

# First Candle: My Angel is Always in My Mother's Day Picture

Allison Jacobson



Saving babies. Supporting families.

*First Candle's efforts to support families during their most difficult times and provide new answers to help other families avoid the tragedy of the loss of their baby are without parallel.*

*“Twenty-three years ago, my firstborn child, Connor, died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). He was born in April, and I’ll always remember how incredibly significant that first Mother’s Day was for me. Little did I know at the time that the next Mother’s Day, I would be hiding in my house, with a torrent of emotions overwhelming me. Connor died in August of that same year at three months. and 24 days old.”*

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Needless to say, the most powerful emotion was raw, agonizing grief. It’s impossible to describe the physical pain you feel when your baby has died. And on Mother’s Day, when other moms are celebrating, you realize how incredibly alone you really are. You cannot talk to your other mom friends because both you and they feel so awkward, unsure of what to say.

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As a friend, how do you celebrate the day while someone else has lost her reason for being? And as the person who is grieving, how do you rise above your sadness to smile and wish your friend a happy Mother’s Day?

No, for everyone involved, it is much easier to hide in your home and wait for the day to be over.

And then, to be honest, there’s the anger and resentment. Why would God allow this to happen to you?! I’ll admit to many times thinking of abusive and negligent parents whose babies were still alive. Yet for me, who did everything right, my baby is dead. It takes many years for this anger to abate. One day I finally realized that no one is immune to tragedy and everyone has their own story. The answer to the question “Why me?” is “Why not me?” Who am I to never experience sorrow or tragedy?

I went on to have three more amazing children who now are 22, 18, and 15 years old. Each of them, in their own way, has helped me heal. The pain has softened, but there will always be a sense

of sadness and longing for what might have been.

I channeled my grief into activism and am now the CEO of First Candle, the non-profit that works to eliminate sleep-related infant death and provides bereavement support to families who have lost a baby to Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Stillbirth. When I speak with a young mom who has recently lost her baby, I'm transported right back to that moment when my own precious baby died. It is hard to believe it was 23 years ago. In some ways, it feels like a lifetime ago.

In truth, I am a different person, wiser, and at peace. What I can offer young moms is hope. When they see me, they see that indeed you can survive the heartbreaking grief.

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***“When my second son Spencer was born, I started celebrating Mother’s Day again. I love looking at the picture every year as my family grows up and my children have become young adults. And somewhere in those pictures, I always see their little guardian angel, their brother Connor.”***

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When my second son Spencer was born, I started celebrating Mother’s Day again. I love looking at the picture every year as my family grows up and my children have become young adults. And somewhere in those pictures, I always see their little guardian angel, their brother Connor. It could be a butterfly, a sunbeam, or an orb over one of their shoulders, but I always know he is there, my firstborn who made me a mom that first Mother’s Day.

**Disclosure:** *The author is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of First Candle, Inc., a Connecticut not-for-profit 501c3 corporation.*

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