the group member answer this question and allow the group to talk about it as a whole for no more than **4 minutes.**
* Let the group member answer this question and allow the group to talk about it as a whole for no more than **4 minutes*.***

How much does a safe abortion cost?

* **Answer:** Safe and legal abortions are free in South Africa during the first three months of pregnancy. You must visit your primary healthcare clinic where they will give you a pregnancy test and talk about your options with you. They will then give you a referral letter to take to a clinic that will give you an abortion. Not all heath workers will give you an abortion, but every health worker must tell you where you can get a safe and legal abortion. This is the law. You can also get an abortion from Marie Stopes Clinics or a private hospital, but these places will charge you money.
* **Follow-Up Question:** How can you get a free, safe, and legal abortion?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** You can get a free, safe, and legal abortion if you visit your primary healthcare clinic during the first three months of pregnancy. They will give you a pregnancy test, talk with you, and then give you a referral letter to get a safe, free, and legal abortion. After three months, you still may be able to get a safe and legal abortion, but it might cost you money. Visit a clinic to find out more.

If I have a safe abortion, can I still have children later in life?

* **Answer:** Yes. Women who have a safe abortion or even more than one safe abortion can still have a healthy baby in the future. In fact, you can get pregnant again only 7 days after you’ve had an abortion. You need to make sure you keep using the condoms and the other birth control methods we talked about last week after getting a safe abortion or you can get pregnant again right away. However, if you have an illegal, back alley abortion, you may never be able to have children later in life. These are unsafe and they may hurt your body so you can never have children again.
* **Follow-Up Question:** Will having a safe abortion make it harder for you to have babies in the future?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** No, if you have a safe abortion, you will still be able to have children in the future. Women who have safe abortions can get pregnant again within a week after the abortion. You must make sure to protect yourself if you do not want children.

Is abortion the same thing as murder?

* **Answer:** You have probably heard some people say that abortion is murder. That’s what the people who are against abortion sometimes say. However abortion is legal in South Africa, so the law does not think it is murder. The law says murder means you have to really want to hurt another human being. But that doesn’t really answer the question of whether abortion is right or wrong for you. This is a question every woman must answer for herself. Abortion stops the pregnancy. Most people believe this is not the same as killing a born person.
* **Follow-Up Question:** Do you think abortion is the same thing as murder?
* **Follow-Up Answer:**

Am I a bad person or good person for getting a safe abortion?

**Answer:** Different people have different answers to this question. Some believe that abortion is wrong or bad. Others believe abortion is the best option for them and is a good, responsible choice for their life. A person can still be good, even if she is making a very hard choice. Many women have chosen to get an abortion, and we cannot judge them. We can only think about our own choices and why we are making the choice to or not to get an abortion cannot judge them. We can only think about our own choices and why we are making the choice to or not to get an abortion

* **Follow-Up Question:** What good can come out of having an abortion?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** This depends on the woman. Everyone has a different reason for getting an abortion and everyone finds different good that can come out of this. For example, some women might have an abortion so they can keeping going to school or take better care of the children they already have. What other good things can come out of having an abortion?
* Let the group member answer this question and allow the group to talk about it as a whole for no more than **2 minutes.**

Those are all really good points. Is there anything bad that can come out of having an abortion?

* Let the group member answer this question and allow the group to talk about it as a whole for no more than **2 minutes.**

Those were also really good points. The important point is that this is a decision for each woman to make.

How will I feel after I get an abortion?

* **Answer:** Everyone will feel different after getting an abortion. How you feel probably depends on how you felt about getting the abortion. Research shows that most women feel relieved and satisfied with their decision, but you may feel guilty, happy, ashamed, or something else. Women’s bodies normally feel pretty good and they are no longer scared about the pain of getting an abortion. However, some women may feel very sad and depressed. This is natural. It is also natural to feel depressed after giving birth to a child or placing that child for adoption. No matter what option you choose and how you feel, it is important to allow your body and mind to heal.
* **Follow-Up Question:** What do you think are some ways a woman could deal with her emotions or the way she feels after an abortion?
* **Follow-Up Answer:** She could talk to friends or family members that understand, have a nice meal, sit in a quiet place, practice her religion, daydream, or do anything else that helps her be calm and process whatever she is feeling.

If I have an abortion, it this against my religion?

