

Lesson 3:

The gift of life – organ donation



Activity 1: The story of Philip Traher and his family

Listen to the story and answer the questions below

1. What do you think Philip's parents were feeling when they heard the news of his accident?

2. What do you think Philip's parents would be saying to support each other?

3. What do you think Philip's parents would be saying to the Specialist Nurse in Organ Donation at this difficult time?

4. Are there any words that they used that surprise you?



Activity 2: Dawn Smith and Harry-James Kirkham's story

Listen to the story and answer the questions below

1. What was Dawn's son, Harry-James, like as a teenager?

2. What was he most interested in?

3. Why did Dawn decide to donate Harry-James' organs?

4. What did Dawn feel when she consented to the donation of Harry-James' organs?



Activity 2: Dawn Smith and Harry-James Kirkham's story

Listen to the story and answer the questions below

5. Did Dawn feel it was important to have the conversation about organ donation with the rest of the family after Harry-James died?

6. What advice does Dawn give to parents and families who may be considering donating their loved ones' organs?



Activity 3: Faith Fact Cards - perspectives on organ donation

Developed in conjunction with faith leaders from across the UK

Buddhism

Organ donation is giving an organ to help someone who needs a transplant.

There are no injunctions in Buddhism for or against organ donation. The death process of an individual is viewed as a very important time that should be treated with the greatest care and respect.

In some traditions, the moment of death is defined according to criteria which differ from those of modern Western medicine, and there are differing views as to the acceptability of organ transplantation.

The needs and wishes of the dying person must not be compromised by the wish to save a life. Each decision will depend on individual circumstances.

Central to Buddhism is a wish to relieve suffering and there may be circumstances where organ donation may be seen as an act of generosity. Where it is truly the wish of the dying person, it would be seen in that light.

“Giving is the greatest of Buddhist virtues. The Buddha in a previous life gave his body to a starving tigress who could not feed her cubs. There are many such tales some in which he even gave his eyes to someone who wanted them. “What loss do I suffer to give an unwanted organ after my death to give another person life?”

Dr Desmond Biddulph, Chairman of The Buddhist Society

Making a donation is your choice. But it can be seen differently even in the same religious groups.

If you have any doubt, seek guidance from a senior teacher in your community.

Also make sure you talk to your family and friends about your decision so they know your wishes.

Further information

Buddhism and organ donation

organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation/what-does-my-religion-say/buddhism



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Christianity

Organ donation is giving an organ to help someone who needs a transplant.

The Christian faith is based upon the revelation of God in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught people to love one another and embrace the needs of others.

Christian beliefs:

- Christians consider organ donation an act of love and a way of following Jesus' example
- Christians believe in eternal life, and preparing for death should not be feared
- Christians believe that nothing that happens to our body, before or after death, can impact on our relationship with God.

"Thousands of people in the UK today are waiting for an organ transplant that could save or dramatically improve their lives. The simple act of joining the donors' register can help make the world of difference to those in need. I hope that everyone will consider whether they can give life to others after their own death." Sentamu Ebor, Archbishop of York, 2010

"The Methodist Church has consistently supported organ donation and transplantation in appropriate circumstances, as a means through which healing and health may be made possible." Methodist Church UK

"Identifying specific faith groups and their beliefs and practice around organ donation provides a basis for discussion. We then need to share information on what faith groups believe in order to foster better understanding of cultural norms. Disseminating more widely information on the cultural risk factors for kidney disease keeps people informed, assists in breaking barriers and engendering hope as people make better health choices which will positively impact their life."

Sharon Platt-McDonald, Director for Health, Women Ministries & Disability Awareness for the Seventh-Day Adventist Churches in the British Isles

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Also make sure you talk to your family and friends about your decision, so they know your wishes.

Further information

Christianity and organ donation

organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation/what-does-my-religion-say/christianity



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Hinduism

Organ donation is giving an organ to help someone who needs a transplant.

