

11

Screening and embryo selection: eliminating disorders or people?



Box 11.3 Activity: Small group work

In groups of four think of an activity you believe to be morally wrong (murdering grandmothers, robbing blind people, pushing children off bicycles. . .).

Now describe these actions so as to strip them of their moral import ('I was teaching the child how to handle the unexpected. . .').

Each group should choose two contributions to present to the rest of the class.

The class might then discuss situations in which actions have been re-described in attempts to exonerate the perpetrators. (e.g. the Nazi claim that they were 'just obeying orders'). The discussion might also consider how one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter.

The point is to teach participants to guard against allowing descriptions to influence their moral reasoning.



Box 11.4 Activity: Creative writing

Imagine you are an embryo with Huntington's disease. Write a 500-word piece on how you feel about discovering your parents are trying to decide whether to use PGD and embryo selection to discard embryos like you.



Box 11.9 Activity: Research

Go to the website of an organisation such as Carers UK (<http://www.carersuk.org/Home>) or the Princess Royal Trust for Carers (<http://www.carers.org/>), log onto a 'chat zone' and read the postings from the many carers who use these sites.

You might also post a request for them to tell you something of their lives, explaining why you need the information.

Having gathered the information write a short essay (500 words) about what it is like to be a carer. Say in particular whether you think the downside of caring justifies the use of PGD to select against those with diseases and disabilities.



Box 11.10 Activity: Film review

Get hold of a copy of the film 'Logan's Run' (in which people over 30 are disposed of so they don't become a burden on society). Write a 500 word review of it. Consider especially whether it is acceptable to eliminate people because they are about to become a burden.



Box 11.12 Activity: Group discussion

Consider again the analogy we considered on page 186:

Premise one: Being female is not a morally acceptable reason for aborting an early embryo.

Premise two: Aborting an embryo because it has a disease or a disability is like aborting an embryo because it is female.

Conclusion: It's having a disease or disability is not a morally acceptable reason for aborting an early embryo.

Discuss in class the truth of the second premise of this argument. The exercise could also be done by exchanging 'female' for 'homosexual' or another condition that would make the exercise more meaningful to participants.

**Box 11.14 Activity: Playing devil's advocate**

Tomato and Paula Lichy should be able to select for a deaf child.

Participants should be allocated to one or other side of this argument without reference to their actual beliefs. Otherwise the discussion should be a free one with all participants invited to contribute.

**Box 11.16 Activity: Writing a review**

Read the book *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult (2009) Hodder Paperbacks (or watch the film which is not so good – <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1078588/>). Write a 500-word review of the book and/or use it to stimulate discussion.

**Box 11.17 Activity: Group discussion**

In 2001 Alan and Louise Masterton applied to the HFEA in the UK to be allowed to use IVF and PGD to select the sex of a baby.⁴⁰ The Mastertons had four sons, and then 15 years later had had a much-wanted daughter, Nicole. Sadly Nicole died in a fire at 4-years-old. The Mastertons badly wanted to select for another daughter.

Should the Mastertons have been granted their wish?