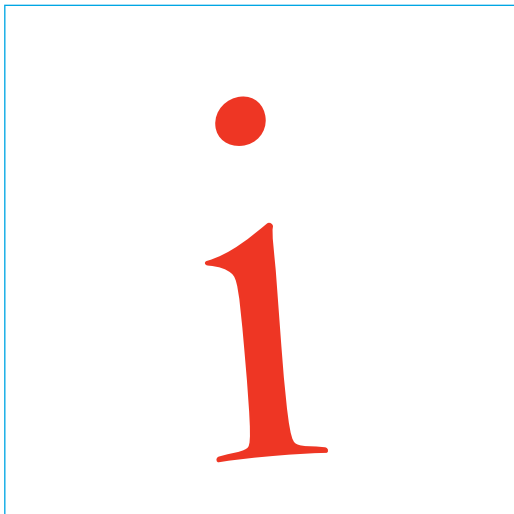




# WHY I'M GIVING MY BODY TO SCIENCE

IF THE SOUL/BODY ARE ONE,  
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO A SOUL  
IF ITS BODY PARTS MOVE TO  
A NEW PERSON?

By BETSY ROBINSON / *Photo illustrations by* AMY GUIP



I'm giving me away — all of me. But putting my organs up for adoption and leaving my body to science was not an easy choice. For years I've had both a will and a living will, but I couldn't decide what to do with my corpse, so I avoided talking about it and never signed the organ donor line on my driver's license — not because I was reluctant

to help someone, but because of ambivalence and one nagging fear. We've all heard the stories of organ recipients developing new feelings and attractions that turn out to be those of the donors, so what happens to my spirit if my various parts — my heart, my kidneys, my corneas, my whatever — continue to experience life after I've departed? What if my spirit ends up tethered to a part of me living inside somebody else?

## Calling the Experts

i

needed answers, so my first call was to Mehmet Oz, M.D., bestselling author of *You: An Owner's Manual*. Oz pioneered the use of healers during his heart surgeries at New York Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City and holds a mystical as well as scientific view of medicine (see "Dr. Oz Finds His Teacher," *S&H* Nov./Dec. 2007). He confirmed that cells have memory: "But it's not as simple as many portray," he said. "The individual cells probably remember their environment and affect surrounding cells in very profound ways that we have trouble understanding with today's science." In other words, we don't know how memory works at a cellular level. It could be merely local memory, or something bigger. It's that unknown "bigger" that scared me.

My next call was to cell biologist Bruce Lipton, Ph.D., author of *Biology of Belief: Unleashing of Consciousness, Matter, & Miracles*: "The general public has been given the idea that cellular memory is like cerebral memory — that cells remember past history," he

explained. "It isn't that at all. I believe that cells are connected by antennas to an identity; not a physical identity, but an energetic identity — just like a broadcast." Lipton used the analogy of a television set with an antenna — TVs download programs, but the programs aren't stored inside the TVs. When cells have an expression, they reflect a memory, but the memory comes from somewhere else. "Where?" I wanted to know. "We have no idea," he answered.

According to Lipton, cells form a pattern of receiving certain kinds of information from an unknown source, and that gives them an identity. So if you transplant an organ, its cells continue downloading from the source of the original owner. Eventually, the organ may become connected to two sources — the recipient's and the donor's. "I think that the spirit of the donor is still connected to the planet in this regard," he says, "because a dialogue is still continuing." This is my worst fear — being stuck to somebody else's body.

I asked Lipton if he plans to donate his organs and he laughed. "I don't think anybody would want any parts of mine when I get finished with them. But seriously, it's a very interesting consideration, because you are extending your life by proxy."



My next call, to physical therapist and healer Tanya Tarail, cheered me. Tarail specializes in traumatic injury through her company, Anatomical Arts ([iahp.com/tanya-tarail](http://iahp.com/tanya-tarail)). Describing a kidney transplant from a live donor to one of her patients, she said she witnessed the donor's energies exiting the organ: "I sensed it, I saw it, I felt it. I could feel waves of emotion passing. I felt the donor's personality passing out of the kidney via waves through my body." Tarail has also done cadaver dissection and believes that she witnessed the spirits of the donors supporting the process: "The bodies were on the table, and the energies of the bodies were right there next to the bodies. They were kind of excited about the process of what we were doing with them. They were these helping kinds of people. This was just part of their service."

## Hope from the Man Who Chases Hearses

**m**y last conversation, the one that finally dissipated my fear, was with Gil Hedley, Ph.D., an anatomy teacher with a doctorate in theological and philosophical ethics from the University of Chicago Divinity School (see "How I Fell in Love with Fat," *SH* Nov./Dec. 2007): "It's my feeling from having a lot of experience with cadaver donor gifts that the union of body/mind/spirit is only for as long as you're alive," he said. "So long as the form is animate, moving or moved by the spirit, so long as the winds of the spirit are blowing through that form, there is union. But the spirit blows where it will, and it blows out of that form and moves on. The form has energy because  $E=mc^2$ , and it's a particular kind of energy because of the shapes of the form, but it's not the same as what was the body/mind/spirit — any more than my shoe is me when I take it off. My imagined scenario for the spirit who's left this body as a gift isn't that it hangs around making sure that the body gets used well. Spirit has no interest in the body because spirit is not having a material experience."

Hedley reminded me that there are nearly 100,000 Americans desperately waiting for organ donations. He told me of the dire need for donations of whole bodies for scientific study and the training of health-care professionals and others — massage therapists, naturopaths, chiropractors, and yoga teachers. "Imagine you're on a raft going down the Colorado River," he said. "And you don't have a geologist to help you appreciate the canyon and to grow from the experience of encountering the glory of the canyon. It's very much like that for people who don't have an explicit anatomical background in their professional training. I teach people who've been teaching anatomy for 20 years and have never been in a laboratory. They find they can correct things that they've been teaching that are off a degree, or they can find new things that they didn't even know were there because they weren't covered properly."

