

The Alchemist's Code: Decoding Altruism

(Year 7 - Ages 12-13)

Lesson 1 of 9

Lesson Summary

This 60-minute introductory lesson for Year 7 acts as the "Initiation" into the unit. It bridges the gap between primary school concepts and the deeper ethical discussions of high school by framing Organ and Tissue Donation as a form of "Modern Alchemy"—the magical-seeming scientific process of transforming a decision into life.

Students engage with the concept of Altruism (the selfless concern for others) not just as a virtue, but as a biological and social imperative. Through "The Alchemist's Experiment," students will explore why humans are motivated to help (Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic motivation) and discover how organ donation is the ultimate example of "Pure Alchemy"—transforming loss into legacy without expecting a reward. This sets a sophisticated yet magical tone for the 9-lesson unit.

Learning Intentions

Students will

- Define Altruism and distinguish between "Intrinsic" (internal) and "Extrinsic" (external) motivations for helping.
- Explore the concept of "Biological Alchemy"—understanding how one donor can transform the lives of up to 7 organ recipients and many more tissue recipients.
- Investigate the scientific and social value of donation as a form of active citizenship.
- Connect the abstract idea of empathy to real-world medical outcomes (e.g., sight, mobility, life).

Success Criteria

Students can

- Formulate a definition of Altruism in their own words (e.g., "Doing good when no one is watching").
- Classify different acts of kindness as either Intrinsic (inner feeling) or Extrinsic (reward-based).
- Identify the "Magic Numbers" of donation: 1 donor = 7 lives saved (organs) and many restored (tissues).
- Complete the "Alchemist's Equation" worksheet, mapping how a single decision leads to multiple positive outcomes.

Lesson Details

Time:	60 minutes
Year Level:	Year 7 (Ages 12-13)
Unit:	This is Lesson 1 of 9 in the series.
Educational Partner:	This lesson is adapted from resources provided by DonateLife

General Capabilities

Ethical Understanding; Personal and Social Capability; Critical and Creative Thinking; Literacy.



Curriculum Mapping and Links

Australian Curriculum (v9.0)

Subject	Strand	Content Descriptor
HASS (Civics & Citizenship)	Knowledge and Understanding	<u>AC9HS7K04:</u> Investigate how citizens can participate in Australia's democracy, including through... volunteering and contributing to the community. (Focus on donation as a silent form of volunteering/contribution)
Health and Physical Education	Personal, Social and Community Health	<u>AC9HP8P09:</u> Investigate different sources and types of health information and how these apply to their own and others' health choices. (Focus on informed decision making)
Science	Science Understanding (Biological)	<u>AC9S7U01:</u> Investigate the role of classification in ordering and organising the diversity of life... (Extension: Classifying body parts into 'Organs' vs 'Tissues' for donation)

Queensland Curriculum (QCAA)

Subject	Syllabus	Content Description
HASS (Civics & Citizenship)	Year 7	How citizens participate in their communities and the responsibilities of citizenship.
Health and Physical Education	Year 7	Plan and implement strategies to enhance their own and others' health, safety, relationships and wellbeing.
Science	Year 7	Classification helps organise the diverse group of organisms [and biological systems].



Resources Required

- Whiteboard/Smartboard.
- Video Hook: A short, impactful video showing a recipient's "moment of transformation" (e.g., a corneal transplant recipient seeing for the first time, or a heart recipient running).
- Student Worksheet: "The Alchemist's Journal" (Contains the "Altruism Equation" and a "Motivation Sorting Hat" activity).
- Cards: "Motive Cards" (Scenarios printed on cards, e.g., "Sharing lunch because you want a favour" vs. "Sharing lunch because your friend is hungry").
- Prop (Optional): An "Alchemist's Vial" (a jar with glitter or coloured water) to represent the "Elixir of Life" (Organ Donation) during the hook.

Skills

- Ethical Reasoning (Understanding motivation).
- Scientific Literacy (Understanding the biological multiplier effect).
- Critical Thinking (Distinguishing between types of motivation).
- Empathy (Connecting with the needs of others).

Teacher Preparation

- Core Metaphor: "The Alchemist." In folklore, alchemists tried to turn lead into gold. In this lesson, we learn how Donors turn a difficult moment (end of life) into "Human Gold" (saving lives). This metaphor appeals to the 12-13 age group's interest in fantasy/sci-fi while grounding it in reality.
- Key Language:
 - Altruism: Selfless concern for the well-being of others.
 - Intrinsic Motivation: Doing it for the feeling inside (The "Hero's Reason").
 - Extrinsic Motivation: Doing it for a reward or praise (The "Celebrity's Reason").
 - Biological Alchemy: The medical process of transplantation.
- Prepare the "Motive Cards" for the sorting activity.

Additional Information

This lesson draws on the "Motivation to Give" themes designed for older students but scaffolds them for Year 7s. At 12-13 years old, students are beginning to form their own moral compass. They are moving away from "following rules" (primary school) to "making choices based on values" (high school).

By framing Organ and Tissue Donation as the ultimate "Intrinsic Choice"—where the donor creates a massive impact without ever seeing the result—we tap into the adolescent desire for purpose and "hidden superpowers." This lesson avoids graphic medical details, focusing instead on the wonder of the connection between a donor and the lives they transform.

