

Language

Look at these sentences from the article. Notice the expressions with *right*:

Jim and Debbie Jones plan to *win the legal right* to choose the sex of their baby.
Article eight *protects the right* of everyone to 'respect for family life'.

Cross out the word in *italics* which does not collocate with *right*:

1. You can *have, win, protect, demand, build, defend, challenge* the right to choose.
2. It's a(n) *legal, moral, straight, automatic, basic* right.

Look at the sentences below. Mark them in the following way:

- ✓ if you agree
- x if you disagree
- ? if you partly agree and partly disagree

1. An unborn child has rights. Those rights must be protected.
2. We don't have the right to interfere with a child's future personality and appearance.
3. Deciding the sex of your child will be a basic right in fifty years' time.
4. We should have the automatic right to choose particular genes for our own babies.

Compare your answers in pairs or small groups.

Discussion

Work in pairs or small groups. In each of the following situations someone is explaining what genetic selection they want to make and why. Decide whether you think they should be allowed to do what they want.

1. There is a history of red hair in my family. I have red hair and I was badly teased at school. I would like to make sure my child does not have red hair.
2. My four-year-old daughter, my only child, has a fatal blood disease. She will die before she is 12 unless we can find a match for a bone marrow transplant. I want to make sure my next baby is a suitable match for my daughter.
3. In my family there is a history of a fatal disease that affects the nervous system. I want to make sure that my baby is not likely to get this disease.
4. I'm a university professor and my husband is a doctor. We'd like to make sure our baby is intelligent.
5. The male members of my family often suffer from a rare and unpleasant bone disease. I would therefore like to make sure I have a baby girl.
6. I feel there is too much violence and aggression in the world. I would like to make sure my child is a calm and gentle person.
7. I would like to have a very musical or artistic daughter. She should have blonde hair, blue eyes and be about medium height when she grows up.
8. I suffer from a genetic disease which I inherited from my mother. My children have a one in five chance of having the same gene. Before I start a family, I want to have treatment to make sure I do not pass on this gene.

"We will still have sex for pleasure, of course, but we will view our children as too damn important to leave it to a random meeting of sperm and egg."

Greg Stock, UCLA professor of procreation

Are you fascinated or horrified by this topic?