* **Answer:** Most people make some choices in life that do not agree with their religion. We can feel uncomfortable or guilty if we think we are living the wrong way. It might be helpful to know what your God thinks about abortion. The first step might be to pray or talk to God and share how you feel about getting an abortion. Does God know you are doing the best you can in this situation? Is your God loving and kind? Can God see into your heart? Some women believe God loves them and will be with them even in difficult times. Some women believe God thinks abortion is wrong, but he will forgive them. Some women believe God will punish them if they have an abortion. This is between a woman and her God.
* **Follow-Up Question:** If you are religious, what would it be like to pray to your God and listen to what He or She has to tell you?
* **Follow-Up Answer:**
* Let the group member answer this question and allow the group to talk about it as a whole for no more than **4 minutes.**

**Game Sheet 1 - Hot Seat­­­­­­­--------------------------------------**

*[Instructions: Write each one of these questions on a separate piece of paper. Tape 1 question under each group member’s chair before the session begins.]*

Is an abortion safe?

Is an abortion legal?

How is an abortion done?

Will an abortion hurt?

Can I give myself an abortion?

How much does it cost?

If I get an abortion, can I still have children later in life?

Is abortion the same thing as murder?

Am I a bad person for choosing abortion?

How will I feel after I get an abortion?

Is having an abortion against my religion?

**Activity D**

Foster Care

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To explain foster care and develop ideas for how a mother can get her child back from foster care if wanted.

**Materials**

**Time**

15 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Start the activity by saying:

Thanks for learning more and talking about abortion. I know talking about these subjects can be hard, so I appreciate your participation.

Now let’s talk about foster care and adoption. These are two other options South African women can consider if they become pregnant. Both of these options mean you would let someone else care for your child, but they are a little different.

Can anyone tell the group what foster care is?

* Let **1 group member** answer the question.

Foster care is when a child is legally placed in the care of an adult other than their birth parents. Children can be placed in foster care if the children are orphans, or if the state or a social worker thinks the children are being hurt, not properly cared for, or treated badly by a parent. When a child is in foster care, the child’s birth mother and father must pay maintenance to the foster care family. This means the child’s mother and father give the foster care family money to help take care of the child. The foster family can also get a Foster Child Grant through SASSA.

Every child that is in foster care has a social worker who helps make decisions for that child. Normally a child stays in foster care for up to two years, but they could stay longer. The social worker visits with the child, the foster family, and the child’s birth parents to figure out what is best for the child. The social worker might say it is best for the child to stay with the foster parents for a longer time or it is best for the child to be adopted by another family. The social worker could also say it is best for the child to return to live with his or her birth parents, meaning the father and mother who gave birth to the child. Every foster care situation is different.

Sometimes children are placed in foster care because the social worker feels this is what’s best for the child, but the parents still want raise to their own children. If a mother decides she wants to raise her child that is in foster care, what can she do to get her child back?

* Let group members talk about this for no longer than **5 minutes.**
* Answers **could** include:
	+ Call the social worker and talk about what she needs to do to get her child back.
	+ Most of the time, she has the right to visit with her child. She should try to not miss visits to show how important her child is to you.
	+ She can talk to the child’s foster parents to see what she can do to get your child back.

However, we have all heard stories of children who are taken away and placed in foster care because their mother is a sex worker. As we all know, being a sex worker does not mean you cannot be a good mother. What do you think a mother could do if her child is taken away from her because the social worker says she cannot take care of the child if she is a sex worker?

* Let group members suggest steps a mother could take if her child is taken away from her because she is a sex worker for **5 minutes.**
* Answers **could** include:
	+ Talk with Women’s Legal Centre to see if anything can be done in court to help get her child back.
	+ Talk to her social worker’s boss and tell him or her that she is facing unfair discrimination and stigma.
	+ Show the social worker that she can be a good mother who is also a sex worker.
	+ Ask for her child to be sent to a foster family that she knows, like her sister or friend. This means she can hopefully continue to visit her child.

Having a child taken away from you and placed in foster care can be sad or it might feel like a relief to you. No matter how you feel, you should talk with the social worker before you sign any paperwork and make sure you understand what you are signing. Social workers in South Africa are very busy and sometimes are slow at returning phone calls, so make sure to ask them all the questions you have while you have them in front of you. It is your right to understand how foster care works.

**Activity E**

Adoption

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To explain adoption and talk about why women might choose this option.

**Materials**

**Time**

10 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Start the activity by saying:

The last option we are going to talk about is adoption. Does anyone know what adoption is?

* Let **1 group member** answer the question, then say:

Adoption means giving up your right to parent your child and giving someone else permission to take on the legal responsibility of parenting your child. This means you will no longer be responsible for raising your child because someone else will do that. Adoption is making a plan for someone else to take care of your child forever.

With the help of a social worker, you can choose whether to have an open or closed adoption for your child. In a closed adoption, you will not know who is adopting your child. Most likely, you will be asked to cut all ties with the child you are placing up for adoption. This may mean you will not see this child again.

