

# What is euthanasia



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Euthanasia is the taking of one's life. It is taken from the Greek meaning 'easy death'. It may seem like suicide, but involves another person. It is a choice made either by the person in suffering or the other person involved, such as a doctor or a loved one.

There are many reasons why a person decides to end their life. Being physically and mentally ill can result in a person not wanting to carry on with their life, as it may be too hard to cope.

There are two types of euthanasia - compulsory and voluntary.

Compulsory euthanasia is when another person decides when a person's life is going to end - this could be a relative or doctor turning off a life support machine etc. Sometimes it may be considered 'mercy', killing when it applies to someone with a serious illness. An example of compulsory euthanasia is when the Nazis decided to kill people due to their race, colour, religion, disability etc. They did this as they thought it was for the right reasons as these people were seen as a nuisance and a let down to Germany.

Voluntary euthanasia is when a person themselves decides to die. This may be due to a terminal illness that they feel interferes with their life and deprives them of a good quality of life.

An example of voluntary euthanasia is the court case of a woman named Jose. She was 30 years old when she requested for a doctor to end her life. Jose had been a diabetic since childhood, and as a result she was unable to digest food. Every alternative imaginable was tried, but with no effect, so Jose's local doctor said he would be willing to try euthanasia. The doctor

consulted a second doctor appointed by the courts, who was to ensure that Jose was in sound mind. The doctor went ahead as planned and the doctor was not prosecuted.

Many people have fought to legalise euthanasia. A woman named Diane Pretty, who had been diagnosed in November 1999 with a degenerative condition, died two weeks after attempting to get permission to be euthanised. Diane was 43 when she struggled for the right to die. There was a European verdict, which confirmed that she was not to be euthanised, which meant she was to die naturally.

Euthanasia is illegal in Britain. There have been a number of bills attempting to legalise euthanasia, but all of them have failed. Although it is illegal, many people still fight to make it legal. The voluntary euthanasia society campaigns for the law to be changed and for euthanasia to be legalised.

However, in the Netherlands euthanasia is legal provided careful procedures are followed. These procedures include relentless suffering of the patient, an independent medical appraisal by at least one other doctor supporting the decision, the patient has to be fully aware of the alternative methods other than euthanasia (such as treatments etc), the decision must be voluntary and after death the doctor must complete a complicated questionnaire which the ministry of justice will use to decide whether the doctor should be prosecuted or not.

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Although euthanasia is legal in the Netherlands, it is generally illegal throughout Europe. People believe this because they feel it is wrong to take away a persons life - voluntary or not. I feel religion also has a part to play in euthanasia not being legalised, and will continue to dominate other peoples opinions.