There are many references that support organ donation in Hindu scriptures. Daan is the original word in Sanskrit for donation, meaning selfless giving. It is also third in the list of the ten Niyamas (virtuous acts).

Life after death is a strong belief of Hindus and is an ongoing process of rebirth. The law of Karma decides which way the soul will go in the next life.

“Organ donation is in keeping with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the life of others.”

The Late Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples

“I always carry my donor card with me. It says that my whole body can be used for organ donation and medical purposes after my death. I would like to encourage as many people as possible to do the same.” The Late Dr Bal Mukund Bhala, Coordinator Hindu International Medical Mission, Former President Hindu Council UK

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Further information

Hinduism and organ donation

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Islam

Organ donation is giving an organ to help someone who needs a transplant.

In Islam there are two schools of thought with regard to organ donation.

The human body, whether living or dead, enjoys a special honour and is sacred, and fundamentally Islamic law emphasises the preservation of human life.

The general rule that *'necessities permit the prohibited'* (al-darurat tubih al-mahzurat), has been used to support human organ donation with regard to saving or significantly enhancing a life of another provided that the benefit outweighs the personal cost to someone.

Here are some verses from the Holy Qur'an that have been used to support organ donation:

"Whosoever saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind." Chapter 5, vs. 32

"Whosoever helps another will be granted help from Allah." Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Faith leaders have also been quoted on the subject:

"If you happened to be ill and in need of a transplant, you certainly would wish that someone would help you by providing the needed organ." Sheikh Dr MA Zaki Badawi, Principal, Muslim College, London

However, there are alternative views within Islam:

"According to a large number of Muslim scholars, organ donation is not permitted. They consider that organ donation compromises the special honour accorded to man and this cannot be allowed whatever the cost. Scholars, such as the Islamic Fiqh Academy of India, allow live donations only." Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt, Muslim Council of Britain

Therefore, it is very clear that in Islam:

"Organ donation is a very personal choice and one should consider seeking the opinion of a scholar of their choosing." Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt, Muslim Council of Britain

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Further information

Islam and organ donation

organdonation.nhs.uk/about-donation/what-does-my-religion-say/islam



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Judaism

Organ donation is giving an organ to help someone who needs a transplant.

In principle Judaism sanctions and encourages organ donation in order to save lives (pikuach nefesh).

Whether or not the wishes of the dead person are known, it is widely recognised that families are entitled to decide for themselves; and that they will often wish to consult with their own experts in Jewish law and tradition before making a final decision.

Judaism holds that organs may not be removed from a donor until death has definitely occurred. For some Jews the 'brain stem death' criteria are acceptable. Other Jews will only agree to removal of organs from a 'non-heart beating' donor.

After donation it is important to recognise that kavod hamet (showing respect for the dignity of the dead) still applies. In Judaism avoidance of any further unnecessary interference with the body and immediate internment are again the primary concern.

"One who saves a single life – it is as if he has saved an entire world" Pirke D'Rav Eliezer, Chapter 48

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Further information

Judaism and organ donation

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Sikhism

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone who needs a transplant.

The Sikh philosophy and teachings support the importance of giving and putting others before oneself.

Seva (the act of selfless service, to give without seeking reward or recognition) is at the core of being a Sikh.

Indeed, Guru Nanak (founder of the Sikh faith and the Gurus who followed) devoted their lives to humanity and sacrificed their lives looking after the welfare of others.

Seva can also be about donating your organ to another - Sikhism does not attach taboos to organ donation and transplantation and stresses that saving a human life is one of the noblest things you can do.

Sikhs also believe that your body does not need all its organs at or after death.

“The Sikh religion teaches that life continues after death in the soul, and not the physical body. The last act of giving and helping others through organ donation is both consistent with and in the spirit of Sikh teachings.” Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK (endorsed by Sikh Authorities in Amritsar, Punjab)

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