Hi there, my name is Frayer, and as a mum with experience of child removal and kinship care, I know how hard Christmas and this time of the year can be for us. Whatever your situation this Christmas I wanted to let you know that you're not alone. I wrote this with us in mind. Here's a few things that might make things a little easier. Check out the back page to for some realistic support and fun <3

Frayer

1. Taking the pressure off

Christmas can come with so much pressure to have more, buy more and do more. You don't need new things to make this time of year feel nice. Get your comfiest PJs out, make your favourite drink, claim the best blanket, put something you love on, or keep the good chocolate for yourself! Sometimes enjoying what we already have is enough.

2. Not all traditions are helpful

I'll admit, I don't like Christmas trees, they take up so much room and remind me of the past so I'm ditching it this year! Are there any traditions you feel like ditching this year? If you don't want to cook a huge fancy dinner you don't have to! Give yourself permission to let go of traditions that cause stress.

3. You don't have to explain

Christmas conversations can sometimes catch us off guard, especially when people start asking about plans or the children. Having a simple go-to line ready can help move the conversation on without having to explain yourself or share more than you want to.

- "I'm not quite sure what Christmas is going to look like yet"
- "I haven't really made any plans yet – I'm just taking Christmas as it comes this year."
- "I'm keeping Christmas really low-key this year – how about you?"
- "I'm trying not to think too far ahead at the moment. Anyway, tell me what's been happening with you."

4. Not just December 25

This year I won't be celebrating on the 25th as that's not the day I'm with my children. If this is the case for you, you can celebrate on a different day too. Our families are all different and our calendars can be different too. It all still counts and it's all still special even if it's different.

5. Money saving ideas

Christmas can put extra pressure on money that may already be stretched. There may be more support available at this time of year than you realise, including food banks and community pantries, help with energy costs, local Christmas support and benefit advice. Your local council or Citizens Advice can be a good place to start to find out what's available near you.

6. It's okay if it's simple

Playing a silly made up game, crafting, or watching a movie is special. Spending time when you can on a day that works for you is just as valuable as the money you spend.

7. A little reminder from me to you

Sometimes the smells, bright lights, constant Christmas music in shops and the non-stop talk about Christmas might be challenging. I can feel really vulnerable at Christmas and it's not easy to talk about. It's okay to feel emotional, frustrated, lonely, happy and excited all at once. You aren't alone, you're part of a whole community of us parents trying to figure things out, doing our best and our best is good enough. It's okay if you need help, if you need to reach out. Trust is important when it comes to sharing your feelings, letting someone who you trust know what you might need this Christmas can be so empowering, whether that's for a chat, a cry or a laugh.



8. Family time when we're not with our children

For some families like mine and others, it can feel difficult to make plans around Christmas for family time. It can be even more stressful having to get approval or permission. It can help to check in early with your social worker or family and ask about dates and times if needed. Knowing in advance might be helpful. I know, waiting for their reply can feel daunting so if you send a message, it might be helpful to do something kind for yourself so you can feel grounded. A nice coffee and a slice of cake?

9. Getting through this together

Whatever this time of year brings for you, whether you celebrate on the 29th in a library or on a video call on the 21st, or have a quiet day at home, I hope you remember you're not alone. Parents just like us are doing the best we can with what we have. Whatever this year brings you, be kind to yourself. :-♡-

I've thought of a few things that have brought me joy or been helpful when my Christmas has looked different. Here are some recommendations that you might find useful or fun.

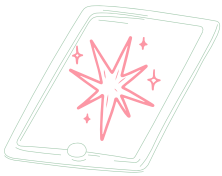
YouTube Picks for When You Need to Switch Off

Sometimes you just need something to make you laugh, distract your mind, or keep you company for a while. YouTube is free and there's always something to get lost in, so here are a few of my personal favourites:

Misfit Minds: Silly, chaotic humour when you just need a laugh - My Top Pick!
Niko Omilana Or Max Fosh: Pranks, challenges and brilliantly ridiculous situations.
Joshua Weissman: Cooking, food and plenty of humour.
Preppy Kitchen: Cosy, comforting baking and cooking videos.
Daily Dose of Internet: Funny, fascinating and unexpected clips from around the internet.
Wonder Docs: Fascinating documentaries and unusual stories to get lost in.
Headspace: Short, calming videos for when you need to quiet your mind, breathe and reset (they have an app as well).
The Dodo: Heart-warming animal rescues, reunions and adorable stories – perfect when you need something wholesome.

Apps that have lifted my mood, and you might find similar ones you enjoy as well

TikTok: For when my home feels too quiet.
Pinterest: For when I'm looking for a new DIY project, though I'm yet to finish many! Anyone relate?
Roblox: I love Roblox when I want to switch off and disappear into something completely different – there are so many games to choose from. As with any online platform, keep online safety in mind.



Numbers that I've actually used as a parent when I've needed support or help to lift my mood

Samaritans - 116 123
I've found them really helpful in the past especially when it feels hard to trust anyone with my feelings and experiences. You can share any emotions you are holding and it feels private and safe. They are 24/7 and its nice to know no matter how difficult or stressful things get, there will always be someone to listen when things feel overwhelming.

Family rights group - 0808 801 0366:
They have been empowering for me in the past and have given me a better understanding of things. Their Free Advice Line is open Monday to Friday 9.30am to 3pm, excluding Bank Holidays.

Take care,
From Frayer

Your ideas and doodles