



# ***HOLISTIC* EXPLANT PLANNING CHECKLIST**

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**Know what to consider *before*  
scheduling a surgical consult**

**Ready yourself for  
relationship and social concerns**

**Mentally and emotionally prepare for  
key moments before and after surgery**

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Yes, this checklist is long!  
But you deserve a comprehensive guide while learning about breast implant removal and inwardly preparing yourself to change or lose this highly sexualized and objectified part of your body.

Change theory shows that thorough planning minimizes regret, remorse, and relapse. Rushing through this part of your journey puts you at risk to struggle afterward. Even when you urgently need to explant to protect or reclaim your health, you benefit by being conscientious and thoughtful about these considerations.

This part of your journey can span many months, so create a habit of continually revisiting this checklist along the way. By doing so, you ensure that you are holistically preparing yourself for explant.

Only check off items once you understand how they apply to your circumstances.

You may notice that you can more easily check off items toward the beginning of the checklist. That's because they deal with more objective (i.e., physical and surgical) aspects of explant, whereas the remaining items shine a light on the harder-to-navigate social, mental, and emotional aspects.

Simply highlight what you need to learn more about. Then act on your behalf by spending time each week toward that learning. A good place to start is the resource list at [amandasavagebrown.com](http://amandasavagebrown.com).

Disclaimer: This checklist does not substitute for medical, legal, or psychotherapeutic advice, nor does it tell you what to do about your breast implants or how to explant. Instead, it provides you with a comprehensive list of things to consider as you prepare for and recover from explant surgery. By using this checklist, you acknowledge that it is an information service only and that you are solely responsible for the decisions you make about your breast implants, explant, self-care and social interactions. To the extent permitted by law, in no event will the author be liable to you for any loss, costs, expenses or damages suffered or incurred by you and arising out of or in connection with your access to, use, non-use or misuse of this checklist.



# Things to Understand Before Scheduling a Consult

## The scar capsule around all breast implants

- I understand why the human body forms a breast implant scar capsule.
- I understand that scar capsules rest against the silicone surface of all breast implants and that breast implant chemicals bleed into the scar capsule.
- I understand that the human body does not reabsorb scar capsules.
- I understand that capsule removal is recommended for women experiencing breast implant illness (BII).
- I understand that breast implant-associated anaplastic large cell lymphoma (BIA-ALCL)-a type of lymphoma found in the scar capsule and the fluid near the implant.

## Surgical approaches to breast implant removal

- I understand the differences between en bloc removal, total capsulectomy, and other techniques.
- I know which procedure is appropriate for my circumstances (e.g., BII, rupture, implant-fill type, BIA-ALCL).
- Irrespective of whether I identify with BII, I have reviewed the lists of questions provided by BII-related groups to broaden my awareness of things to ask at surgical consultations.

## Surgical approaches after breast reconstruction with implants

- I understand the pros and cons of aesthetic flat closure.
- I understand the pros and cons of autologous reconstruction using tissue from another part of my body and am aware that other materials and devices (e.g., mesh and clips) are added during this procedure.
- I have connected with other breast cancer survivors who explanted or I have read about their experiences.
- Irrespective of whether I identify with BII, I have reviewed the lists of questions provided by BII-related groups to broaden my awareness of things to ask at surgical consultations.

## Different approaches to post-operative care

- I understand there are no established best practices for post-operative care and the use of drains, medications, nerve blocks, scar treatment, compression bras, etc.
- I understand that it's normal to feel unsettled about conflicting recommendations from surgeons and other women who explant.
- I am prepared to discuss and advocate on my behalf regarding my personal health history as it applies to post-operative care (e.g., sensitivity to medication, a predilection for keloid scarring, and so forth) so that I feel assured that my surgeon understands my circumstances and to increase my compliance.





# Things to Understand Before Scheduling a Consult

## The pros and cons of additional surgeries

- I understand the objective of additional surgeries such as lifts and fat transfers.
- I know the costs, recovery, risks, and benefits of additional surgeries.
- I understand my social learning about breasts can heavily influence this decision and that I must also consider my personal health, lifestyle, and mindset affect my candidacy for additional surgeries (e.g., keloid scars, body fat, lifestyle habits that interfere with surgical healing, financial ability to afford additional surgeries or reoperations related to them, past medical or surgical trauma, or a longing to do as little as possible to my body).
- I understand the pros and cons of doing additional surgeries at the same time as explant versus waiting.

