

When my daughter asks me why

by [Daniel Donaghy](#) in the [August 26, 2008](#) issue

Maggie, her grandparents' dog,
can't come with us to the zoo,
we say she's not feeling well
and try to leave it at that,
bring up tigers and polar bears,
offer Twizzlers and juice,
but all she wants is the dog,
asks if we gave her medicine,
when will she come back
so we can fix her with
a *screwdriver*, today's new word,
so many new sounds,
so much new these days
we can't keep track
of all the people and places
she knows, and the names
of things, reminding us
we cannot save her
from the word, or save
ourselves from having to
explain what *dead* means,
as if we've waded through
all we were taught
and emerged on one side
or the other, unable
to dismiss or believe
there's one true voice
that could reveal a pattern
we've never picked up on
in the sunlight and trees,
some force behind *why*

that could lead us beyond
our parents' loving euphemisms,
beyond *we simply don't know*.