

Separated, Not Gone

Staying Dad When You're Apart



For men living without their children
in Stockport

Welcome

Separation changes everything, but it doesn't change the fact that you're still a dad.

Being apart from your children can stir up anger, guilt, sadness, and sometimes even relief.

All of those feelings are human.

This booklet isn't here to judge you or tell you how to parent. It's here to give you space to reflect on what being a dad means to you now and offer ideas that might help you stay connected, steady, and supported.

Dads have different levels of access so some of the pages may not apply to you right now, but hopefully there will be ones that do.

Where I am right now

Separation hits differently for everyone.

Reflection prompt:

- What feels hardest about being apart?
- What do I miss most about daily life with my kids?
- What's one thing I still feel proud of as their dad?

Whatever your answers, they're valid. There's no "right" way to feel about this.

Staying connected (even when apart)

You may not have the time or access you'd like, but small things still matter.

Ideas some dads try:

- Consistent phone or video calls (short and predictable works best).
- Writing letters, texts, or voice notes.
- Sending a photo of something that reminded you of them.
- Keeping a small ritual when you do meet (bedtime story, special walk, shared meal).

Reflection prompt:

- What's one way I'd like to connect with my kids this week?

When you don't see your kids at all

For some dads, there's little or no contact right now. That can feel unbearable, like you've lost your role completely. If that's your reality, please know this: you're still their dad. The bond doesn't vanish because you can't see them.

Ways dads sometimes hold on in this space:

- Keeping a journal or memory box to share with their children in the future.
- Writing letters they may not read yet, but that keep the connection alive.
- Finding safe support for the emotions that come with "not knowing".

Reflection prompt:

- How can I honour my bond as a dad, even when I can't be with my kids right now?
Being out of contact doesn't erase your fatherhood. You are still part of their story.

Contact days and handovers

Handovers can be tough, awkward with your ex,
or emotional for your kids.

Things that sometimes help:

- Keeping the focus on the children, not the argument.
- Having a short, steady "handover routine" (same words, same place).
- Planning something small but reliable for the first 10 minutes together (a snack, a game, a short walk).

It's OK if handovers feel messy. Many dads find them difficult. What matters is trying to steady yourself and your kids through them.

Coping with conflict

Separation can stir up rows with your ex or wider family.

Reflection prompt:

- What arguments drain me most?
- Where can I step back for my own peace, even if the other person doesn't?

Protecting your own energy isn't giving up — it's choosing where to put your strength.

Court, Cafcass & contact centres

For some dads, legal processes are part of the picture.

This booklet can't give legal advice, but here's what other dads say helps:

- Knowing the basic steps (what Cafcass do, how contact centres work).
- Writing things down — it shows consistency and helps memory.
- Having emotional support on standby around hearings.

It's not just about the case — it's about looking after yourself through it.

Identity & self-worth

When you're not doing the school run, the bedtime, or the day-to-day, it's easy to feel "less of a dad."

But being a father isn't measured by hours, it's measured by care. Even if you see your kids less, the love you carry still counts.

Reflection prompt:

- What strengths do I bring as a dad, even in this new shape of family?

Looking after yourself so you can be there for them

When you're separated, it's easy to run yourself into the ground – poor sleep, too much drinking, no appetite, or never switching off. But the truth is, looking after yourself is part of looking after your kids. When you're steadier in body and mind, you've got more energy, patience, and focus to give them when you're together.

Some ideas dads find helpful:

- Rest where you can – even short naps or early nights make a difference.
- Eat something real – regular meals, not just takeaways or skipped dinners.

Move your body – walks, stretching, gym, football, cycling – anything that gets you moving.

Continued...

Looking after yourself so you can be there for them

- Keep a check on drinking. If alcohol's becoming your main way to cope, it may leave you drained for the times that matter most.
- Talk it out. One solid mate, a support group, or counselling can lighten the load.

Reflection prompt:

- What's one thing I could do this week to look after myself, so I'm in the best place possible for my kids?

Caring for yourself isn't selfish. It's an act of fatherhood too.

Loneliness and quiet time

The quiet house after kids go home can be the hardest bit.

Options that may help:

- Planning something for yourself after they leave (walk, call, hobby).
- Keeping one space in the house that feels warm and yours.
- Writing a note to your kids for next time you see them.

Missing them shows how much you care. The ache is proof of love, not failure.

My separation toolkit

- One way I'll connect with my kids this week
 - One step to make handovers steadier
 - One way I'll protect my own energy
- One reminder of my identity as a dad
 - One plan for the quiet hours
 - One action to look after myself physically/mentally
- One way to honour my bond if I can't see my kids

Emergency plan

If emotions get overwhelming:

1. Pause and breathe.
2. Step away from conflict if possible.
3. Call a safe person or helpline.

Strong feelings are normal. You don't have to face them alone.

Resources & support

Samaritans - 116 123 (24/7, free)

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

Shout - Text 85258 (anytime)

Closing words

Separation changes routines. It changes family shape. But it doesn't take away your role as a dad.

However often you see your children, whether every week, occasionally, or not at all right now, you are still their father.

Hold onto that truth. And remember: you don't have to walk through this on your own.

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.



For men living without their children
in Stockport

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

