**Problem-Based Learning**

**(learning things through a problem/situation)**

**Tip:** When you work in a group, think about **organizing** your group => possible roles:

time keeper

 secretary

 facilitator/moderator

**Topic 9: Playing God**

**Problem/situation**

*Marie and Claire are having a conversation over a cup of coffee.*

**Marie:** Did you see that thanks to biotechnology, many genetic diseases might be cured soon. Even cancer could become a thing of the past!

**Claire:** Yes, I know! There has been very encouraging progress over the past ten years. But I think the scientific community should be very careful when they interfere with the course of nature.

**Marie:** What are you talking about?! You're studying medicine! Aren't you glad to be able to save people's lives?! Wouldn't you like to be able to prevent a baby from getting bad genes from their parents?!

**Claire:** Of course no-one can be against saving people's lives. But what do you mean by "bad genes"? To some people, it's the wrong hair, eye or skin colour...

**Marie:** I'm not talking about rich people's dreams of getting designer babies! That's totally crazy.

**Claire:** Some people don't think it's crazy. And they would be ready to pay a lot of money to have the "perfect" child. Ethics are central in this topic. The scientific community has to set strict limits to what can or cannot be done. Otherwise some will always be tempted to play god.

**Marie:** Acting like gods... isn't it what doctors do everyday when they save lives?! Or when they perform euthanasia or assisted suicide...

**Claire:** When you become a doctor, you have to take an oath. You're supposed to save people, not to *kill* them. As future doctor, I'm against assisted suicide: patients need more psychological and material support, more end-of-life care in order not to suffer...not to be actively helped to die!

**Marie:** Does that make you, then, one of these pro-life doctors who refuse to perform abortions or to prescribe the morning-after pill?

**Claire**: Not at all! Pro-life people are often motivated by religious principles. I'm an atheist. I believe in helping my patients. If my patient is a woman who wants to get an abortion, I will do my best to help her, without judging her, whatever her circumstances.

**Marie:** Ok, then, but how many weeks should be the limit to perform an abortion? When the embryo's heart starts beating? When it starts looking like a human baby? South Carolina has recently limited abortion to 6 weeks of pregnancy...and many other US states have banned it altogether.

**Claire:** This debate has nothing to do with healthcare: it has to do with personal beliefs!

**Marie:** What about ethics?! Do all doctors agree on what is ethical and what isn't?! And what about human cloning?!

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| What are the key issues raised by this situation? |