

When You're Talked Out, Touched Out, and Teetering: A December Survival Guide for Parents

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There comes a moment in every parent's year, often somewhere between the school nativity costume hunt and the "Mum, I need money for Secret Santa... today" when you realise your brain has quietly slipped out the back door. You are officially talked out, touched out, and emotionally flatter than a mince pie that's been sat on.

If this is you, pull up a chair. Better yet, sink into it. This is your reminder that you are not broken, dramatic, or in need of "trying harder." You are human. A human who has been asked approximately 47 questions before 8.15am, who hasn't had a solitary shower since spring, and who has been touched, poked, clung to, leaned on, chatted at, listened to, and needed... a lot.

Parent wellbeing tends to drop to the bottom of the priority list, right under "clean out the glove box" and "sort the Tupperware." But here's the truth most parents never get told: your wellbeing *is* the family's wellbeing. When you're steadier, calmer, and not one irritation away from turning into a festive gremlin, everyone benefits.

So, let's call this your December pep talk. No perfection. No guilt. Just a few thoughts to help you feel a bit more like a person and a bit less like a walking to-do list.

1. Stop treating your limits like a personal flaw

There is nothing wrong with you if your tolerance is thin. You're not supposed to function like an endless hotline of emotional, physical, and logistical availability. Even phones run out of charge and require plugging in. You're allowed to need the same.

When you feel touched out, that is your nervous system waving a small, polite flag. When you feel talked out, that's your brain saying, "No more input, please, I'm full." Listening to those limits isn't weakness; it's wisdom.

2. Your bandwidth is real, plan with it, not against it

You know how some parents schedule twenty things in December and somehow remain serene, glowing, and on top of the wrapping? Lovely for them. Gold star. Add them to the seasonal museum under "rare creatures."

But that doesn't need to be your model.

Your bandwidth may be different. Smaller. Quirkier. Dependent on sleep, hormones, workload, or whether anyone in your house used the last of the milk *again*.

Give yourself permission this month to plan around reality, not fantasy. If weeknights are too much, say no. If weekends need to stay slow, honour that. You're not cancelling joy, you're protecting your sanity.

3. Build small pockets of alone-ness (even if they're weirdly timed)

Parents often imagine wellbeing must look like a spa day, a yoga retreat, or an uninterrupted bath. Sure, those are lovely. But also: unicorn-level rare.

The real secret sauce to staying sane? Micro solitude. Tiny pockets of time when no one is talking at you, touching you, or asking for snacks.

It might happen in odd places, the car before pick-up, the kitchen while nobody has noticed you yet, or standing outside the front door for a breathtaking 90 seconds of silence. These moments matter. They're little resets for your overloaded system. Take them... without apology.

4. Make peace with doing things "lightly"

December has a habit of turning ordinary parents into unpaid event managers. Suddenly you're expected to bake, socialise, decorate, attend, remember, and deliver joy with the enthusiasm of a professional elf.

But here's a radical idea: you don't have to go all in on everything.

Do things lightly. Wrap presents simply. Buy the mince pies instead of baking. Skip the homemade advent calendar. Keep the festive plans cosy instead of chaotic. Your kids don't measure your love by the scale of your effort, they feel it in your presence, your tone, your steadiness.

And steadiness comes from not drowning yourself.

5. Let your own needs take up space

This might be the most disobedient thing a parent can do in December: admit what *you* need.

Quiet
Space
Support
A break
A moment
Fewer demands
A nap or four

You're not asking for luxury. You're asking for humanity. And the funny thing is, once parents start claiming even a sliver of their own needs, the whole house shifts. Children learn that grownups are allowed boundaries. Partners step in more. The atmosphere lifts.

You become the lighthouse again: steady, sane, and shining, instead of the shipwreck being tossed around by everyone else's waves.

December is busy. Parenting is intense. And you are doing a remarkable job, even if you feel like a slightly frazzled snowflake. Your wellbeing matters, not as an afterthought, but as a foundation.

So this month, be gentle with yourself. Say no when you need to. Step back when you must. Take your moments. Honour your limits.

You deserve to feel human too.