

Getting Through Christmas

A space to pause, notice, and plan



For men living without their children
in Stockport

Welcome

If you're reading this, it might be because
Christmas feels heavy this year.

Maybe you're missing your children. Maybe
you've lost a child. Maybe family life just isn't
how you hoped it would be.

Whatever the reason, please know this: you are
not alone in feeling this way. Many dads quietly
carry the same ache, even if they rarely speak
about it.

This booklet isn't here to cheer you up or tell
you what to do. It's here to offer space to notice
your feelings, to reflect, and to try a few ideas
if they feel right for you.

Naming what shows up

Christmas can stir up all sorts: sadness, guilt, anger, pride, relief, or even numbness.

Reflection prompt:

- What feelings come up most strongly for me when I think about Christmas?
- Where do I notice them in my body?

Whatever you write down (even “nothing”) is valid. You don’t need to justify or change your feelings.

The pressure of the season

Adverts, songs, and social media paint a picture of the “perfect family Christmas.” When that doesn’t match your reality, it can feel like you’re on the outside looking in.

That doesn’t mean you’ve failed. It means the world’s story doesn’t match yours and that’s OK.

Reflection prompt:

Where does the pressure land most heavily for me?

- ☐ Family expectations
 - ☐ Money
 - ☐ Traditions
 - ☐ Social media
- ☐ Something else: _____

However you answered you’re not the only dad feeling it. Many find Christmas stressful for exactly the same reasons.

Values check-in

Amid all the noise, it can help to pause and ask:
What actually matters to me this year?

Some dads want peace. Some want connection.
Some want a private way to honour their child.
Some just want to get through without
collapsing.

Reflection prompt:

- If I set aside what others expect, what two or three things do I want Christmas to stand for?

Whatever your values look like, simple or complicated, they are yours. They matter.

Making the day survivable

Christmas Day can feel endless when your kids aren't there. Having even a small plan can steady you.

Options:

- Structured day: plan morning, afternoon, evening.
- Loose day: just choose one or two anchors (e.g. a walk, a call, or a favourite film).

Worksheet (fill-in):

- Morning anchor: _____
- Afternoon anchor: _____
- Evening anchor: _____

There's no right way to "do" the day. Choose what feels least heavy for you.

Connecting in a way that feels safe

Some conversations feel steady. Others take more than they give.

It's OK to protect your energy. Short answers are enough. You don't owe anyone the full story.

Reflection prompt:

- Who feels safe to connect with this season?
- Who drains my energy?

Choosing who you let close isn't selfish — it's survival. You matter too.

Alcohol and coping

Alcohol is entwined with Christmas.

Sometimes it softens the edges. Other times it makes things worse.

There's no judgement here if drinking has been part of your coping. Many men do the same. This page is simply space to think about what feels safest for you.

Reflection prompt:

- How does alcohol usually affect me when I'm low?
- What decision feels right for me this Christmas?

Whether you drink or not, you deserve to respect yourself tomorrow morning.

Honouring the bond with my kids

Even if your children aren't with you, your bond with them hasn't gone anywhere.

Some dads light a candle, hang a special ornament, write a card, play a song, or visit a place that connects them.

Reflection prompt:

- Is there a small ritual that would help me feel closer this year?

Your connection is real, even if you're apart. The bond doesn't disappear.

Handling grief triggers

Sometimes grief comes out of nowhere. A smell, a song, a memory.

You might try:

- Stepping outside for air.
- Grounding: name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- Writing or voice-noting what just came up.
- Moving your body — stretch, walk, or shake it out.

If grief hits you, it doesn't mean you're going backwards. It means your love is still alive.

When loneliness bites

Loneliness can feel sharper than anything at Christmas. It doesn't mean you're weak. It means you're missing connection, which every human needs.

Options that sometimes help:

- Sending a quick message, even just "Alright mate?"
- Going to a walk, run, or community meal.
- Volunteering for a few hours.

Reflection prompt:

- What's one small way I might ease loneliness this year?

Even tiny connections — a short chat, a nod on a walk — can ease the load.

A letter to myself

Sometimes the voice we need most is our own.

Try finishing these sentences:

- "It's OK that..."
- "I want to remind myself that..."
- "One strength I carry is..."

Speaking kindly to yourself isn't weakness — it's courage.

My Christmas toolkit

Checklist page you can tick or fill in:

- ☐ One anchor for the day
 - ☐ One safe connection
 - ☐ One ritual for my kids
 - ☐ My alcohol decision
- ☐ One grounding strategy

Emergency plan

If things get too heavy:

1. Notice what's happening.
2. Take a pause (step outside, drink water, breathe).
3. Reach out (call/text a friend or a helpline).

My emergency contacts:

Person 1: _____

Person 2: _____

Helpline I'll try: _____

Asking for help is not weakness. It's a form of strength many men don't allow themselves. You deserve support too.

Resources & support

Samaritans - 116 123 (24/7, free)

CALM - 0800 58 58 58 (5pm-midnight)

Shout - Text 85258 (anytime)

Closing words

Whatever this Christmas looks like for you, know this: you are still a dad.

Your bond with your children, whether they're here or not, whether they're near or far, doesn't vanish because of circumstance.

Take what you need. Leave the rest. One step, one day, one Christmas at a time.

Help us support more dads

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Somebody's Dad CIC is a non-profit. Everything we do is funded through grants and donations.

If this booklet has helped in any way and you want to support dads going through tough times, please consider making a donation through our website.

somebodysdad.org/fundraising

Every pound goes directly into providing our service and the support for dads who need it most.

Thank you.



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If you have suffered the loss of a child or are
unable to see your children due to the breakdown
of a relationship, we provide Six 1-to-1 funded
walking therapy sessions to help you talk through
the issues you face

Our service is open to men in Stockport (SK postcode)
Get in touch today:

somebodysdad.org
contact@somebodysdad.org

