

LET'S TALK LEXICON: FOR INFLUENCING AND *WINNING*

Intentional Language for Compassionate
and Consistent LIFE Messaging

A Summary Compilation Created by Karen Garnett
Vice President of National Expansion, Cogency Strategic

With Introduction by Nelly Roach
CEO of Choose Life

Run so as to win.
1 Corinthians 9:24

A MESSAGE FROM NELLY ROACH

Dear Pro-Life Colleague:

Language shapes culture, and in the battle for life, the **words we choose** can mean the difference between victory and defeat. Since 2017, Karen Garnett has been faithfully equipping leaders with this essential training, helping our movement reclaim the narrative and speak with clarity and compassion.

As the CEO of Choose Life, I've seen how intentional, strategic language transforms campaigns, conversations, and ultimately, lives. Adding my voice to this project is an honor, and I believe this shared lexicon will strengthen our unified efforts to reach more women, mobilize advocates, and win the long-term fight for life.

Together, let us *Run so as to win*. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Yours for Life,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nelly Roach". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Nelly" and "Roach" being significantly larger and more decorative than the rest of the letters.

Nelly Roach
CEO Choose Life

LET'S TALK LEXICON: FOR INFLUENCING AND *WINNING*

Intentional Language for Compassionate and Consistent LIFE Messaging

**We're not only in a cultural battle, we're in a cultural *war*,
between life and death.**

“Regardless of the industry, a specific language exists... and that language matters. Language is a crucial element in your brand strategy... Whoever owns the language, owns the customer. Choose your words carefully.”

– business and marketing brand strategist Jasmine Bina
(from random online search)

Dennis Peacocke, self-described former Marxist, is a Christian leader, writer, author, and the Founder and President of GoStrategic, an international non-profit organization that educates and equips leaders and others for effective service and leadership. He writes:

“Whoever controls the language controls the culture. . . . The words we use to describe a situation or problem frame the way we approach it. It's not bullets that ultimately win wars, it's words. A bullet won't make you die for someone, but the right word lodged within you will make you fearless. . . . The real warriors on either side of the issues wage war with words. . . . Unify their language and you have unified their power!”

The Associated Press has a longstanding *AP Stylebook* for media outlets, which includes “how to talk about abortion” and which words to use and not use, e.g., “use ‘anti-abortion’; never use ‘pro-life’”. The American Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) similarly offers its highly concerning *ACOG Guide to Language and Abortion*.

- **Does the pro-life movement or industry have a “unified/common language lexicon” on important terms?**
- **Does your organization or chapter have a lexicon or style guide on important terms?**

Several national pro-life organizations have become more strategic and intentional in recent years as we work to “reclaim the narrative”/“take the language” back from Planned Parenthood and the culture of death, and try to help with some “branding consistency” in culture of life language, messaging, and marketing.

Below is the current lexicon of preferred intentional language terms shared via trainings and webinars, and we invite your consideration for your own lexicon. Note that some exceptions are made in online **ads** that are going head-to-head against Planned Parenthood’s, since we are being “congruent with the mindset” of the woman who is currently pregnant and panicking, in order to be able to REACH her, and she is “used to” the Planned Parenthood language. There may be other instances for exceptions as well, particularly when considering a specific audience. Stephanie Gray Connors, Lila Rose, and David Bereit are among those who also use much of the below.

LET'S GO:

1) “**Unexpected** pregnancy” rather than “unplanned” – since the whole “planned” language is “**Planned**’ Parenthood’s” 100-year cultural marketing ploy that every baby **HAS** to be “planned” by the mother/parents, and ““unplanned’ = abortion”. Don’t buy into it, reinforce it, “give it to them”. God has a **plan** for every precious and unrepeatable life He co-creates. **Every** life has inherent dignity, meaning, and purpose.

2) Further echoing #1 – in addition to avoiding “unplanned pregnancy,” we also avoid saying “crisis pregnancy” – yes, the Momma is **experiencing** crisis and is scared to death, but the innocent little **baby** is not the crisis, and therefore “the pregnancy” is not the crisis. She’s “in crisis” at this moment, but it is **not permanent**, and she can most definitely be HELPed through it.