## Other women's experience with breast implant removal

- I understand that because of the lack of best practices, it's important to read about other women's experiences so I know what to anticipate and what to guard against.
- I remind myself that everyone comes into these journeys with different histories, sensitivities, and support and that although others' experiences help me know what's possible, it can be unhelpful to my heart and mind to set expectations for my body based on other women's experiences.
- I understand that there is an inherent bias by patients and surgeons toward posting post-explant pictures with idealized aesthetic results and that my post-explant breasts/chest may appear wrinkled, dented, creased, or have contour distortions.

## Financial and medical insurance considerations

- I understand the potential costs involved in breast implant removal.
- I understand health insurance might cover some costs in some situations. If I have health insurance, I understand how to approach them.

## Supporting my body before and after explant

- I understand that my surgeon should advise me on what to discontinue before surgery to minimize my risk of complications and improve my healing.
- I understand that when explanting due to presumed BII, I may not experience total symptom remission and may need to do additional things to help my body heal.



## Keep in Mind

Even though there's much to consider about explant surgery, much of it can be done by visiting the informative websites and groups listed in the resource list at [amandasavagebrown.com](http://amandasavagebrown.com).

Move through these surgical considerations in smaller, do-able chunks.

Set goals for moving through this learning such as: "By the end of the week, I will finalize my list of consult questions."



# Ready Yourself for Relationship and Social Concerns

- I have checked in with myself about how open or closed I want to be about my body's changing silhouette.
- I know the people in my life with whom I do not want to discuss my breasts (e.g., your partner's boss, co-workers, gossipy neighbors, extended family, etc.). I developed a plan for how to inwardly care for myself and any self-awareness I might feel when seeing them after surgery.
- I understand that I get to decide when I'm ready to talk with others about breast implant removal and to choose what I share and with whom.
- I know which people I want to include on my journey at this point; I give myself permission to take a wait-and-see approach with others.
- I know which of my personal values I want to guide these conversations, such as honesty when discussing with my older children, or self-care when approaching an unsupportive partner. (Note: Chapter 6 of Busting Free helps you discern your most heartfelt values.)
- I have identified people in my life directly affected by or involved in my recovery or post-explant life. I understand my plan for talking with these people depends on whether they already know I have breast implants and how supportive they are to me.

## **For people in my life who don't know I have breast implants:**

- I considered when it's most helpful to me to discuss my surgery with them.
- I selected a personal value to guide my plans for the conversation.
- I have a values-guided plan for talking this through.

## **For people whom I previously misled about having breast implants:**

- I considered when it's most helpful to me to discuss my surgery with them.
- I selected a personal value to guide my plans for the conversation.
- I have a values-guided plan for acknowledging that I misled them.



# Ready Yourself for Relationship and Social Concerns

## For supportive people:

- I have decided when it's most helpful to tell these people about my surgery.
- I know to explore their questions and concerns.
- I can clearly describe how they can support me moving forward.

## For unsupportive people:

- I am clear on what I want and don't want from them.
- I know what boundaries I want to define with them.
- I have written out or practiced what I want to hear myself say when others fail to respect my boundaries, or I receive treatment that is unacceptable to me.

I have honestly reflected on the physically intimate and sexual relationships in my life. I understand my approach with these people depends on how securely we are partnered:

- When I am securely partnered, I understand it's important to talk about my concerns and listen to my partner's perspective. I understand I can only receive reassurance from them by choosing to trust my partner.
- When I am not safely partnered, I understand that it's helpful to have these conversations with a therapist. I understand that when my partner is unwilling to do that, I can meet with a therapist or coach on my own. I understand that when I cannot afford to meet with a professional, I should pursue support through other means (e.g., church groups, online support groups, trusted safe others in my life).

## Keep in Mind

**Sometimes your mind will try convincing you to downplay, ignore, or white-knuckle through your explant-related social concerns, but you can acknowledge your feelings and proactively act on your behalf by considering the things in this checklist.**





# Mentally and Emotionally Prepare for Key Moments Before and After Surgery

## Steadying Myself

- I understand that I may feel overwhelmed or threatened at times on this journey and that ignoring or pushing through those feelings is unhelpful to my surgical readiness and recovery.
- I know three ways to ground myself. (Chapter 5 of Busting Free teaches you five ways to steady yourself using your inner BRAKE).
- I have an inner healing first-aid kit. (See Chapter 11 of Busting Free for more details.)

