"It's time to move on." I can still remember people telling me that. It had been just about a year. They meant well. They thought it was "tough love" I guess, but that isn't how loss works. It isn't an uncommon thing to hear after losing an infant. I was shocked when I was in the hospital, and the OB director warned us. She had lost babies of her own to stillbirth, and she knew how the world responded. Try as they might and loving as they may be, most of the world just doesn’t understand. But then she made a good point: The only way anyone could ever understand this loss is to live it first hand. I don’t know about you, but I wouldn’t wish that on anyone.

It's been five years since I lost my son. Have I moved on? Yes. Am I happy again? Very. Are there still days when it hits me? There will always be days when it hits me. You do not get over losing your child. You learn to live with it, but it’s in a new normal. That’s our reality.

Upon finding out that you’re pregnant, there’s something more than a child inside you that is growing. Yes, there is a life made through you and from you, but there’s an indescribable, never felt before kind of love, purpose, protectiveness, joy, and completion. It’s an experience incomparable to any other.

From the first sight of the heart beating on an ultrasound at six weeks, I was crazy in love with my son. From the first flutter I felt of him moving, I bonded with that little life. From the moment I found out his gender and chose his name, he had an identity. Through every step of my pregnancy, my little one took on more and more of a personhood. I envisioned his face, his laugh, and his tears. I imagined his smell, his touch, his voice. I pictured telling him about the tooth fairy, helping with homework, and midnight snuggles after bad dreams. I imagined him as a teenager, a groom, a father. I anxiously anticipated the day that I heard him call me "mom" or say "I love you." Then in a stilled heart beat, it was all gone. No, scratch that. It was all violently ripped away.

There is nothing simple about healing from the loss of a child. There is nothing that will ever allow a mother to move on in a matter of months. For me, and I have no idea how I fit in with other moms, it took a good two years. And still to this day, I dread his birthday because I have to celebrate it at a gravesite. I dread Mother's Day because nobody acknowledges me as a mom. I dread the holidays because every other member of my family is there, but he's not. I've got about four days a year when it envelops me for a brief time. I am happy the other 361 days. I'd say I've done pretty well moving on considering the magnitude of the loss.

When I lost my son, a part of my soul died. I did not go "back to normal." Over the course of time (and it was my timetable, no-one else's), I learned to live in a
new normal. But an angel's footprint is forever in my heart. I will spend the rest of my life thinking "He would be five today ... He should be graduating this year.... I'll never see him hit a homerun.... I wish I could hear him call me mom just once...."

There's only one way to keep my son close to me: By remembering him. I need to say his name. I need to hear others say it too. It's pure joy to hear. I need to talk about my son without others averting their eyes, shifting in their seats, or getting uncomfortable.

On a happiness scale of 1-10, I am at about a nine. It’s been five years. I live a very happy, full, joyous life, with my son's memory tucked safely in my heart. I learned to live in a new normal. It had to happen in my time and in God's time ... not someone else’s time.