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Death and killing: the quality and value of life



Box 13.3 Activity: Review writing

Show participants a DVD of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* and ask them to write 500 words in the character of Jean-Dominique Bauby about the situation in which he finds himself.



Box 13.7 Activity: Informal poll

Ask participants to answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following question before they read the rest of this chapter:

Should the law be changed to allow the intentional killing of those who have irreversibly lost the capacity for consciousness?

After the poll has been conducted participants might list their reasons for their decision so they can be re-visited at the end of the chapter.



Box 13.10 Activity: Revision

Read Box 4.6 on page 41 (deontology activity). Ask yourself whether it would be possible to tell which of the people had which intention. Reflect again on whether the nature of the intention with which these people acts is important in evaluating the moral acceptability of the action.



Box 13.11 Activity: Group discussion

Imagine a classmate, Sam, has been claiming that she wants to die since the break-up of an important relationship 2 years ago.

Many of you, believing Sam is clinically depressed, have tried to persuade her to go to the doctor for anti-depressants. But Sam doesn't believe in taking drugs and won't go.

Does Sam really want to die? Would it be morally permissible to help Sam to die? Should it be legally permissible to help Sam to die?



Box 13.13 Activity: Discussion

In pairs, participants should discuss what it would be like to have locked-in syndrome.

After 5 minutes ask participants to rate, on a scale from -5 (very low) to $+5$ (very high), the quality of life they believe they would have with locked-in syndrome.

Once ratings are in compare them with ratings taken from people who actually have locked-in syndrome. (As reported by Dr Ashraff Ali, a consultant in neuro-rehabilitation at the Royal Hospital for Neurodisability in South London, most such patients rate their quality of life to be around 3 or 4.)

Open to the whole group a discussion of any discrepancy between the ratings.



Box 13.16 Activity: informal poll

Ask participants to answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following question before they read the rest of this chapter:

Should euthanasia be legalised under regulations designed to eliminate abuse?

After the poll has been conducted participants might be asked to list their reasons for voting as they voted and these reasons noted so they can be re-visited at the end of the chapter.

**Box 13.18 Activity: Personal research**

In the US state of Oregon,⁴⁷ where physician-assisted suicide is legal, 45% of patients given good palliative care changed their minds about euthanasia.⁴⁸

Can you find any other empirical evidence to help weigh the utility of regulating euthanasia against the utility of banning it?

**Box 13.19 Activity: Informal poll**

Participants should answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following question before they read the rest of this chapter:

Is medical collusion as likely to happen where euthanasia is legally regulated as it is where euthanasia is illegal?

Participants might list their reasons for their vote so they can be re-visited at the end of the chapter.

**Box 13.21 Activity: informal poll**

Participants should answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following question before they read the rest of this chapter:

Would the courts have the same discretion in sentencing were euthanasia to be legally regulated as they do where euthanasia is legally banned?

Participants might list their reasons for their vote so they can be re-visited at the end of the chapter.



Box 13.22 Activity: Virtue ethics and euthanasia

A group of participants should imagine that they are a committee of the 'great and the good' appointed by the government to advise it on whether or not euthanasia should be decriminalised or legalised (and if so how regulated). We can imagine that each of the committee members has the reputation of being a virtuous person.

Committee members might be given roles to play as follows:

Chairperson: This person's job is to chair committee meetings, keep members to the agenda, make sure the committee stick to their remit and to present the final report.

Note-taker: This person's job is to keep the minutes of the meeting(s), and to produce a report of the meeting.

Other participants should be asked to act as witnesses called up before the committee to make arguments for or against imposing legalising euthanasia. These members should represent the following organisations:

Faith groups

Disability rights organisations

Organisations concerned with the rights of the aged

Civil liberties organisations

Medical practitioners' organisations

Lawyers and judges

Participants should be given time to conduct some research and prepare their arguments, then a meeting of the committee should be held. Witnesses should be called one by one until all have been heard. The debate should then be opened to the committee.