3) “**Preborn** baby/child” rather than “unborn” – as a “stage of development,” e.g., “preschooler,” “pre-teen,” rather than “unschooler,” “un-teen,” “not schooler,” “not born”. Another application: “Preborn” is the stage of development of a present, living, and growing preborn child in his/her mother’s womb prior to his/her birth; “Unborn” may be considered as the “class” of human beings “not yet born” as in “generations to come.”

4) What does our industry/movement call “the life-affirming centers” themselves? We have tracked the evolution from “crisis pregnancy center” (CPC), the original language from the 70s/80s/90s, to “pregnancy resource center” (PRC), which was “the upgrade” from CPC. In the last decade, we’ve seen a further shift among a number of national organizations, to “pregnancy help center” (PHC). The reasoning was two-fold, including the critical need for “**category awareness**” advertising and branding, since the watershed research study of 18-29-year-old women published by

Charlotte Lozier Institute in 2015 revealed that only **46%** are even AWARE of the concept or existence of a “pregnancy help center” in their community, **either as a “category” or an individual entity**, compared to **93%** aware of Planned Parenthood/abortion facilities. With marketing-mindset **congruence at the time they are in crisis and searching**, what they need is “HELP!!” when looking for HELP Right Now in their “emergency situation,” rather than “Resources!! I need Resources right now!!”

We have also seen “pregnancy care centers,” “women’s care centers,” “women’s healthcare centers,” and “women’s care clinics” as additional “category” terms, which all counter Planned Parenthood’s “Care. No Matter What.” slogan. “Women’s health centers” or “women’s health clinics” are also being seen, along with “reproductive health centers”.

Of late, we have seen “pregnancy centers” alone, without the adjectives “resource,” “help” or “care”.

To more effectively “Reach Her,” we wish to bring to the forefront of the conversation that the latest research in the quest to clearly differentiate life-affirming women’s health, care, or healthcare centers or clinics from Planned Parenthood facilities and distinguish them as a “counterbrand” to the Planned Parenthood brand, **is to steer from including the word “pregnancy” in the category name or individual names of life-affirming centers or clinics.**

As a result, we advocate for including the word “**women’s**” – to be more broad and generic, and also because Planned Parenthood has been broadening the marketing of their “services” beyond abortion/pregnancy termination.

We have a tremendous opportunity to advertise **the existence of life-affirming women’s health centers/clinics** in light of the

defunding of Planned Parenthood efforts at the national level through the signing of the One Big Beautiful Bill on July 4, 2025, and Planned Parenthood's subsequent announcement of the imminent closure of 41 facilities.

To aid in that national category awareness effort, Cogency Strategic professionally produced 8 PSAs (15- and 30-sec), distributed in partnership with the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) association, available to download and air for free to educate women across the country about the **real help** that is available to them.

5) “Having lost a child to abortion” or “experienced an abortion” rather than “I am/she is/‘people who are’/‘are you?’/‘is she?’ ‘post-abortive’” – based on feedback from hundreds of people who have suffered losses, to move away from an adjective “label,” and because it is “pro-life industry jargon,” not found in the dictionary, that the general population cannot relate to – especially the masses/millions we are trying to reach to help with healing and support. Analogies would be “child with Down Syndrome” or “child in foster care” rather than “Down syndrome child,” “Down’s baby,” or “foster care kid,” or “foster child”.

--> Note that at their annual meeting in April 2019, the leaders of the Abortion Recovery Coalition network of healing ministries within our movement voted to move away from the term “post-abortive”. They are grateful to all who can assist in spreading this message.

For further consideration, the Institute of Reproductive Grief Care (parent organization of Life Perspectives/Abortion Changes You/Miscarriage Hurts) in recent years coined/introduced “**experienced reproductive loss**” as an overall-encompassing term to reach the **broader community**, based on input from licensed professional counselors. As a result, many new doors began to open that had previously been inaccessible (e.g., accredited trainings now being

given in medical schools, and for mental health professionals!).

