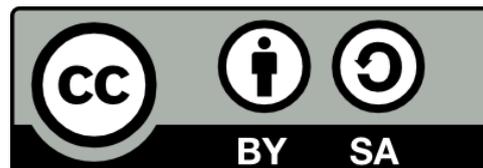




MAKING SENSE*

Laura Ashton and Sheree Veysey



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***EASY ACCESS VERSION**

Duration –10 Mins

Genre – Comedy/ Sci-Fi

Tags/Themes - body image, eating disorder, eating difficulties, society and norms, worldview, money, social exclusion, stigma and discrimination

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Making Sense

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Summary - Students are studying an alien culture and finding it hard going! These 'humans' don't make a lot of sense — why do they restrict their food and do such bizarre things to their bodies?

Discussion points for study – Why do you think the writers have used 'aliens' in this script? How does looking at our society through an alien's eyes make us think about our culture, beliefs and behaviours? What are the main themes this script is trying to teach us? How might you support a healthier body image at your school or amongst your friends?

Cast/ Characters

STUDENT 1 – *Any gender, any size or shape – youth, school or university aged*

STUDENT 2 – *as above*

STUDENT 3 – *Mature aged/ wiser. Sounds more experienced than the others.*

(Wardrobe suggestion – as 'alien-like' as possible. Be creative with costuming – they should not look 'human'.)

Setting – See below — an alien student's room/study hall/space-ship.

Props – A 'tablet' of some kind that the students refer to.

Notes to Director – *The authors are happy for this script to be further workshopped in order to improve its impact. Actor diversity is encouraged. The Director is welcome to play with the theme of aliens (for example using bizzare, strange or minimalist costumes).*

A staging idea from the authors: Dress the actors in all black with white/fluoro tape used on certain parts of their body. The actors are then lit by ultra violet light, so the white then suggests quite strange alien beings of weird shapes, and the skill required from the actors is then closer to a radio-play. A screen upon which relevant slides are projected is at the other side of the stage. Slides illustrate items like reality television, diet ads and plastic surgery as mentioned in the script.

Making Sense - BEGIN

Stage directions: *Two aliens are seated to the side of the stage, where they are studying for a test.*

Student 1: This information does not compute. It just makes no sense.

Student 2: I know.

Student 1: I hate this subject. When the term finishes I'm throwing away my intergalactic history book!

Student 2: Okay, but for now we need to study! The exam is close. Let's start with what we do understand.

Student 1: Alright. These creatures ...

Student 2: Practise saying 'humans'. It's what they called themselves, and you'll get more marks. Humans loved to organise themselves into boxes.

Student 1: But intelligent beings are too complex to fit into simple boxes!

Student 2: I know.

Student 1: So these creatures ...

Student 2: Humans ...

Student 1: ... would sort themselves into nations, ethnicities, cultures, and races.

Student 2: Aren't those all the same things?

Student 3: Negative. Human ethnicity and culture often relate to which nation a person considers they belong to — but human nations can have many different ethnicities and many different cultures. Race is a simplistic concept to describe the genetic diversity of the human civilisation.

Student 1: Confusing.

Student 3: Humans have a need to categorise themselves. Classes, castes, personality types, genders ...

Student 1: Didn't they used to think that everyone had to be an A or a B?

Student 2: 'A's were supposedly the opposite of 'B's. And they'd dress the baby 'A's in one colour and the 'B's in another — it was a terrible thing if you got them confused!

Students 1: Bizarre. These categories are very confusing. But when I look at the way they used to eat — especially in the Western world, after about 1950 — well it just seems dumb!

Student 2: You must be missing something. All the evidence suggests these were intelligent life forms.

