

The Empathy Algorithm: Decoding Bias

(Year 9 - Ages 14-15)

Lesson 2 of 9

Lesson Summary

In Lesson 1, students learned that humans are wired to cooperate. In Lesson 2, they discover the "bug" in the system: Bias. This 60-minute lesson explores the psychology of "In-Group vs. Out-Group" dynamics. Students will participate in an "Identity Sorting" activity to feel how quickly divisions form. They will then analyze how cultural, religious, and social biases can act as invisible barriers to organ donation. Finally, they will learn strategies to "patch the code"—using Perspective-Taking and Active Listening to extend empathy beyond their own social circle.

Learning Intentions

Students will

- Define Unconscious Bias and In-Group/Out-Group dynamics.
- Investigate how cultural and social bubbles affect our willingness to help "strangers."
- Analyze specific myths or misconceptions about donation that exist within different community groups.
- Develop communication strategies to bridge the gap between different perspectives.

Success Criteria

Students can

- Explain why humans naturally find it easier to help "people like us" (Evolutionary explanation).
- Identify one specific barrier to donation for a diverse group (e.g., religious uncertainty, mistrust of medical systems).
- Demonstrate Active Listening techniques (e.g., reflecting back, open questions) in a role-play scenario.
- Reframe a "myth" into a "question" to address it respectfully.

Lesson Details

Time:	60 minutes
Year Level:	Year 9 (Ages 14-15)
Unit:	This is Lesson 2 of 9 in the series.
Educational Partner:	This lesson is adapted from resources provided by DonateLife

General Capabilities

Intercultural Understanding; Personal and Social Capability (Social Awareness); Critical and Creative Thinking; Ethical Understanding.



Curriculum Mapping and Links

Australian Curriculum (v9.0)

Subject	Strand	Content Descriptor
Health and Physical Education	Personal, Social and Community Health	<u>AC9HP10P04</u> : Analyze how... biases and stereotypes influence... relationships and health outcomes. (Focus on bias in healthcare)
Civics and Citizenship	Knowledge and Understanding	<u>AC9HS9K02</u> : The influence of... social cohesion and cultural diversity on Australia's democracy.
English	Literacy / Interacting	<u>AC9E9LY01</u> : Use interaction skills... to interpret and evaluate others' perspectives and arguments.

Queensland Curriculum (QCAA)

Subject	Syllabus	Content Description
Health and Physical Education	Year 9	Evaluate the impact of social and cultural factors on health decisions (Inclusion).
Civics and Citizenship	Year 9	How citizens can influence society (Social Cohesion).
English	Year 9	Listen to and create spoken texts that evaluate perspectives.



Resources Required

- Whiteboard/Smartboard.
- Resource: "The Bias Deck" (Cards featuring different community profiles with specific concerns/values).
- Student Worksheet: "The Algorithm Update: Debugging Bias."
- Video Hook: The "Blue Eyes / Brown Eyes" experiment clip (short version) or a modern equivalent on Unconscious Bias.
- Prop: Coloured stickers (Dot stickers) for the "Sorting" activity.

Skills

- Critical Reflection (Examining own biases).
- Cultural Competency (Respecting difference).
- Conflict Resolution (Navigating disagreement).
- Empathy (Cognitive vs. Emotional).

Teacher Preparation

- The Metaphor: "The Algorithm." Social media algorithms show us what we like. Our brains do the same. We have to manually "update" our code to see the full picture.
- The Sorting Activity: Have stickers ready. Place them on students' foreheads randomly. They must group themselves without speaking. Discuss how it felt to be "In" or "Out."
- Sensitivity: Discussing bias can be confronting. Set ground rules: "We judge ideas, not people." "We are all biased; it's how our brains work. The goal is to notice it."

Additional Information

This lesson tackles the "Us vs. Them" mentality that peaks in adolescence. By framing bias as a "System Error" rather than a moral failing, we make it safe for students to explore their own limitations. It prepares them for the practical advocacy work later in the unit by ensuring they can speak to everyone, not just their friends.