## Surgical Consults

- When attending surgical consults or being in a plastic surgeon's waiting room feels uncomfortable to me, I give myself permission to:
  - bring an engaging book
  - do something engaging on my phone that has no chance of adding to my discomfort (i.e., I'll play a game instead of scrolling through social media)
  - review my list of consult questions
  - sit with my eyes closed and ground myself using my inner BRAKE
  - notice when my mind entangles in lobby videos, brochures, or unhelpful thinking and lasso my focus back to the here and now (Note: Chapter 7 of Busting Free helps you build and use a mental lasso)

## Surgeon Selection

- I understand that surgeon selection is important to my well-being and that I may be nervous and eager during consultations. I will visualize myself attending pre-ops and post-ops in that setting.
- I understand that my emotions convey valuable information so I will pay attention to them while talking with the surgeon and interacting with the staff.
- I will remind myself to not overlook red flags (or even pink ones).





# Mentally and Emotionally Prepare for Key Moments Before and After Surgery

## Seeking Support Before Surgery

- I understand that because women use tend-and-befriend responses when confronting something difficult (learn more in Chapter 3 of *Busting Free*), it's helpful to connect with others on this journey (e.g., through social media, blogs, or other women using the same surgeon as me).
- I understand that there are many social-media-based groups or pages focused on explant and breast implant illness—each with its own culture and feel—so I will join a few to ensure I find the best fit.
- I understand to look for groups that allow members to share experiences of explant-related relief and remorse because I deserve support no matter how my journey unfolds.
- I will limit the amount of time I spend on social media so I can guard against crossing the line between helpful information and overload.
- When engaging with any group, I will rate my inner experience using a 1-10 scale, where level 1 is “calm” and level 10 is “overwhelmed.” I will take a break when I feel myself approaching or passing level 7.
- I will follow through on the plans I made to talk with supportive people in my life.

## Pre-Surgery Anxiety

- I understand that it's normal for my nervous system to ramp up the closer I get to surgery, even when I am eager to be implant-free.
- I understand not to neglect my inner experience while preparing my home, meals, arranging backup providers for children, buying recovery supplies, etc.
- I will acknowledge when I feel apprehensive and respond in ways that support all my inner experiences, even my difficult thoughts or unwanted feelings. (Note: Chapter 9 in *Busting Free* includes strategies to companion yourself.)
- I will show up for any pre-surgery anxiety by using my personal values as guides (e.g., bravery, self-care, self-respect, and so forth).



# Mentally and Emotionally Prepare for Key Moments Before and After Surgery

## Pre-Surgery Anxiety (continued)

I understand it's important to do things that keep me within my window of tolerance such as:

- use my inner healing first-aid kit to ground and soothe myself
- use my inner BRAKE as a grounding technique
- complete several cycles of belly breathing each hour
- create a playlist that inspires me
- spend time with people or doing things that calm and center me (e.g., yoga, guided relaxation, prayer, reading a favorite novel, watching a beloved movie)
- remind myself why explant matters to me and visualizing the life I am driving toward

## Adjusting After Surgery

I understand I may experience a sense of coming home to my original body or my mind may struggle to adjust to my body's altered contours.

I understand I can help my mind adjust to my new silhouette—even during times of restricted arm movements—by practicing the mindful body scans (post-explant or post-explant-to-flat) available at [amandasavagebrown.com/bustingfree](http://amandasavagebrown.com/bustingfree).)

## During “The Reveal”

I understand that seeing myself unwrapped for the first time after explant surgery offers a significant opportunity to reclaim my heart and mind.

I will proactively think through—even list out—how I want to approach this moment.

Before seeing myself unwrapped, I will remind myself of the kind of woman I most want to be, how I want to treat myself, and why breast implant removal mattered to me.

If I choose, I give myself permission to not look at myself at my post-op appointment and to wait until I am comfortable, at home, or with a supportive person. I will remind myself that I do not need to justify, defend, or explain myself when acting on my behalf during this important moment after explant.

I will use nonjudgmental words to use to speak respectfully to myself during this tender moment. Rather than words like “deformed” or “mutilated,” I will use words like “distorted” or “surgically traumatized.”



# Mentally and Emotionally Prepare for Key Moments Before and After Surgery

## During Recovery

- I will offer myself acceptance during post-explant recovery by viewing my body as something to support rather than something that lets me down and needs fixing.
  
