

## Suicide, Removal of Life Support, and Euthanasia

The term "suicide" is really the wrong term to use in ending the life of a dying patient because this kind of deliberate death is far different from otherwise healthy people who kill themselves out of depression. When people approach death, the only question is how and when. It is the position of this Church that the individual gets to make that choice.

In the eyes of the Church of Reality, making end of life choices is not suicide if a person is terminally ill. The term suicide in this religion refers to an otherwise healthy person ending their own life. For the terminally ill, "self euthanasia," is a better, far more accurate term. The Church of Reality fully supports the person's right to euthanasia and self euthanasia. To us, the issue is that dying people have as much choice as possible and as much control of their own life processes as we can give them.

We err on the side of choice. Life choices are up to each individual to make.

Choices surrounding death are always difficult, and people often disagree as to what is best. Someone might argue that the dying might make a bad choice, but this church supports {In:Self Ownership} and the {In:Principle of Freedom} and freedom includes the right to make bad decisions. So even if dying people are making bad choices, it is their bad choices to make.

Our position is that death is a part of life. Everyone dies. Just as a person has a right to live their own life, one also has the right to die their own death. Our world view is that the right person to make the decision is the dying person, or, if the dying person can't assert their wishes, the dying person's immediate family. Our view is that death is an extraordinary event and that it is something that is intensely personal and that the wishes of the individual should take precedent over social norms. That the individual's freely made choices be respected.

The Church of Reality makes no moral distinction between removing life support and actively euthanizing an individual. It is our view that to remove life support that is keeping people alive, and to give people fatal injections to end their lives are the same things despite the illusion that passive killing is somehow morally different from active killing. We take the position that when the decision is made to end the life of a dying person, that it should be done in a way that is most humane and causes the least amount of suffering. Generally a lethal injection is far more humane than death through starvation or suffocation. The Church of Reality does not recognize the illusion or the denial that "natural" death or "passive euthanasia" is morally superior to "active euthanasia". In fact, passive euthanasia can be far more cruel.

There is no moral difference between euthanasia and withholding or removing life support. To passively kill someone and to actively kill someone is the same thing.

Of course euthanasia invites a certain level of abuse that has to be actively prevented. Decisions have to be made very carefully so they don't turn into a cover for murder. The dying person has to have legal protections in place to make sure that the decision to euthanize, by active or passive means, isn't a decision that is made by others from economic self-interest.

The Church of Reality joins all other religions in opposing murder. However, to kill a dying person as an act of mercy in order to relieve the suffering of death is not an act of murder. It is an act of compassion that is a gift which requires great courage and wisdom to give. That is why Dr. Jack Kevorkian is considered a saint in the Church of Reality.

As a society, we recognize that when a beloved pet is dying, we take it to the vet to "put the poor suffering animal to sleep" because we don't want it to suffer. Why is it that we can't do the same thing for our poor suffering family members? The reason is that humanity is in denial about death and dying and the denial of euthanasia services is based on a denial of our mortality. But the reality is, we all die. Science might change that some day, but of all the people who were born 150 years ago none of them are still with us today. We take a position that we should apply wisdom to the dying process and allow the dying to have a full range of choices.