ACTIVITY 6: WHO GET’S THE HEART

Notes to Instructor: Divide into teams of about 3 to 5 before describing the activity or distributing handouts. Often it is best for the teacher to organize the groups – this helps ensure that all students are involved and it encourages associations that might not otherwise occur.

This activity deals with organ donation and transplantation, which is becoming more and more common and is recognized as great way to improve health and prolong life for many people. If you can, you may want to discuss personal experiences (self, family member, friends, acquaintances) who are potential donors or who have donated or been the recipients of this great program. Some of your students may want to share similar experiences.

This activity works well with any group, high school age or above.

Provide at least one copy of the handout to each group.

Encourage creative, outside the box, thinking. Encourage debate and even disagreement – this fosters great English discussions. Anything goes, as long as everyone speaks only English.

It’s interesting to list the preferences of each group on the board and then compare, discuss and debate.

Presentation to Students: You are members of the “Medical Science and Ethics Committee” in your city. At the moment, you have seven patients who desperately need a heart transplant if they are to have any chance of living. All seven patients live near your hospital and are classified as “critically ill.” Without a transplant could die at any time.

You have just received news that the heart of a 16-year-old boy who was killed in an auto accident has become available for transplantation. Speed is extremely important as you decide which of the following patients, on the list to be provided, is to receive the heart. Not only might one of the patients die, but the donor heart will soon begin to deteriorate.

Consider: The age and sex of the donor have no relationship to the age and sex of the recipient. In other words, the heart of the 16 year old would work well in a 50-year-old woman, etc.

Read the information about each patient carefully. Discuss why each person should receive the heart. Rank the patients in order of preference:

   1 = first choice to receive the heart, to
   7 = last to receive the heart

On back of the paper, record reasons each patient should or should not receive the heart.

Prepare a report and assign a group member to present it to the class. Remember, this is a life-or-death situation for many of these patients. You want your views to be clearly understood and consider.
Candidates for the Heart:

1. **Amegneza Edorh**, female, age 57: Mrs. Edorh, a renowned poet and novelist from Nigeria, received the 1987 Nobel Prize for literature. An inspiration throughout the developing world because of her anti-colonialist writings, Mrs. Edorh has been confined to bed for the past five months with steadily deteriorating health. (Married: four children between the ages of 30 and 37)

2. **Soohan Kim**, male, age 12: Soohan, a junior high school student from South Korea, was born with a congenital heart defect. Doctors wanted to wait until he was a teenager to replace his heart, but his condition has worsened dramatically. He is being kept alive on a heart-lung machine.

3. **Alicia Pagan**, female, age 27: Ms. Pagan’s heart problems, though recent, seem to have a genetic basis because her twin sister (patient 4) is similarly affected. Although Ms. Pagan is a promising Ph.D. student in biochemistry at Georgetown University, her failing heart and kidneys have caused her to drop out of school temporarily. (Unmarried)

4. **Galia Feinstein**, female, age 27: Mrs. Feinstein is Ms. Pagan’s twin sister. Mrs. Feinstein, who holds a Master’s degree from Harvard University in Computer Science, currently operates a computer business with her husband. Mrs. Feinstein’s condition differs from that of her sister in that her kidneys have not been affected. (Married: one daughter, age 4)

5. **Amahl Abdulah**, male, age 34: Mr. Abdulah works for the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) and is considered the leading authority on Middle East military strategy. Like patient #2, Mr. Abdulah is being kept alive on a heart-lung machine. (He is a widower, his wife died in an automobile accident and he has three children, ages 6, 3 and 2.)

6. **Martha Rosales**, female, age 23: Ms. Rosales’ heart problems originated from a bout he had with scarlet fever, a serious childhood disease, while growing up in the slums of New York. Unemployed and on welfare, Ms. Rosales raised money for her operation through the contributions of people in her neighborhood. (Never married, she has four children, ages 8, 6, 5 and 1)

7. **Peter Jacobsen**, male, age 42: Mr. Jacobsen’s family has a history of heart disease. His father died from a heart attack at age 39. Considered the leading scientist in the world in the area of bacteriological diseases, Mr. Jacobsen has already had one heart transplant operation. Since his body rejected that heart three weeks ago, Mr. Jacobsen has been kept alive by an artificial heart. (Never married, no children)