



Psychology

Arguing Euthanasia

Leveled Assessment ____/4

Name:

Section:

Score: ____/5

Directions: Read the article about the Verbessem twin's and answer the series of thought questions below.

Deaf twins euthanized: Marc and Eddy Verbessem make controversial choice

Deaf twin brothers were euthanized recently after they learned they were going blind and were devastated they would not be able to communicate with one another. This story has shocked people around the world, and on Jan. 15 the Huffington Post shared the details about Marc and Eddy Verbessem's controversial decision.

In Belgium where the Verbessem brothers lived, patients who declare assisted suicide is his or her wish may be euthanized. Many disagree with the details in this situation, where the deaf twin brothers were euthanized without being terminally ill, but their brother Dirk Verbessem shares he supports their decision. The brothers were born deaf and were slowly going blind and had numerous other physical challenges seriously affecting their quality of life. They lived and worked together, and the doctor who treated them said their physical conditions were "strongly deteriorating." It is said that when their request for euthanasia was accepted, "a weight fell off their shoulders."

This story has sparked heated debate and discussion online, as there are many who disagree with the decision of Marc and Eddy Verbessem. However, there are further details about the condition of the Verbessem twins that has been overlooked by many media outlets. A translation of information from their doctor, Dr. David Dufour, to De Standard provides additional insight.

Dr. Dufour notes that the twins not only were deaf and going blind, but one had respiratory problems that meant he could only sleep upright. The other had spinal cord damage and could barely walk. Doctors were unable to improve their condition, and many medications could not be used because of their fragile eyesight. It had come to the point where they barely ate, and they had been begging for months to be allowed to die.

The doctor shares that the twins were so determined to pursue this, that the doctors felt compelled to grant the request for the deaf twins to be euthanized. The twins met with a psychiatrist and two other doctors before the request was approved. While the first hospital was said to refuse their request, Dr. Dufour notes that this was specifically due to one specialist who morally objected euthanasia and preferred it not happen in his department.

The report of the deaf twin brothers choosing to be euthanized has certainly sparked a lot of conversation, much of it quite harsh toward the decision of the Verbessem brothers. In the end it is said they were calm and confident in their decision, and their family supported their choice.

Carey, Stacy, Rochester Top News Examiner, Jan 15th 2013.

