The ADHD and AuDHD guide

Surviving Christmas

Plan it. Get through it. Recover from it.
Your way this year.

A printable pack for the most wonderful, most overwhelming time of the year.

Start here

You don't need all of this. Nobody does. Pick the door that fits today.

It's too much right now

Go straight to page 12. Everything else can wait.

I've got 5 minutes

Play the bingo on page 15, or cut out your pocket cards on page 14.

I've got 20 minutes

Start with My Christmas, my way on page 3. Then the calendar on page 4.

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Two small rules. Fill it in on a calm day. Messy, half-finished and pencil are all fine.

My Christmas, my way

Christmas doesn't have to look like the adverts. Decide what's worth your energy, before anyone else decides for you.

Keep
The bits I love

Change
The bits I'll do differently

Drop
What I'm not doing this year

Not sure? Hosting, cards, the late party and the big shop on 23 December are all optional.

If only one thing goes well, I want it to be

This year I give myself permission to

December
on one page

Time blindness loves December. Put it all where you can see it, then stick this on the fridge.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Big event Recovery day Keep free

The golden rule. Every big day gets a quiet day straight after it. Colour those in first.

Things I must not forget

The no-panic countdown

No giant to-do list. Just one small job at a time, so 23 December feels a bit less like a horror film.

4 weeks to go

- [ ] Set my budget (page 7)
- [ ] Write my gift list
- [ ] Fill in my calendar
- [ ] Say no to one thing
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

3 weeks to go

- [ ] Order what I can online
- [ ] Check the last post dates
- [ ] Book any travel
- [ ] Buy wrapping paper
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

2 weeks to go

- [ ] Plan my big days (page 8)
- [ ] Tell my safe person the plan
- [ ] Wrap just two presents
- [ ] Stock up on safe foods
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

The last week

- [ ] Gift bags. Gift bags count.
- [ ] Pack my bag and charger
- [ ] Book my quiet day
- [ ] Let the rest go
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

Do this now. Set a phone reminder for each week. Future you will not remember, and that's OK.

Where I put the wrapping paper, so I don't buy more

_____

Social battery planner

Everything costs battery, even the fun things. Colour in what each one will take, then book your recovery.

Date	Event	Battery cost	Recovery booked
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	
		○○○○○	

Two big events in a row? Add a quiet day between them, or go to one for less time. You're allowed to say no. Recovery is part of the plan, not a reward.

Gifts and budget

Impulse buying and Christmas are not a calm mix. Set the number first, then write down every idea before you buy.

My total budget

£ _____

Spent so far

£ _____

Who	Gift idea	Budget	Bought	Wrapped
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡
			♡	♡

Where I hid the presents (you will thank us)

_____

_____

_____

My big day plan

One for each big day. Copy the page or take a photo. Fewer surprises means a calmer brain.

Event _____ Date and time _____

Where _____ Who will be there _____

I will leave by

Time _____

Getting home _____

My quiet spot there

_____

_____

My safe person

Name _____

Our code word _____

- ♡ They know my plan

In my bag

- ♡ Headphones or earplugs
- ♡ Phone charger
- ♡ Safe snacks
- ♡ Fidget or comfort item
- ♡ Something soft to change into
- ♡ _____

Afterwards, I will recharge by

_____

_____

_____

_____

The leave-early plan

Leaving before you're overloaded is a skill, not rude. Decide now, so you don't have to think when your brain is full.

Signs I need to go soon

e.g. snapping, buzzing ears, can't follow what people say, wanting to cry

Words you can use

To leave

"Thank you so much, I've had a lovely time. I'm heading off now."

For a break

"I'm just getting some fresh air. Back in 10 minutes."

If someone pushes

"I'd love to stay, but I need to go now. Let's catch up soon."

To my safe person

Our code word, or: "Can we go in 5 minutes?"

My exit steps

1.

2.

3.

What to say when...

For the questions you know are coming. Pick the ones that sound like you.

"You don't look like you have ADHD."

Thanks. It's mostly on the inside.

"Aren't you excited?"

I am. This is what it looks like.

"Go on, just have a little bit."

I'm all good, thank you. It looks lovely.

