

Needs that all human beings have, are often referred to as human rights. It is important to remember that the rights we all have as human beings also place duties on us to make sure that other people's rights are not threatened. If we agree, as most people do, that everyone has the right to be educated, then that places a duty on our parents and governments to provide education. It also places the responsibility on you, as schoolchildren to make the most of this opportunity to learn and not to prevent your classmates from learning!

THE RIGHT TO LIFE – THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHT



The United Nations, the assembly of all the nations of the world which meets in New York, made a Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Article 3 states that *“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”*

This right to life is often described as the “basic human right”. Why do you think this is? Look at the “needs” or rights you listed down above. Why is the “right to life” put first, ahead of these other rights?

The Declaration of Human Rights was made in 1948 just after the end of the Second World War. Why do you think the Declaration, written just after the war, placed such emphasis on the “right to life”?

In 1959 the United Nations specifically considered the rights of children. The nations of the world recognized the vulnerability of young life when they stated in the Declaration on the Rights of the Child: *“the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.”*

The emphasis on life before birth was expanded elsewhere in the Declaration: *“ . . . [the child] shall be entitled to grow and develop in health; to this end, special care and protection shall be provided both to him and to his mother, including adequate pre-natal and post-natal care.”*

Why do you think that children, especially the youngest children (including those developing in their mother's wombs), need special safeguards and care compared to adults?

Every person has human rights. Sometimes the rights of one person can affect the rights of someone else. Smoking cigarettes will damage a person's health but an adult has the “right to smoke” under our law. Do you think a pregnant woman should smoke cigarettes? Is the situation different when a woman is pregnant?

Role play: (Work in teams of two or have two people role play to the whole class)

A young woman has just discovered that she is to have a baby. She visits a friend to tell her the good news and lights up a cigarette. Her friend thinks this is a bad idea. One of you role play the pregnant woman, and the other her friend. Role play the conversation that might take place between them.



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