

Another Night

Getting through the times when
sleep won't come



For men living without their children
in Stockport

Welcome

Struggling to sleep doesn't mean you're weak. It doesn't mean you're broken. It simply means your mind and body are carrying more than they can settle right now.

This booklet isn't about "perfect sleep routines" or magic fixes. It's about finding ways to get through the long nights, to rest when you can, and to face the next day in one piece.

Take what works. Leave what doesn't. Even small moments of rest can make a difference.

Why nights can feel harder

Daytime often gives us distractions with work, chores, conversations, noise. But at night, those distractions fade. That's when:

- Thoughts replay, often louder than before.
- Emotions like grief, anger, or loneliness feel sharper.
- The silence of the house makes everything echo.

If you find yourself lying awake with a restless mind or heavy chest, you're not alone. Many dads describe night-time as the hardest part of the day.

If nights are tough for you, it doesn't mean you're failing. It means you're human.

The lonely hours

When the house is empty, night-time can feel unbearable. Loneliness tends to creep in once the world has gone quiet.

Things that sometimes help:

- Keeping a small night-time ritual: a warm drink, reading a few pages of a book, or playing a calm playlist.
- Using gentle background sound if silence feels heavy: a podcast, low music, or white noise.
- Placing a grounding object by your bed: a photo, stone, or item of clothing that steadies you when you touch it.

Loneliness at night is common. It's not a weakness, it's the echo of love and connection that matter to you.

The 2 a.m. plan

When you're stuck awake, it can feel like the clock is mocking you. Instead of battling the night, try this:

- Breathe steady – focus on slowing your exhale, even just for a few breaths.
- Ground yourself – name 5 things you can see, 4 you can feel, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste.
- Shift gently – sit somewhere dim, stretch, or sip a warm drink. Don't flood your senses with bright lights or screens.

The aim here isn't to "force" sleep. It's simply to create calm. And calm makes rest more likely.

Writing it down

When your mind won't switch off, thoughts go round in circles. Worries, memories, to-do lists, arguments, they often feel bigger in the dark.

One way to calm this is to take them out of your head and put them on paper.

How to try it:

- Keep a notebook or scrap paper by your bed.
- When thoughts start spiralling, write them down — uncensored, messy, whatever's there.
- Don't worry about spelling or making sense.
- Tell yourself: "I don't have to fix this now. I've saved it for tomorrow."

Sometimes the act of writing is enough to quieten the mind. It doesn't solve everything, but it gives your brain permission to rest.

Tricks for a restless mind

If your brain refuses to slow down, you can gently distract it:

- Alphabet imagery – pick a letter, imagine objects beginning with it, and picture them in detail (A: apple, ant, aeroplane). Move through the alphabet slowly.
- Reverse counting – start at 300 and count backwards. If you lose your place, it doesn't matter – that's part of the point.
- Memory walk – imagine walking through a familiar place step by step, noticing small details like doors, trees, or smells.
- Story building – invent a simple story in your head and let it wander without pressure.

These tricks work because they give your brain something harmless to chew on, instead of the heavy stuff.

Body first, mind later

Sometimes the body has to relax before the mind can. You might try:

- Progressive muscle relaxation: tense and release each muscle group from toes to head.
- Gentle stretching or yoga poses in bed.
- A warm shower or bath before sleep to release tension and lower body temperature afterwards.

Your body carries stress all day. Releasing it first can help your mind to follow.

Night-time triggers

Grief, memories, or arguments often feel heavier at night. If something hits suddenly:

1. Pause and take a slow breath.
2. Use a grounding exercise or stretch.
3. Jot down what came up to revisit tomorrow.
4. If needed, move to another room briefly and reset.

Being triggered at night doesn't mean you're going backwards. It means your love and care are alive.

sleep and alcohol

Alcohol can knock you out quickly, but it often leads to shallow, broken sleep.

If you do drink:

- Try to stop 2-3 hours before bed.
- Alternate alcohol with water.
- Notice how your body feels the morning after. Is it helping or making things harder?

Choosing what feels best for you is what matters.

This isn't about judgement, just awareness.

Making your bed a safe place

If your bed feels like a battleground, it helps to reset it:

- Fresh bedding or a new pillow can change the feel.
- Use your bed mainly for rest, not long scrolling sessions.
- Add a small comfort: a weighted blanket, favourite hoodie, or calming scent.

Think of bed as a signal to your body: "Here, we rest."

When you can't sleep at all

If hours pass without rest, try this instead of fighting it:

- Get up, keep lights low, and do something calm: reading, writing, or listening to something steady.
- Avoid doom-scrolling or filling your head with news or arguments.
- Return to bed only when you feel drowsy again.

Even if you don't sleep, resting your body and mind quietly is still giving yourself a break.

Big days after bad nights

If you have a big day and no sleep:

- Start with water before coffee.
- Eat a steady breakfast — protein + carbs.
- Get some daylight in the morning to reset your body clock.
- Keep caffeine to the first half of the day.
- Take a 20-minute nap if possible — long enough to recharge, not long enough to make you groggy.

One bad night won't undo everything. Your body is stronger than you think.

Habits that may help (without pressure)

Over time, small habits can make nights easier:

- Aim for similar bed and wake times.
- Keep lights low in the evening.
- Limit caffeine in the afternoon.
- Move your body during the day to use up tension.

These aren't rules, just gentle supports. Pick one or two that feel doable.

My rest toolkit

- ☐ One night-time ritual I'll try
- ☐ One mind trick that might work for me
- ☐ One body strategy that helps me settle
- ☐ One way I'll soften the next morning after
a bad night
- ☐ One person or service I'll reach out to if it
gets worse

Emergency plan

If night-time thoughts ever tip into unsafe territory:

1. Pause and breathe.
2. Call or text a safe person.
3. Reach out to a helpline if you feel at risk.

The night can feel endless — but it always passes. You don't have to go through it alone.

Resources & support

Samaritans - 116 123 (24/7, free)

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

Shout - Text 85258 (anytime)

Closing words

A bad night doesn't make you a bad dad. Rest doesn't have to mean perfect sleep. Even short moments of calm matter.

Take it one night, one morning, one day at a time.

You're still their dad. You're still here. And you're not alone.

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
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