6) **“Healing after abortion”** or **“after-abortion healing or care”** rather than “post-abortion healing” for similar reasons as #5. Softer, gentler, **broader** reach, and for entry points of discussion for those who may be suffering and in most need of help to be introduced/ connected to healing resources. **“Reproductive grief care”** is also being seen per #5 above.

Note: Note: Dr. Susan Bane, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG) Action, has been sounding the alarm on the rise of the use of the term “abortion care” by the abortion industry. She exhorts us to be sure to never use the words “abortion” and “care” together as a term. There is no such thing as “abortion care” when it is destroying the life of the preborn child.

7) Similarly, based on consistent feedback from birth and adoptive parents – **“Placing a child for adoption”** or **“making an adoption plan”** or **“helping create a family through the gift of adoption,”** rather than “giving a child up” or “putting a child up” for adoption or “giving your baby away”.

8) **“Abortion supporter”** or **“abortion advocate”** or **“pro-abortion”** rather than “pro-choice” – since “pro-choice” was a carefully crafted, deliberate “euphemism” created by the abortion industry. All the more reason for us to “choose not to adopt” – and more importantly, because the “choice” to end an innocent preborn human child’s life is not a “legitimate” choice. The abortion industry has “gotten away with” this carefully crafted “right to choose” euphemism for more than 50 years. We can collectively help bring a stop to that.

9) “**Abortion facility**” or “**abortion business**” rather than “abortion clinic” – since abortion is not legitimate health care that would be received at a legitimate “medical clinic,” and abortion is most definitely a lucrative business/industry. We can clearly differentiate here between legitimate women’s health **centers** and/or women’s health **clinics**.

10) “**Abortionist**” or “**abortion provider**” rather than “abortion doctor” – since, per #8 and #9, abortion is not legitimate health care, and abortionists are in complete violation of the Hippocratic Oath doctors traditionally pledged to “Do No Harm.”

11) **Regarding language around the Abortion Pill:** >60% of abortions are now procured via the “abortion pill” – combination of the drugs Mifepristone and Misoprostol. “Abortion pill” is the search term that young women use. “Abortion-pill abortions” would be awkward. The abortion industry and ACOG recommend the sanitized term “Medication abortion”. Abortion pills or abortion drugs are not “medication” to treat or help someone heal from illness or disease. We have also seen recent terminology introduced by the other side to include the misleading “missed period pills”. “Chemical abortion” is a term created and used by some organizations in the pro-life industry/movement – but this term does not resonate with the culture or young women.

We have recently seen Dr. Christina Francis, CEO of AAPLOG, using the terms “**Drug-induced abortion**” and “**Abortion-inducing drugs**” and we recommend these terms.

12) Our colleagues at Be Not Afraid (**Benotafraid.net**) have asked for our assistance to promote the term “**Prenatal diagnosis**” rather than “adverse prenatal diagnosis,” “life-limiting diagnosis,” or “incompatible with life”. Be Not Afraid has partnered with Heartbeat International to create the helpful resource website **PrenatalDiagnosis.org**.

13) “Abortion-illegal” or “abortion-restricted” or “life-protecting” state or city rather than “abortion-free”. While many states are abortion-illegal, abortion-restricted, or life-protecting following the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* Supreme Court decision of June 24, 2022 overturning *Roe v. Wade*, and some states are now “abortion-*facility* free,” there are no “abortion-free cities” or “abortion-free states” as long as there are residents of those cities and states procuring abortions – either via “abortion tourism” – traveling to other states to procure an abortion – or via abortion pills continuing to be mailed to their mailboxes.

A city or state will be “abortion free” when the preborn children of residents in their cities and states are no longer being killed by abortion.

14) We affirm AAPLOG’s recommendation to use “**Maternal-fetal separation**” – when medically necessary in emergency situations – rather than “abortions to save the life of the mother” or “medically necessary abortions”. These are not only not “abortion procedures,” but the *intent*, even in the event that the preborn child may be pre-viability and may not survive the separation procedure, is not a *direct and intentional abortion* to destroy the preborn child.

15) “Protections for women and children” rather than “abortion ban”: Polling in recent ballot initiatives conveyed that the term “abortion ban” did not land well for the pro-life cause and could become a “galvanizing” slogan for the other side.