- I will consider how hard my body is working to heal me from a surgery it never signed up for and had no idea it was facing. I will see my breast implant through explant journey from its perspective—practice gratitude for its continued perseverance.
  
- If my journey includes breast cancer or BII, I will take time to honor the persevering spirit within my body.
  
- I will make a list of ways to treat my body tenderly, gently, kindly, protectively, and respectfully.
  
- I will practice mindful awareness of how I speak to and about my breasts.
  
- I understand I need to continually monitor how I regard and treat myself moment by moment. When I am behaving unlike the woman I most want to be, I will gently return myself back to those heartfelt intentions.

## Ongoing Comparative Thinking

- I understand that even when I am thrilled to be implant-free, my mind will naturally compare my aesthetic outcomes to others, how I once looked in a bathing suit or favorite top, my post-explant chest to my pre-implant chest, how I measure up to others, and so on.
  
- I understand it's important to learn new ways to respond inwardly when comparative thinking shows up. (For example, Busting Free teaches you how to use your personal values to guide how you treat yourself, step back from your breast-related thinking, companion yourself when feeling less than, and see beyond your breast-related self-concept.)



# Mentally and Emotionally Prepare for Key Moments Before and After Surgery

## Post-explant intimacy

- I understand that post-explant intimacy offers another opportunity to show up for myself differently than I ever have before.
- I understand I might initially feel quite vulnerable, and that I can genuinely validate that feeling.
- I understand that avoidance begets avoidance, and if I follow my internalized breast shame, I might develop unhelpful coping techniques (e.g., T-shirt sex in the dark) which can interfere with fully reclaiming my body, mind, and heart and living life on my terms.
- I also understand that I don't have to push myself before I am ready and that I can take smaller steps such as wearing something sheer or using candlelight.
- I understand that I don't have to white-knuckle my way through post-explant intimacy and that I can learn inner strategies that help me care for myself in those moments.
- I recognize that I can act on my behalf by acknowledging how I feel and asking for reassurance when I am being physically intimate with someone I trust.
- I understand the importance of noticing things such as chest-to-chest warmth, the feel of a beating heart, and the absence of breast discomfort or pain.

### Keep in Mind

**By repairing your relationship with yourself  
and doing things that reclaim  
your body, mind, and heart  
from your social learning about  
women, breasts, and belonging,  
you emerge from your explant journey  
stronger and more radiant than ever before.**





# Final Words

This checklist outlines what you need to know before scheduling an explant consultation and helps you prepare yourself socially, mentally, and emotionally. You'll benefit most by taking your time and only checking off items that you understand in a very practical sense.

For the surgical considerations, that means knowing how each topic applies to *your* circumstances and what's important to you. For example, at one of my consultations, a surgeon suggested removing my implants in his office under light sedation. He said he would cut open my scar capsule and pull my implants out. He assured me that explant was a minor surgery and that my body would reabsorb the scar capsule. Because of the investigation and learning that I did beforehand, I knew that scar capsules are not reabsorbed and they cause problems for some women when left behind. I wanted mine removed because they caused me problems for many years with capsular contraction. I also knew that his suggested approach was unsafe with ruptured silicone implants. If his low-cost, low-pain promise had swayed me, silicone from my broken implant would have entered my body. Instead, I recognized that his recommendation was likely based on his surgical skills rather than what was best for my circumstances. Stories like mine are not uncommon, so please use this list to educate and empower yourself as well.

For the social considerations, the items listed here help you develop a solid plan for talking with others in your life. I was uncomfortable talking to our youngest daughter who had no idea I had breast implants. But by approaching her as outlined in this checklist, I moved through that conversation honestly and paved the way for us to connect more meaningfully throughout the rest of my explant journey.

Mentally and emotionally preparing yourself for key moments before, during, and long after explant means learning new ways to show up for yourself. I know that's often easier said than done. I also know it offers you an opportunity to emerge from this journey with an unshakable self-acceptance practice that will serve you the rest of your life.

That's why I wrote *Busting Free*. It's a first-of-its-kind self-help book helping you mindfully step back from your breast-related thinking, companion yourself through internalized breast shame, see beyond your breast-related self-concept, and use your heartfelt values to be the woman you most want to be.

To keep "abreast" of *Busting Free*'s release and other resources, please visit [amandasavagebrown.com](https://amandasavagebrown.com) and join my spam-free newsletter.

Hope to see you there,

Amanda

