



family member across Scotland who may be facing challenging circumstances this year.

While the festive season can bring joy and celebration, we know that the constant stream of festive cheer and societal pressures to create a 'perfect' holiday can weigh very heavily on our family members.

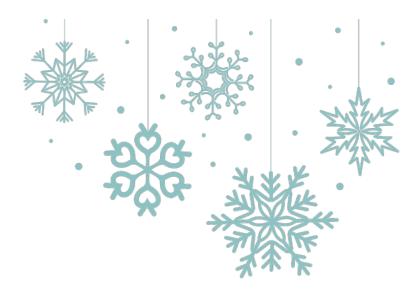
Our main message to you is that it is okay to put yourself first and prioritise your own wellbeing. Whether that means setting boundaries, adjusting your holiday traditions to suit your needs, or taking time completely for yourself to do things you enjoy. Reach out to trusted friends, family and support networks. And know that Scottish Families are here for you if you need us.

From all of us here at Scottish Families, we are sending strength and peace your way this festive season.

You will find a selection of lovely festive-themed artwork throughout this booklet all are created by the very talented Amanda Barr. We are deeply grateful for Amanda's creativity and generosity.

Take care and we will see you in 2026.

# **Holiday Dates for our Helpline**



Our Helpline will continue to support you throughout the holiday period. We'll be offering a mix of live support and our callback service\*.

You can call us on any phone for free at 08080 10 10 11, email us at helpline@sfad.org.uk, or you can use the webchat on our website www.sfad.org.uk.

\*Our callback service works by you leaving us a voicemail, email, or message and one of our team members will get back to you as soon as they can.

- Monday 22 December Open as usual
- Tuesday 23 December Open as usual
- Wednesday 24 December (Christmas Eve) Open as usual
- Thursday 25 December (Christmas Day) Callback service
- Friday 26 December (Boxing Day) Callback service
- Sat 27 Sun 28 December Callback service
- Monday 29 December Open as usual
- Tuesday 30 December Open as usual
- Wednesday 31 December (Hogmanay/New Years Eve) Open as usual
- Thursday 1 January (New Years Day) Callback service
- Friday 2 January Callback service
- Sat 3 Sun 4 January Callback service
- Monday 5 January onwards Open as usual

## Other support:

- NHS 111 111
- **Breathing Space** 0800 83 85 87
- **Samaritans** 116 123
- Police Scotland 101 (for non-emergencies)
- If it's an emergency please call 999

# Holiday Dates for our Click & Deliver Naloxone



Our Click and Deliver Naloxone service will be open up to the festive period, however following in line with Royal Mail deliveries, we cannot guarantee that ordered kits will arrive before Christmas if ordered after Monday 15 December.

Naloxone is a drug that can reverse the effects of opioid drugs like heroin, methadone, opium, codeine, morphine and buprenorphine. It is only effective for opioid overdoses and won't work with any other drug.

If you need a naloxone kit for over Christmas, please make sure to order a kit as soon as possible. You can also order multiple kits if needed.

Naloxone can still be ordered over the festive period, and when we return to our office in the new year we will pack and send out your kits as soon as we can.

Any questions for our team? Please contact - naloxone@sfad.org.uk

#### Order here:

https://www.sfad.org.uk/support-services/take-home-naloxone-application

Order your naloxone by scanning the QR code



# **Planning Ahead for Christmas**



'Tis the season to be jolly,' they say, but for many families affected by alcohol and drugs, Christmas can be a challenging time. The constant stream of festive cheer everywhere we go, coupled with the pressure to have a traditional celebration can make this festive season particularly difficult.

#### **Plan Ahead**

We can't say this enough – planning ahead is vital. Often, family members say they're waiting to see what happens. They'll wait for this or that with regards to their loved one, but we encourage you to make plans that suit you and only you. Don't wait to see what your loved one is or isn't doing. If you are doing this, the stress will build and you will create these expectations of 'maybe they can get it together for that one day and it'll be lovely' but the reality is probably going to be quite different and quite difficult.

Make plans that prioritise your own wellbeing and stress levels. Whether that's having a traditional meal, a relaxed day in your pyjamas, or something entirely different. Choose what suits you and your family without waiting for your loved one's behaviour to shape the day. This helps you get into a space where you can look at this day of the year as not being something that you just have to get through, but something you can actually find a bit of enjoyment in.

#### **Look After You**

We know self-care is a buzzword and is thrown around a lot, but it is a vital tool for you. It's about recognising what makes you feel better and helps you with your mental health. Self-care can be as simple as a hot bath, going a walk on a cold winter day, watching your favourite film (doesn't have to be Christmas-related) or spending time with a friend.

The key is to prioritise your needs because that is so important. Self-care is not selfish.

# **Thoughtful Gift-Giving**

When it comes to gift-giving, consider practicality with the plans you are making about buying gifts for a loved one who might have an alcohol/drug problem. Christmas is a time where we often feel that we have to be over-generous and let our guard down, but if you are giving a gift to someone who is not in a good place in terms of their substance use, an extravagant gift might be something they see as a way to access more alcohol or drugs by selling it on or using it in a way you hadn't intended for.