- Student 1:** Did you not look at the time capsules we were given in class?
- Student 2:** Ah yes, the time capsules with the 'tele-vision'. Specifically 'reality tele-vision'. Hmm ... Well **some** of the evidence suggests these were quite intelligent life forms ... And they needed H₂O, and they needed food in order to survive.
- Student 1:** And yet it seems they were obsessed with the restriction of this food.
- Student 2:** Their DNA, combined with the way they ate, resulted in the huge range of shapes and sizes that humans came in.
- Student 1:** That's what makes it so strange. They needed food, they enjoyed food, yet ...
- Student 2:** In the absence of being able to fly or body shift — it was one of the most enjoyable things they had.
- Student 1:** Still, it's just mad that they all tried to be the same. Some constantly tried to consume less than what their bodies wanted ...
- Student 2:** And so their bodies reacted!
- Student 1:** Predictable.
- Student 2:** Their brains were deprived of food, and so they became obsessed with it. They found themselves caught in cycles of obsession, unable to think of anything but food, food, size, food ...
- Student 1:** These humans sure put a lot of weight on the size of their bodies.
- Student 2:** In the end, humans blamed themselves for their obsession. Some needed fixers — doctors or therapists — to help them. These fixers would then diagnose them as ill and prescribe different types of food intake and body movement programmes to change their shapes and sizes!
- Student 1:** They constantly judged each others' bodies as if there was a single **right** way to look. And their 'ideal' look was only genetically achievable for a small proportion of them for a short period of their lives. I just can't get the logic of it. These were supposed to be intelligent creatures.
- Student 2:** (*correcting Student 1 for using the word creatures*) Humans!
- Student 1:** ...right. Their attitudes towards food and their bodies made no sense. How will I explain it in the exam when I don't understand it myself?
- Student 3:** You are looking at this all wrong. Stop thinking about logic or sense. Stop thinking about humans doing things for their health, general wellbeing, spirituality, customs or for enjoyment. Think about one thing only, and it will all make sense.
- Student 2:** Well?
- Student 3:** Marketing.
- Student 1&2:** Mar-Quet-Ting?

Student 3: The human action of promoting and selling products or services, practised by special humans know as marketers, to gain more of the property commonly known as money.

Student 2: Money. They thought it was quite important, didn't they?

Student 3: So important that eventually it seemed as though money was what made the Earth go round.

Student 1: Wow.

Student 2: But what's this money got to do with their food habits?

Student 3: As money made the Earth go round, the entire civilisation wanted more and more of it. Marketing created various needs — needs humans would then spend money to meet.

Student 1: Incredible.

Student 3: What made it ingenious was that the need was imaginary! Humans tricked each other that they needed all sorts of things — huge places to live, flavoured water, expensive underwear — when in reality they didn't.

In the case of food and body image, these marketers discovered that the more unrealistic they made the pictures of the bodies people 'should have' the more effective the marketing was! Even after research proved that food ingestion programmes — 'diets' were ineffective, marketers found it didn't matter. People hoped to look 'different' and so people kept spending money! More money was spent on food ingestion programmes than on human welfare.

Student 1: What was this money stuff like? It must have been irresistible?

Student 3: It was originally objects, then bits of paper, then just numbers.

Student 2: Just numbers?

Student 3: Just numbers.

Student 2: What a ridiculous thing to organise a whole species around.

Student 1: So this is why humans were obsessed with their bodies and what they consumed.

Student 3: Exactly. There was more money to be made when humans were dissatisfied with their bodies than there was in encouraging them to be happy.

Student 2: Made possible by the marketing of these programmes.

Student 3: All sorts of programmes — gym memberships, exercise equipment, food products, control garments, cellulite creams, self-help books, fat burning supplements, muscle building supplements, plastic surgery ...

Student 1&2: They did surgery on plastic?!

Student 3: No, that's what they called it, the surgical modification of their bodies for the purpose of appearing more like each other.

Student 1: This society is beginning to sound rather ... sad.

Student 3: There were trillions of humans not feeling good about themselves. In marketing unrealistic bodies, the marketers had created the perfect product for sale, because no human had or could have one. Yet the entire civilisation was being told that they could have it if they just tried harder, just sacrificed more. Everybody was encouraged to pick at themselves and each other to point out the ways in which their unique, genetically diverse bodies, were just not good enough.

Student 2: (*Muses*) All of them believing their bodies weren't good enough. Why ... I'm feeling some sadness!

Student 1: Sad or not, I bet we ace this exam!

Student 2: (*Continues to muse*) It is interesting how things make sense once you factor this money thing in ...

Student 1: Yes. These humans were not so unintelligent ... they were just, perhaps ...

Student 3: I think the word you're looking for is deceived.

Making Sense - END