You can also ask for an open adoption. In an open adoption, you will know who is adopting your child. You may talk with them and agree to still be involved in the child’s life. This could mean the parent who adopts your child might send you photos of the child, letters, or even allow you to visit the child. This is something you must talk about with the parents who are adopting your child and decide what is best for the child.

You can talk with your social worker about placing your child for a closed or open adoption. What do you think are some reasons a woman might put her child up for adoption?

* Let group members talk about why a mother might choose adoption for **5 minutes.**
* Answers **could** include:
	+ She is not ready to be a mother.
	+ The pregnancy was unwanted.
	+ She was raped or became pregnant by a family member.
	+ She does not have the money, time, or resources to raise a child.
	+ She is homeless and unable to raise a child.
	+ She is in an unsafe situation and unable to raise a child.
	+ She has no social support to help her raise a child.
	+ She feels she is too young to become a mother.

These are all very good examples of why a mother might place her child for adoption. If this is something you are thinking about, you should go to a child protection organization that is legal and safe. In Western Cape, these include: ACW, Badisa, Cape Town Child Welfare, Child Welfare South Africa, AFM Abba Adoptions, and the Department of Social Development. You can go to any of these places and speak with a social worker about placing your child for adoption. Some places will ask you to pay some money when you place a child for adoption, so make sure you ask about this as well.

**Activity F**

Stories and Support

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To let group members share their personal stories and seek support if wanted.

**Materials**

**Time**

15 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Start the activity by saying:

Today we’ve talked about three choices a woman has once she becomes pregnant. She can choose to parent, get an abortion, or place her child in adoption. We also talked about dealing with the foster care process. Each of these options can be very hard and emotional for a woman and other people in her life.

We want to give everyone some time to talk about how today made you feel. We have about 15 minutes to talk about what you learned today, how you feel right now, or how you feel about the options we discussed. Please feel free to share a personal story or question with the group if you would like. The group can offer you advice or just give you the space to talk about parenting, abortion, foster care, or adoption. You do not have to say or share anything you are not comfortable talking about. This is a safe space for you to use as you wish.

We also have *[insert name]* here from Women’s Legal Center so you can ask her any questions you may have about the foster care or the adoption process. You can also talk to her privately after our meeting.

* Let the group talk about the session for no more than **12 minutes.**

Thank you all for sharing. I know talking about and listening to these stories, questions, and feelings can be hard or upsetting, so I want to truly thank you all for being brave and having an open mind today.

**Activity G**

Closing

**Preparing for the Activity**

**Purpose**

To review what was learned in this session.

**Materials**

**Time**

5 minutes

**Procedure--------------------------------------------------------**

* Wrap-up the session by saying:

Thank you all for a great session. I think we learned a lot about the choices we have if we become pregnant. As I said earlier, *[insert name of Women’s Legal Centre representative]* will stick around for a few minutes to answer any questions you may have.

Remember, our next meeting is on *[date]* at *[time]*. We will talk about the health of our child and how to identify and treat common childhood diseases. It could be very important in saving your child’s life, so I hope to see you all again on *[date]* at *[time]*!

**Appendix 1 - Resources---------------------------------------**

1. Soul City, *Grants for Children*. Jacana.
2. Western Cape Government Department of Social Development, *Giving up a Child for Adoption.* 2013.
3. Western Cape Government Department of Social Development, *Fostering a Child.* 2013.
4. Western Cape Government Department of Social Development. *Adopting a Child*. 2014. Available from: <http://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/adopting-child>.
5. Mhlanga, R., *Abortion: developments and impact in South Africa.* British medical bulletin, 2003. **67**(1): p. 115-126.
6. Major, B., et al., *Psychological responses of women after first-trimester abortion.* Archives of general psychiatry, 2000. **57**(8): p. 777-784.
7. Marie Stopes. *Safe Abortion*. Available from: <http://www.mariestopes.org.za/safe-abortion/>.
8. Planned Parenthood. *Abortion*. Available from: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-info/abortion>.
9. Western Cape Government Department of Health. *Termination of Pregnancy (TOP)*. 2015. Available from: <http://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/termination-pregnancy-top>.
10. Bradshaw, Z. and P. Slade, *The effects of induced abortion on emotional experiences and relationships: A critical review of the literature.* Clinical Psychology Review, 2003. **23**(7): p. 929-958.
11. Adler, N., et al., *Psychological responses after abortion.* Science, 1990. **248**(4951): p. 41-44.
12. Guttmacher Institute. *Resources*. Available from: <http://www.guttmacher.org/sections/abortion.php>.