It’s the long slow exhale.

Holding breath in & slowly forcefully, blowing it out.

That’s the tell-tale sign.

Not the averted eyes. Not even the tears.

In other areas they differ: ethnicity, income, circumstance.

Different.

But in this one exhale, in this one response, is their commonality: despair.
Since starting with Care Net, I’ve had the interesting experience of answering the question “So, what do you do?” I craft a response that’s appropriate for the circumstance (how deep of a dive do I really want to take with the woman who’s about to cut my hair?). Reactions vary, but one theme emerges: ‘you’re not who I expected.’ It’s not an offensive response. It’s an honest and accurate one.

The subsequent dialogue is centered on an important theme: Empathy. I hope that my (surprising) leadership at Care Net will help many see an important truth about why you and I care about serving moms and saving babies. It’s not because they’re white or black, or because you’re a man or a woman. It’s because we’re all humans, made in God’s image.

To help us all understand an Alcove Health* client’s life experience a little bit better, I asked Sherri Pigue (pictured on the cover) to write our feature story. Sherri is a client advocate and has counseled hundreds of women through one of the hardest decisions of their lives.

To the woman who knows God from a distance, there is anxious clinging to the idea of forgiveness. “God understands. He will forgive me.” To the woman who is close to God comes the question, “Have you prayed about this?” Her answer: “No, I’m afraid to ask God.” Afraid because she is aware of His answer. Afraid because His answer is going to collide with her answer. And the church? “I’m not going to walk in there and have them judge me.” Secrecy is one of abortion’s strongest allies.

And what of her baby? Long exhale. The need to make a quick decision is driven by her knowledge that she can only prevent herself from thinking about the baby for so long.

Each day at the clinic, we take that long exhale with her, beside her. We create a safe space to help her slow down and remember who she is rather than let despair define her. We show her that neither her dreams nor her baby need to die. There is reason for hope. And after that exhale, there will be an inhale. Here, in this space, she inhales truth and hope in a place of support and compassion, and the loudness of despair is quieted.

For the women who muster the courage to tell others, there is a common and noble-sounding response. “I’ll support you in whatever you choose to do.”

The weight of this decision fully rests on her shoulders alone. The pressing call to act: “I’ve got to fix this problem fast.” This urgent desperation is the enemy of wisdom. Enemy though it is, this desperation is the driver.

“I’ll injure myself to save myself and I will deal with afterwards, afterwards.”

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And what of her baby? Long exhale. The need to make a quick decision is driven by her knowledge that she can only prevent herself from thinking about the baby for so long. “Don’t get attached, don’t get attached!” She knows she does not have the emotional strength to wait – every day she waits is more costly to her heart.

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*Alcove Health is the name of the clinic operated by Care Net Peninsula.
The nurse follows up with the client once the Medical Director reviews the ultrasound. Alcove staff and volunteers check in with the client periodically to check if she is in need of additional resources or appointments.

“**We show her that neither her dreams nor her baby need to die.**”

**A LOOK AT THE ALCOVE HEALTH CLIENT PROCESS**

**Options consultation**

The client meets with a trained advocate. This is a safe place to discuss options, process her feelings, ask questions and get advice.

**Medical consultation**

The client receives a lab-quality pregnancy test, and an ultrasound when needed. She and the nurse talk about her options and other critical medical information.

**Follow-up**

The nurse follows up with the client once the Medical Director reviews the ultrasound. Alcove staff and volunteers check in with the client periodically to check if she is in need of additional resources or appointments.