

Should the Dead Help the Living?

Three doctors from different countries discuss using the organs of dead people. Read the story and find out: Who is in favor of this? Who is opposed?



Dr. Jones: In my opinion, the dead must help the living. There is no question about it. When people die, they no longer have any use for their organs. If we don't use their healthy hearts or lungs, we miss the chance to save the lives of other people who need healthy organs.

In fact, it is so important to do this that I believe we must do it all of the time. Every time there is a death, we should use

all the organs we can, even if the person did not give permission before death.

Dr. Tesfaye: I understand your position, Dr. Jones. But in my country, we have the opposite point of view. We believe that it is wrong to cut up a dead body, take out the heart and then put it into someone else's body.

Taking out parts of a dead person's body is a terrible thing to

do. When you do that, you violate that person's body. When I die, I want my body to be treated with dignity and respect, and not cut open so that my organs can be put into other people.

Dr. Houte: As you two show, using organs from the dead to help the living is a difficult question. There are good reasons both to do it and not to do it. In my country, we believe that it is all right to use organs from the dead but only under two conditions. First, the dead person must have given permission in writing, before he or she dies. Second, the person has to be dead. Sometimes this is clear. But many times it is not. We all have heard stories of near-death experiences—when we think someone is dead, but he or she comes back to life.

And what about the so-called "brain-dead"? There are many people who are kept alive by machines—machines that breathe for them. But their brains are dead. What should we do with them? Turn off the machines and let them die so that we can use their healthy organs? I wonder if that isn't just the same as killing them. So we must be very careful before making any decisions.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Which opinions do you agree with?
Check as many as you want.

Well, organ donation is OK, but we have to be sure the person is dead! We have to make this clear before we can talk about donating organs.



If people want to donate organs after they die, it's wonderful. But they should give permission before they die.



I like the idea that the dead should help the living. I don't mind giving my organs if that helps people.



Maybe it's OK to donate some organs, but not organs like the heart and the brain!



I don't like the idea of cutting up my body after I die. I'm sorry, but I can't help you!



Now exchange your ideas with a classmate.

TURN TO PAGE 87 FOR AN INTERACTION TIP.

LOOKING AT THE ISSUE

What would you do to help someone stay alive?

Would you...

- give blood?
- give a kidney to a dying family member?
- give your body to science after you die?
- register as a bone marrow donor?
- register as a donor at an eye bank?
- allow your doctor to transplant your organs after you die?

	Yes, I'd do it	No, I wouldn't do it.
give blood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
give a kidney to a dying family member?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
give your body to science after you die?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
register as a bone marrow donor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
register as a donor at an eye bank?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
allow your doctor to transplant your organs after you die?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why or why not?