

Answering Tough Questions: Sticking to Our Values

Use this resource for work with media, decision makers, or people in your life who may feel differently about issues related to reproductive justice and abortion.

Many people have strong emotions about reproductive health and abortion. They may be passionate about the need to ensure access to safe and legal abortion care; concerned about the moral implications of the topic; or they may be uncertain about a particular issue. When tough questions come up, it is important that we stick to our values! **It’s about conversation and understanding, not debates and divisiveness.**

Three tips to keep in mind:

- ▶ **We can move people if we talk about the need to protect access to health care, respect individual decisions, and safeguard the ability to follow our religious or moral beliefs.** By speaking from a place of values, we can begin to redirect people’s attention to respecting and supporting the decisions and personal beliefs of others, and prioritizing health and safety over political agendas.
- ▶ **The goal of addressing tough questions is to try to have a conversation that helps advance understanding** instead of judging those who may be uncertain about where they stand. We may not be able to change someone’s mind, but they might leave the conversation with a broader understanding of the issues and increased respect for individuals seeking care.
- ▶ **There is a difference between a dialogue and an argument.** We do not have to put ourselves in a position where we are being yelled at or treated badly. There is nothing wrong with a simple, “We may need to agree to disagree,” if it is clear that a conversation is not going to help create understanding or if you are not going to be treated with basic respect.

What follows is guidance on how to answer tough questions using value statements.

Tough question: Why don’t you care about the baby?

Value Statement: I hear your concern and that you have strong feelings about pregnancy, childbirth, and abortion. We may disagree, and because of that, I don’t want to make such a personal decision for someone else. It is better that every woman be able to make her own decision about whether and when to become a parent.

Value Statement: Each religion looks at life and the potential for life in a different way. This is a very personal question for each of us to answer, based on our own faith and values.

Tough question: I’ve heard abortion causes women deep psychological pain. I have a friend who is still depressed about her abortion. Don’t you care about the women in your congregation/community?

Value Statement: While some people do struggle, others feel relief. Most important decisions in life trigger complex and conflicting, maybe even negative emotions – and abortion is no exception. Strong feelings are certainly not a reason to take away any woman’s ability to make her own decision. We can support and respect a woman’s feelings about abortion without interfering with or taking away the ability for each woman to make her own decision.

Tough question: If we provide teens with access to birth control, aren't we just saying it's okay to have sex?

Value Statement: Young people are capable of making thoughtful decisions about sex and healthcare. We should ensure that they have the information, services and supplies to protect their sexual and reproductive health, and to make the best decisions for their own lives.

Value Statement: Many people are uncomfortable with the idea of a teen couple having sex, but if they are, it is important that they have access to accurate information and safe options to reduce the risk of an unintended pregnancy. We should help teens build healthy relationships and make informed decisions.

Tough question: I don't think abortion should be used as birth control. Do you think it is right for women to have more than one abortion?

Value Statement: People seek abortion for many different reasons. It is not our place to judge someone seeking abortion care. Instead, we should ask ourselves how we can support a woman who wants to prevent pregnancy, whether that is ensuring she has information, birth control, or other support. Let's first be sure she has what she needs.

Value Statement: It is not our place to interfere with a person who is deciding whether to choose adoption, seek abortion, or become a parent. If a woman is facing an unintended pregnancy, she needs support to make the best decision for her unique circumstances.

Tough question: I believe abortion is murder. Don't you think life begins at conception?

Value Statement: The question of "when life begins" is a profound one. Each person must decide for themselves, based on their religious teachings and values. It is not our place to impose our personal feelings on another person or infringe on their beliefs.

Tough question: I don't understand why people oppose legislation that makes counseling mandatory. Don't you think women should be counseled so they know the dangers of abortion?

Value Statement: Every woman should have evenhanded information provided in a respectful manner so that she can protect her health and make the best decision for her circumstances. A woman should be informed about the pros and cons of any health procedure, including abortion, but the information should never be provided in a way intended to coerce, shame, or make her change her mind.

For more information about NCJW's Reproductive Justice Initiative, check out the [Action Kit](#) at my.ncjw.org/reproductivejustice.org. See "Jewish Values and Reproductive Justice" and "Talking Points: Interfaith Support for Abortion Coverage" for more details about values.

If you are working on reproductive justice advocacy or programming, please let us know!
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