16) A “new slogan” that we’ve recently seen emerge from a small number of national pro-life organizations is “Make abortion ‘unnecessary’”. We “**urge the immediate purge**” of this concept/slogan. Abortion is the direct and intentional killing of an innocent preborn human person, and not “necessary”. We would not similarly say, “Make infanticide unnecessary,” “Make slavery unnecessary,” “Make rape unnecessary.”

This “living, breathing” lexicon is continuously evolving. We welcome and value your feedback/input regarding additional terms you are encountering/developing and/or for further discussion.

We also encourage the reviewing of AAPLOG’s *Glossary of Medical Terms for Life-Affirming Medical Professionals* and contrasting with the *ACOG Guide to Language and Abortion*.

Together, let us *Run so as to win!* Thank you and God bless you!

ABOUT KAREN & NELLY



Karen Garnett has been serving in the culture of life battlefield for 36 years. She was the Founding Executive Director of the Dallas-based Catholic Pro-Life Committee of North Texas, where she served for 23 years. In 2016, she founded Culture of Life Network, collaborating with local pro-life organizations to provide emergency assistance to mothers in need. From 2016-2023, she served at Heroic Media, most recently as its Chief Culture Officer, President of National Prayer Luncheon for Life, producer and host of the *Pro-Life Impact Show* weekly podcast, and Executive Editor of *Pro-Life Magazine*. She was elected to serve a two-year term on the inaugural Executive Committee of Pro-Life Vanguard, a national association of pro-life leaders launched in 2023. In October 2024, Karen joined Cogency Strategic, a division of the Choose Life enterprise, as Vice President of National Expansion, assisting pro-life advocacy groups with effective, winning messaging campaigns to transform the culture for LIFE. Karen was blessed to represent the pro-life movement and the Church at the bedside of Norma McCorvey, the “Jane Roe” of *Roe v. Wade*, in Norma’s final days, and deliver the eulogy at Norma’s funeral in 2017.

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With more than 20 years of experience in business, **Nelly Roach**'s passion for the pro-life mission stems from a deeply personal experience. At 18, facing an unexpected pregnancy, she found herself in an abortion facility, preparing to make a difficult decision. But in that moment, she realized there had to be a better choice. Courageously, she walked out, choosing life for her son. This defining moment sparked her fervent dedication to helping life-affirming women's health centers reach women in similar situations. As Founder and CEO of Choose Life, Nelly has combined her personal story with her marketing expertise to create strategies that not only save lives but also transform futures – one mother and one baby at a time. Since its founding in 2016, Choose Life Marketing has served more than 800 life-affirming women's health centers, maternity homes, and adoption agencies – the largest service agency in the pro-life industry. Now, with her leadership extending into Cogency Strategic, she continues to drive pro-life marketing and messaging campaigns forward, harnessing her lifelong journey and bold strategic vision to create lasting impact that changes hearts, minds, and futures.

ABOUT COGENCY STRATEGIC

Cogency Strategic, a division of the Choose Life enterprise, is dedicated to helping pro-life advocacy groups win critical cultural, legislative, and political campaigns for life. Through innovative, data-driven digital strategies, we amplify life-affirming messages, mobilize voters, and increase donor support. With a team of pro-life experts, we craft bold, targeted campaigns that outmaneuver the opposition and drive public policy victories, creating lasting cultural change for the pro-life movement. Learn more at **cogencystrategic.com**.

ABOUT CHOOSE LIFE

Choose Life Marketing, the primary division of the Choose Life enterprise, is a full-service digital marketing agency dedicated to helping life-affirming women's health centers and pro-life organizations connect with abortion-determined women. Through innovative digital strategies including Google Ads, NextGen Micro-Targeting, social media, SEO, website optimization, and more, Choose Life Marketing equips clients with the tools to reach women in need, change minds, and save lives.

The enterprise has been serving clients since 2016 in all 50 U.S. states, as well as in Canada, Ireland, Taiwan, and Australia, providing customized digital strategies that align with each organization's mission and goals.



Choose Life



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1 Corinthians 9:24