Instead, plan ahead and think about practical gifts. They could be gifts related to essential needs like food or shopping.



Sometimes we feel under more pressure to give money as gifts, and that's never a good idea when someone's in a state of mind that they might want to spend that on something that's harmful to them. So think about how you can avoid doing that or avoid being put in the position where you feel like you've got to do that.

It's crucial to set budget boundaries you're comfortable with to avoid disappointment.

# **Including Your Loved One**

While it's wonderful to include your loved one in celebrations, be prepared for the possibility that their substance use may lead to lapses or relapses during the festive season. We encourage you to be realistic and plan. Think in your mind that this is quite likely to happen, so how do I deal with that? What tools do I have in place now? This proactive approach, combined with self-care, can help manage expectations and reduce stress.

# **Setting Boundaries**

Setting boundaries is essential, especially when it comes to communication. We suggest being realistic about when you're available and not allowing your phone to dictate your peace of mind. Set boundaries that are manageable for you and help reduce stress.

You should not feel that it's your responsibility to have the 'perfect Christmas'. If it doesn't go to plan, it's nothing that you have done or should have done. It is what it is. And it's about how to pick yourself back up again from that disappointment and try to still make the best of the situation.

## **Advice from a Family Member**

We asked a family member to share bits of advice and information about their Christmas: 'I love Christmas and I always have and have always tried to make it

special. As I've got older though, I've started to put less pressure on myself to focus on one day, where I usually end up exhausted and missing everything because I'm in the kitchen half the day. Last year wasn't easy with my son, and he was out for a big part of the day and then the police were involved on Boxing Day. So this year we've decided to do something different, take the pressure off ourselves so that if things don't go as planned it won't really matter.'

# **Some Things to Consider**

**Simplify the Celebration:** Consider breaking away from tradition by ordering takeout or simplifying the meal. The focus should be on enjoying the day and reducing the pressure of preparing an elaborate feast.

**Invite Supportive Guests:** If you're worried about judgement or negative interactions, invite family members who understand your situation and can provide emotional support during the day.

**Flexible Timing:** Prepare meals in advance, allowing you to eat whenever you want, freeing up time for activities you enjoy.

Christmas is a time for joy and celebration, but it can also be challenging for families affected by alcohol and drugs. The key to navigating this season is planning ahead, practicing self-care, and setting realistic expectations.

Remember that support is available through Scottish Families, and you're not alone in facing these challenges. You survived every hard day up to this point, so you can do it. With the right tools and support, you can make Christmas more manageable and less stressful.



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# **Time for You at Christmas**



Can you believe the time is nearly here? The shops are filling fast with Christmas cards, boxes of sweets and decorations. For families affected by a loved one's alcohol or drug use, Christmas can be one of the most challenging times of the year.

At this time of year, it can be hard to escape the marketing around parties and drinking. From ads to festive displays at every turn, the pressure to make drinking part of the celebration is everywhere. Social gatherings, work parties, and even family events can feel like they revolve around alcohol. But it's important to remember that Christmas is about so much more.

You may also find pressure to follow certain traditions with certain people. However, traditions that are meant to bring warmth and connection can feel strained, and the pressure of creating a "perfect" Christmas may feel overwhelming. Yet there are ways to make this season your own, creating moments of joy and comfort that prioritise your wellbeing.

Here are some tips to help make Christmas a time you can enjoy in your own way.

#### Release those expectations:

The idea of an ideal Christmas can often add pressure, especially when dealing with the reality of your personal life. Remember that it's okay to let go of traditional expectations. This year, focus on what brings you peace and happiness. A quiet holiday with a few meaningful activities can be just as fulfilling as a larger, busier celebration.

#### Plan a day that's all about YOU!

We believe massively in self-care and looking after your own mental and physical

wellbeing. You also deserve a day that bring joy and comfort and there are many ways to make Christmas enjoyable, just for you:

- Eat foods you love: Take this time to indulge in foods you enjoy, regardless of tradition. Have you seen a new recipe you've wanted to enjoy? Why not take the time to make it for yourself.
- Watch a Christmas movie for laughs: Pop on a light-hearted Christmas movie that makes you laugh. Laughter can be a wonderful escape, helping you relax and shift into a more positive mindset.
- **Listen to music you enjoy:** Christmas music is everywhere now so why not try to embrace holiday music or any tunes that make you feel good. Creating a playlist with songs that lift your spirits can help you feel more connected to the season on your terms.
- Start a tradition that's all about you: Consider creating a small ritual or tradition that centres around your own well-being. This could be lighting a candle to mark the day, taking a winter walk, or enjoying a quiet moment with a favourite book or hobby. These small traditions can become an anchor for you during the season for not only now but many years to come.

# Choose alcohol-Free gifts and encourage others to do the same:

If you're giving gifts or participating in a Secret Santa, you may want to choose alcohol-free options that bring joy without the risk of triggering difficult moments. There are many different gifts you can give this year such as candles, journals, chocolates, puzzles or gift cards.

