

# The Right Words in Under 10 Minutes



Home + classroom safe (ages 5–16)

A simple, story-supported framework that helps parents, carers, and teachers explain organ and tissue health journeys — calmly, gently, and without medical jargon or pressure.



**Anita Demchenko**

Founder, Donate Buddies & Every Breath She Takes

Double-Lung Transplant Recipient,  
Parent/Carer Communication Resource (Ages 5–16)

“Most families don’t need more information — they need the right words when a child asks a big question. Donate Buddies makes those conversations feel calm, safe, and possible.”

Ages 5–16

Emotionally safe  
language

Under 10 Minutes

To use the framework

4-Step Framework

Safety → Simple words →  
Calm answer → Close

Home + Classroom Safe

For parents, carers &  
teachers

## A calm way to talk about big health journeys (Ages 5–16)

**For:** Parents, carers, teachers, hospital support teams & community organisations

**Solves:** “I don’t have the right words to explain this to a child.”

✓ Ages 5–16   ✓ Under 2 minutes to start   ✓ 4-step framework   ✓ Home + classroom safe

## What this is / what this is not

### ✓ What this IS

- Simple, calm language for real conversations
- Age-appropriate words a child can understand
- A tool to open the door — not close it

### ✗ What this is NOT

- Medical advice or clinical information
- A script about surgical procedures
- Pressure to decide, act, sign up, register, or “choose donation”
- Scare-based or graphic explanations
- A replacement for your care team

## The “Right Words” Framework (4 steps • under 2 minutes)

### Step 1 — Open with a Safety Sentence

Choose what feels natural:

- “You’re safe, and it’s okay to ask big questions about this.”
- “We can talk about this gently — and we can stop anytime you want.”
- “I might not have every answer, but I will always tell you the truth in a calm way.”

### Step 2 — Name the body part (one sentence only)

Keep it body-positive and calm:

- “Your heart is a strong pump in your chest that keeps blood moving around your body.”
- “It sends oxygen-rich blood to where you need it — to your brain, muscles, and tummy.”
- “It works all the time — even when you’re sleeping — to help your body keep going.”

### Step 3 — Explain what’s happening (without fear)

Pick one:

- “Sometimes the heart needs extra support, and the medical team helps decide what that looks like.”
- “Sometimes a transplant is discussed when a heart can’t do its job well enough.”
- “A transplant can involve organ donation, and we explain that gently and without scary details.”

### Step 4 — Keep it calm (Short vs Story)

- Short version: “That’s the main thing about the heart. You can ask me more questions whenever you’re ready — there are no silly ones.”
- Story version: “Captain Buddy can explain heart stuff gently with a story — would you like the short version or the story version?”
- Buddy version: “Harriet the Heart explains heart transplant and donation in kid words.”

## Quick Guide – DO / DON'T

### ✓ DO

- Start with safety – reassure before you explain
- Use body-positive, simple language
- Let the child lead with questions
- Pause and breathe – your calm is contagious

### ✗ DON'T

- Use medical jargon or clinical terms
- Make it about urgency, time pressure, or numbers
- Let adult worry lead the conversation
- Promise outcomes you can't guarantee

## Ready-to-use scripts (Common hard questions)

### “What does the heart do?”

Ages 5–9:	“Your heart is a strong pump that pushes blood around your body so you can play, grow, and rest.”
Ages 10–12:	“Your heart pumps blood to carry oxygen and nutrients around your body and take away what the body doesn't need.”
Ages 13–16:	“The heart is a muscular pump that keeps blood moving, delivering oxygen and helping the body work properly.”

### “Why is my heart sick (or tired)?”

Ages 5–9:	“Sometimes hearts get tired and need help. You didn't cause it. The doctors are helping your heart.”
Ages 10–12:	“It can happen for many reasons, and it's not your fault. The team is working out what your heart needs.”
Ages 13–16:	“There are different reasons, and it's not something you caused. The team is working out what helps most.”

### “What is a heart transplant?”

Ages 5–9:	“A transplant is when doctors give someone a new heart to help their body work better.”
Ages 10–12:	“A heart transplant is when a healthy heart is used to replace a heart that isn't working well.”
Ages 13–16:	“A heart transplant replaces a heart that can't do its job properly, with careful medical planning.”

### “What does heart donation mean?”

Ages 5–9:	“Donation means a gift that helps someone else. Sometimes a donated heart can help a person live.”
Ages 10–12:	“Heart donation means a heart can be given to help someone who needs a transplant.”
Ages 13–16:	“Heart donation may help someone receive a transplant. It's handled with respect and care.”

### “Does heart donation hurt the donor?”

Ages 5–9:	“No. Donation only happens in ways that don't hurt the donor. Grown-ups handle the details.”
Ages 10–12:	“No. Donation is managed carefully by trained teams, and it doesn't hurt the donor.”
Ages 13–16:	“No. Donation is handled respectfully by trained teams. We can keep details simple.”

### “Will I need a new heart?”

Ages 5–9:	“Maybe, maybe not. The doctors are checking what your heart needs, and we'll take it step by step.”
Ages 10–12:	“We don't know yet. Sometimes support is enough, and sometimes transplant is discussed. We'll go step by step.”
Ages 13–16:	“It's not decided yet. The team will look at how your heart is doing and talk through options.”

## The One-Minute Close (end well)

Choose one:

- “I'm really proud of you for asking about your heart. We can talk again anytime you need.”
- “Right now, you're cared for and not alone. Let's do something normal together – what would you like to do next?”
- “If you want, Harriet the Heart and Captain Buddy can help us find the right words – no rush at all.”

## For support teams – how organisations can use this

This mini-pack is designed to sit comfortably inside resources already offered by hospital support teams, school counsellors, and community health organisations. It requires no specialist training – simply print or share digitally as a gentle starting point for families, siblings, and classrooms navigating heart transplant and donation conversations. The language is written to complement, not replace, professional guidance.

Disclaimer: Educational resource only – not medical advice. Always follow the guidance of your treating care team.