Jojo’s Answers about Death
A Conversation for Ages 5-9
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JoJo answered my questions about death over a period of two-and-a half years, beginning when she was five years old. JoJo’s mom had asked me to talk to her following the death of her grandmother. She thought that, as a hospice volunteer, I might be able to share valuable insights with her child.

I was happy to apply my hospice training to the task! It was the first time I had used it with a child. As a hospice volunteer, I don’t push a certain philosophy or religion; I let the dying speak, and give them a safe space to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. And that’s what I did with JoJo; I asked questions, I listened, and I took notes.

JoJo did the talking, giving me her own thoughts and ideas about what death and dying means.

To lend different perspectives to JoJo’s ideas, and to include her terrifically-diverse school population, I tossed in a few cultural facts her classmates and their families might appreciate. JoJo and I hope this book inspires discussion before the death of a loved one occurs, and makes talking about and dealing with death—something that happens to us all—a little easier for you and those you love.

Robert MacDonalp, 2015
Dedicated with gratitude to everyone in hospice who works and volunteers among those approaching the end of their lives.
Dear JoJo,

Let me tell you what I have learned about death on a farm. We have around 3,400 cows. They die from time to time and it does not get easier.

In the past 12 months we have lost family, friends and co-workers who have been a part of our days and nights on the farm. All four are missed. All four will always be remembered. All four we would rather have back in our days than having their portraits hanging in our milk room.

I think that farmers are more intimately acquainted with the cycle of death than others may be. While we have this perspective on dying, we may not have a greater understanding but we certainly know that death is part of life.

I used to think one of the benefits of raising children on a farm was a relationship and understanding of death, not necessarily a blessing. But it is truly an opportunity to talk openly about dying and death. I think we dairy farmers have a more intimate relationship with death given the oftentimes solitary nature of our lives. We have the chance to think a bit more about death and life and appreciate the natural order of things.

Jenni Tilton Flood
Flood Brothers Farm
Clinton, ME
Dear JoJo,

We live on a Vermont dairy farm with around 100 milking cows. Every year around 20% leave the farm. Some are sold. Some die and so a farm family is very familiar with death.

Like my granddaughter Ella. A few years ago her favorite cow, Pixie, died of cancer at 12. Even today, Ella has a stuffed animal she calls Pixie.

Ella knows a lot about death, much more than many young girls. We had guests here, a multi-generational family group. The grandfather had cancer. Ella said to him, “I’m so sorry you are going to die.” She held his hand.

It was awkward. But not for Ella. And not for the grandfather.

He came to me later and said it was a very touching moment. All because a little girl learned on a farm that death is part of the cycle of life.

Beth Kennett
Liberty Hill Farm
Rochester, VT
You were wondering about your Grandma dying...

WHY?
Because I miss her.

Why do you miss her?

Because I don’t want to lose the angel kiss on my face. She gave me that.
What does **Dying** mean? When you pass away.

Do you worry that your daddy misses his mom now that she’s **DEAD**?

**Yes.** Why?
Because now she's an **angel** who watches over me and my sister Francie.

I'm sad that my dad can't see her.

I know she can see us, though.
Where is she... now that she **Died**?

*In Heaven*

**Where is Heaven?**
In the sky.
Where would Heaven be? If you are . . .

Hindu
Heaven would be the joy you make in everyday life.

Judeo-Christian
Heaven or Gan Eden.

Muslim
Heaven would be Seven Heavens—you can choose one.
Zulu
This would be Heaven right here, now.

Native American
This would be Heaven right here, now.
Some people think Heaven is here, now.
All people who believe in Heaven after death think that...

Heaven is a beautiful place.

Life after death is Paradise.
When do we Die?

When we get old or really sick.
Are you afraid to die?

No, because it won’t happen for a while.

Will you be an angel when you die?

Yes.
Are you afraid people you love will die?

No. Well, maybe. Sometimes.

Does everybody die?

Yes.

When do young people die?