"Donating your body is such a fabulous gift," he continued. "I just wish everybody would do it. Every time I see a hearse, I think, oh, if only. Because there's such a big need."

*(continued on page 77)*

## FAITH LEADERS ON ORGAN DONATION

As part of April National Donate Life Month activities, New York Organ Donor Network ([DonateLifeNY.org](http://DonateLifeNY.org)) has gathered the following quotes from religious leaders:

### CATHOLIC

CARDINAL EDWARD EGAN

*Archbishop of New York*

"The commitment of one person to give the gift of life to another mirrors an essential foundation upon which the teachings of Christ and the theology of our Church are based."

### JEWISH

RABBI DR. MOSHE D. TENDLER

*Professor of Medical Ethics at Yeshiva University, New York*

"No greater honor can be bestowed on an individual than that of being a savior of as many as eight lives through (organ) donation."

### BUDDHIST

ROBERT A. THURMAN

*Chair of Religious Studies and Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Buddhist studies at Columbia University, New York*

"The gift of the body is a very great benefit and a boon . . . a karmic advantage to a person."

### CHRISTIAN INTERDENOMINATIONAL

REV. DR. JAMES A. FORBES, JR.

*Former Senior Minister, The Riverside Church of New York City*

"The opportunity to donate organs and tissues may be one of the most effective ways to counteract the pervasive selfishness of these modern times."

### ISLAM

SHEIKH OMAR S. ABU-NAMOUS

*Imam, Islamic Cultural Center of New York*

"An organ donated is an ongoing charity that will continue to be rewarded as long as the donated organs live."

### HINDU

UMA V. MYSOREKAR, M.D.

*President of the Hindu Temple Society of North America*

"When we give charity by way of our bodies, it is an act

# My Body Becomes a Gift

**S**o I made arrangements to donate my body (see box, right). Now all my best friend has to do is make one phone call and the body donation

people will pick me up and pay for everything. I'm still a bit uncomfortable . . . but not as uncomfortable as I'd be to have others clean up after me and spend money on the disposal of what I believe will be the equivalent of old shoes — shoes that might save somebody's life or educate health-care practitioners who will save somebody.

Of course there could be problems: my spirit might get waylaid. But I've decided to risk it. I'm choosing to leave this life in service, and I'm trusting that the very desire to help will make whatever comes next joyful — both for me and for anyone who benefits from my very well-used parts.

SC&H

Betsy Robinson is managing editor of SC&H.

## IF YOU WANT TO DONATE

GIL HEDLEY SAYS THAT SOME PEOPLE who inquire about donating their bodies want their cadavers used by a particular type of student — massage therapists, yoga teachers, women doctors. He explains to those people, "You're not quite ready if you're making all these rules. What you're telling me is that you haven't thought it through."

If and when you are ready to let go of your remains, here's what to do:

**M** Notify your next of kin and ensure their cooperation, as they will actually make the donation. Signing a donor card is not enough.

**M** Organ donation and whole body donation are mutually exclusive and require different arrangements. Donated organs must be removed within 24 hours; then the body can be held for ceremony and disposition. Donated bodies will be used in their entirety, then cremated; the ashes can be returned to donor families.

**M** Whole body donation is generally a local phenomenon. The 1968 Uniform

Anatomical Gift Act qualifies dental and medical schools as authorized donor recipients. You can register with a local medical school.

For schools in your area, go to LivingBank.org.

The National Body Donor Program in St. Louis, Missouri, accepts whole body donations locally, but distributes them nationally. Contact Tim Cusick, National Body Donor Program, 2135 Chouteau, St. Louis, Missouri 63103, 314-862-6199.

**M** Organ and tissue donation can be done locally or through national registries, which will pick up your body, file a death certificate, and pay all costs involved.

LivingBank.org has a registry and extensive information.

LifeLegacy.org, 888-774-4438, a federally approved nonprofit research organ and tissue bank, offers a registry for anatomical donation, which is an option even if the donor does not meet the requirements for transplant.

B.R.



**CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY,  
THEOLOGY AND HEALTH  
DUKE UNIVERSITY**

**1st Annual Meeting of the Society for  
Spirituality, Theology and Health:  
"Spirituality, Health and Human  
Flourishing: Meaning? Measurement?  
Implications?"**

**R. David Thomas** June 25-27,  
Executive Conference Center, 2008  
Duke Fuqua School of Business Durham, NC

**Keynote Speaker**  
Bill Koper, MD, CEO,  
UNC Health System

**Plenary Speakers:**  
Ellen Jellar, PhD  
Jeff Levin, PhD  
Ken Parmenter, PhD  
John Swinton, PhD

More information at  
<http://www.duke.edu/spiritualityandhealth.org/education/training.html>  
Contact Karl Lauterbach, [karl.lauterbach@duke.edu](mailto:karl.lauterbach@duke.edu) or 919-686-7888  
Center for Aging and Human Development



**INSTITUTE OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
Community Consciousness Center  
CAREER TRAINING AND PERSONAL GROWTH  
COUNSELORS, ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS, RESEARCH  
EDUCATION, BUSINESS AND HEALTH SERVICES

M.A. • PH.D. • CERTIFICATIONS  
EXPERIENTIAL • QUALITATIVE • ONLINE LEARNING COURSES  
NEW ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITIES

650.495.4430 • WWW.ITP.EDU

