

Euthanasia Knowledge Organiser

Euthanasia: a definition

Euthanasia: “gentle and easy death”. It is also known as assisted suicide or dying. Someone is given help to end their life in a quick and painless way. Normally the person is living with a very painful or incurable disease.

Euthanasia is illegal in the UK but is legal elsewhere, for example in the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Types of Euthanasia



Voluntary euthanasia is when the person concerned asks someone else to help them die. They may persuade another person to assist them to die or they may refuse to have the medical treatment necessary to be kept alive.

Involuntary euthanasia is when a patient does not give consent to die. It is important to distinguish between cases where patients cannot express a wish to die (e.g. they are in a coma) called **non-voluntary euthanasia**, and those cases where they can express a wish to die but do not – called **involuntary euthanasia**.



Euthanasia can also be referred to as being 'active' or 'passive'.

Active euthanasia is when a specific action is undertaken to bring life to an end. E.g. giving drugs with the intention of bringing about death. This is **ILLEGAL** in the UK, but legal in other countries such as Switzerland and Belgium.

Passive euthanasia is when treatment is withdrawn or withheld in order to allow the person to die. For example switching off a machine that is keeping a person alive, so that they die of their disease or not carrying out surgery that will extend life for a short time.



Is Euthanasia ever right?

Arguments against euthanasia

A patient might not be able to make a rational decision or might change their minds but be incapable of telling the doctor.



We should care for people in their last days, showing love, not kill them.

Doctors make mistakes and someone with a terminal illness may have been misdiagnosed.

Old people might feel that they are a nuisance to others and opt for Euthanasia when in their hearts they want to continue living.

It is killing somebody and should be treated as murder.

Arguments in favour of euthanasia

People should have the right to decide what they do with their own body.

Can allow people to die with dignity if they are suffering huge amounts.

Quality of life is more important than the sanctity of life.



Voluntary Euthanasia can help to shorten the grief and suffering of the patient's loved ones.



We see it as compassionate to put animals in pain to sleep, so should allow the same compassion to humans.

Alternative to euthanasia – A Hospice

A hospice is a place where people who are terminally ill (dying) are treated until they die. Hospices aim to give people with painful and terminal diseases the best possible quality of life. Religious groups see hospices as the way forward for terminally ill people. They argue God wants us to care for these people, to look after them, to express God's love for them, not kill them.



Christianity and Euthanasia

'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20:13)

'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 6:19)



On most occasions Christians would not agree with euthanasia. Christians believe that all life is sacred as it was created by, and belongs to, God. Whilst death might mean going to heaven to be with God, it should not be hastened – life should always be protected. However, in countries where euthanasia is legal, there are Christian groups who also agree with it, for example, the Dutch Protestant Church in the Netherlands, who see it as an act of love and compassion and a good use of the medical knowledge they believe God has granted us.



Islam and Euthanasia

'It is not possible for one to die except by permission of Allah' (Qur'an 3:145)



'Whoever commits suicide with something will be punished with the same thing in the (hell) fire' (Hadith)

'Do not take life, which Allah has made sacred' (Qur'an 17:33)

Muslims believe all life is specially created by Allah, and Allah has a plan for each life; euthanasia goes against these plans. Hence, for most Muslims, euthanasia is always wrong.

The Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) told the story of a man who helped a friend die because he was in so much pain. The man and his friend were both denied paradise as a result. No one knows the plans of Allah, this is called al-Qadr or the predestination of Allah's will. In other words, Allah has planned for this experience, so it must have some value. Life will end when Allah wills it, so euthanasia is not acceptable.