If you're involved in a Secret Santa at work or even with family, consider speaking with the organiser or group to make sure everyone is on the same page about keeping the gift exchange alcohol-free. Letting the group know that you prefer non-alcoholic gifts (and gently suggesting the same for everyone) can help create an inclusive, enjoyable experience for all.

## Communicate boundaries gently and ahead of time:

It's perfectly okay to let friends and family know what will make the day more comfortable for you. It is your Christmas. This could mean asking to keep the celebration low-key, avoiding alcohol-focused events, or setting time limits for gatherings. By sharing these boundaries with others ahead of time, you can help create a holiday that feels safer and more manageable for you. It also helps to avoid questions at the time of the event.

# Remember, it's okay to prioritise your wellbeing:

Gift yourself permission to put yourself first. It can be empowering to focus on what makes the day meaningful for you, rather than trying to meet expectations that feel out of reach. If you can, take breaks when you need them, find moments for self-care, and remind yourself that you deserve a Christmas that brings peace and joy to your life, in whatever form that may take. You can go full on Christmas for yourself or avoid it altogether on the day, it is your decision.

# **Grief at Christmas**



Christmas or any other holiday period can be a hard time for people experiencing bereavement. Whether it is your first holiday without your loved one, or if you have had many, it can be a tough time of year. We are regularly told, through TV, songs and social media that Christmas is a time to be with family, which can make you miss your loved one more. You may find that your emotions feel less controlled people have described feeling 'irrationally' angry at things; bursting into tears for no reason and feeling particularly anxious at this time of year – perhaps anxious about how to get through the 'festivities'. The pressure to be enjoying yourself can exacerbate these feelings.

These feelings are all normal and you are not alone this Christmas - many families are facing similar concerns.

# Plan what you want to do ahead of time:

Have a think about who you want to be with (if anyone), what you want to be involved with, and what you don't. Communicate this ahead of time to those around you. Also, think about what you want to do and don't be scared to change up traditions if it is too painful to do the same thing, for example, you might want to go out somewhere rather than stay at home.

#### Do things differently:

If you usually do all the cooking but don't feel up to it this year, ask someone else to do it or go out for a meal. Relieve yourself of responsibilities that feel unmanageable.

#### Write down your anxieties and make plans on how to cope with them:

Sometimes when we write down the things we are worried about it can lessen our anxiety. It can also help us to problem solve and plan how we are going to deal with them, so nothing comes as a surprise. For example, if you are worried you will

get upset in front of others, a solution for this may be to let those you will be with know that this is a concern and that you plan to remove yourself from the room if this happens. Maybe also discuss with them what they can do if this happens - if you want to be left alone, or if you want someone to leave the room with you.

## It is okay to 'opt out' of the festivities:

If you are not feeling up to it, it is okay to remove yourself, either for the whole planned event, or for parts of it. Do what feels right for you.

# Allow yourself time to grieve:

It is okay to feel sad at Christmas, or any other time of year. Pretending you are not can be exhausting.

# 'Involve' your loved one who has died:

Have a think about if and how you want to 'involve' your loved one who has died. It might be nice to dedicate some time to sharing memories of them or to write a letter to them. If you feel you want to involve them in the day, then do.

#### Be kind to yourself:

Grief is difficult and tiring. Try to look after yourself emotionally, physically and practically. If you are struggling with any of it, don't be afraid to ask for help.

# Don't feel guilty for enjoying yourself:

Moments of enjoyment or happiness don't diminish your grief. Enjoy these moments of respite from your grief and try not to feel guilty for them.



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# Couldn't Love You More



Couldn't Love You More is available on most streaming platforms including Spotify and Amazon Music.

#### Listen over on our Vimeo page

Couldn't Love You More by Jordan Stewart was written in collaboration with some of the amazing families that we support here at Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs and is dedicated to anyone who has been affected by someone else's alcohol/drug use.

#### Verse

It took a little bit of time to admit The air was knocked out of me and I always missed I love and I love, but it's hard to hold on And I don't know how to fix them when all I can do is listen

#### Chorus

I couldn't love you more It's what I'm doing all of this for I will walk this road beside you and I will keep on fighting for you

#### <u>Verse</u>

I'm growing a lot, just trying to hold on Met a girl who knows my story and I'm looking out for me I see all the good that you have in your heart, I'm the one that you call when your world just falls apart But I've got you anyway

#### Chorus

I couldn't love you more It's what I'm doing all of this for I will walk this road beside you and I will keep on fighting for you

#### <u>Bridge</u>

I'm your brother, your sister, your mother or your son And I love you more than I love anyone You are good, you are kind You are the love of my life And I want you to be okay

I'm your father, your partner, your cousin or your friend And I promised you that I would love you to the end You are good, you are kind You are the love of my life And I want you to be okay

#### Chorus

I couldn't love you more It's what I'm doing all of this for I will walk this road beside you and I will keep on fighting for you



# **Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs**

**Helpline:** 08080 10 10 11

helpline@sfad.org.uk webchat available at: www.sfad.org.uk

Facebook: @ScottishFamiliesAffectedByDrugs

Instagram: @scottishfamilies

email: info@sfad.org.uk website: www.sfad.org.uk



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