Sometimes accidents or war . . . or just because.
Think about yourself or ask your family:

Who takes you to Heaven? Do you get to come back from Heaven?

Do some kids die when they are sick?

Why can doctors fix some people but not others?

What does it mean to die?

Do you think it hurts more when someone dies suddenly or over time?

When will we really know where people go when they die?
Will you get to see your dog in Heaven?
Do dogs have the same Heaven?
Where do the leaves on trees go in the Winter after they die and fall off in Autumn?

They fall on the ground and new leaves arrive. Some are just babies.

Why do they come back in the Spring? To grow again.
Where does the sun go at night?

It goes to sleep.

Do the stars and moon sleep during the day?

Kinda. You can't see them, but ... you know they are there.
Do you love your daddy even when you can’t see him?

Yes.

Does your daddy still love you when he can’t see you? Yes.
Were you afraid to go to school the first day?

Cried a lot. I missed my mom and dad.

Were you afraid to jump into the lake the first time? No. Yes.

Or take the chairlift to the top of the mountain and snowboard all the way down? Fun.
Never be afraid of what you haven’t done.
Be brave and happy for all you can do.
And for everyone who loves you—whether you can see them or not—whether they are alive or dead.
Now tell me why we all die
and why flowers die in the winter
and grow again in the spring?
A Message From Roberta’s friend,
Alan Hugenot: a scientist, a man of the sea, and a delightful messenger about his “Near Death Experience” (NDE).

Dear JoJo,

Many years ago—when I was much older than you are now, and much, much younger than I am now—I died in a motorcycle accident.

I was gone for about twelve hours. I was in a coma (which is when you don’t move or do things on your own, and folks worry if you will “come back” at all because you don’t talk or open your eyes). But, I was lucky enough to come back and live again in the same body, and I learned something very important that day while I was gone. I learned that dying is not the end of life, that there is a life after death.

I felt no pain, even though I’d been terribly hurt—broken bones, big cuts, emergency surgery. I wasn’t even in the hospital room where my body was; I had left my body but I was still me. I went to a very wonderful, loving place.

I felt so comfortable and safe. I met a person... who was more like a bright light, all glowing. I call this person a “being of light”—what some people who had experiences like mine might call an angel.
I saw loved ones who died years before me: my grandmother and grandfather, and even my favorite dog. All these folks came to find me, to hug me and welcome me and help me find my way over there.

I didn’t get to stay long because I had to come back to live this life doing things that I loved like science and building ships and serving in the Navy.

My Mom and Dad are both waiting for me there. And, some day it will be my time to go home to them and I’ll be ready to feel that peaceful light and love again.

I’m glad you’re talking to Roberta about dying. Sometimes, we all reach an end to our lifetimes. I am living proof that death is just the other end of being born and is just as filled with joy.

Much love,

Captain Alan Hugenot, Engr.Sc.D
## Appendix:
### Hospices Enrolled with Better Impact for Volunteer Management System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospice Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VNA of Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties</td>
<td>Colchester, VT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weinstein Hospice</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions Life Care/Hospice of Wake County</td>
<td>Raleigh, NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Hospice</td>
<td>Ridley Park, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Health of Carolinas</td>
<td>Raeford, NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospice of Southern Maine</td>
<td>Scarborough, ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Health &amp; Hospice Care</td>
<td>Merrimack, NH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Dempsey Center for Cancer Support and Hope</td>
<td>Lewiston, ME</td>
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<tr>
<td>VNA Hospice of Philadelphia</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornerstone Hospice &amp; Palliative Care</td>
<td>Tavares, FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord Regional VNA</td>
<td>Concord, NH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avow Hospice</td>
<td>Naples, FL</td>
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Since 2014, Cabot has donated this system to these non-profit hospice organizations.
Programs & partnerships that reflect the values that drive our co-op

Promoting healthy bodies and healthy communities

Enrichment of schools

For Families

For Scouts

For Seniors

And supporting emotional and physical well-being around the full circle of life.
Partnering with UVM Medical School on continuing education certification in end of life care.