"Why are you so quiet?"

Just recharging. I'm having a nice time.

"Everyone's a bit ADHD."

Maybe! Mine just doesn't switch off.

"Why don't you just write a list?"

I have 47. I can't find them.

"Are you still doing that hobby?"

No. I have a new one. Got two hours?

"You're leaving already?"

I've had a lovely time, and I'm at my limit. See you soon.

The one I always get

_____

My answer

_____

Remember. You don't owe anyone an explanation. "I'm OK, thanks" is a full answer.

Sensory-friendly Christmas

Small changes that make a big difference. Tick the ones you'll try.

Lights

Warm, steady lights, not flashing ones. Sunglasses or a cap are allowed indoors.

Noise

Earplugs or headphones. Ask for the music to go down. Find the quietest room.

Food

Bring your own safe food, eat at a different time, or eat in another room.

Clothes

Comfy beats festive. Skip the itchy jumper, or bring something soft to change into.

Crackers

Ask for a warning before crackers, poppers and party games, or step out.

Presents

Opening gifts in front of everyone is hard. You can open them later, on your own.

Hugs

"I'm not a hugger, but happy Christmas!" A wave or elbow bump is fine.

Routine

Keep one thing the same each day: your morning drink, a walk, or your bedtime.

What else helps me

When it all gets too much

Meltdowns and shutdowns are your brain saying "enough". They're not a failure. One step at a time.

1. **Go somewhere quieter**
   The bathroom, the car, a bedroom, outside. Hiding in the bathroom for a while is completely OK.

2. **Turn everything down**
   Headphones in, lights off, close your eyes. Less noise, less light, fewer people.

3. **You don't have to talk**
   No explaining right now. You can explain later, or not at all.

4. **Find some pressure**
   Hug a pillow, wrap up in a blanket, or press your hands together hard.

5. **Breathe out longer**
   In for 4, out for 6. Do it five times.

6. **Send one message**
   "I'm OK, I just need some quiet. Give me 20 minutes."

Afterwards: rest, have some water, eat something. It will pass. It always does.

Struggling or not safe? Call 999 in an emergency. Samaritans: 116 123, free, any time. Under 19? Childline: 0800 1111. Or text SHOUT to 85258.

A card to share

Hard to explain out loud? Fill this in and give it to family, or send them a photo before the big day.

Christmas can be a lot for me.

I love you all, and my brain works differently. Here's how you can help.

It helps when you

Please try not to

If I go quiet or leave the room

It isn't about you. It usually means I need

The thing I'd love most this Christmas

Love from

Pocket cards

For when the words won't come. Cut them out, keep them in your bag or phone case, and just hand one over.

I need 10 quiet minutes.

I'm OK. I'll be back.

I'm not being rude.

My brain is just full.

Not a hugger.

Happy Christmas though!

I can't talk right now.

Please text me instead.

Can we go in 5 minutes?

I'm nearly out of battery.

My own card

Recharging. Back soon.

Stick me on a door. Please knock quietly, or come back later.

ADHD Christmas bingo

Colour a heart each time one happens. There are no prizes, just proof you're not the only one.

Lost the sellotape	Hid the presents. Forgot where.	Hid in the bathroom "for a minute"	Info-dumped at a relative	Bought a gift, then a second one for the same person
Wore the comfy clothes anyway	Went out for one thing. Came back with nine.	Left the party early. Proud.	Gift shopping turned into 47 tabs	Bought more sellotape. Found the old one.
Ate the same safe food all day	Cards sent in January (or never)	**Still here** Free square	Said "5 minutes". It was 45.	Cried at an advert
Wrapped presents at midnight on the 24th	Wore headphones at the table	Bought myself a present. Deserved.	Practised saying "I love it"	Asked what day it is
Cancelled a plan and felt relief	Asked for help	Forgot the one thing I went in for	Rewatched the same film. Again.	Stayed up finding the perfect gift

Got a full line? Share your card and tag us @the_adhdvibe. We want to see it.

The after-Christmas crash

Feeling flat after the big days is really common. Your brain has been working overtime. Plan for it, and let it happen.

My recovery menu

- ♡ A whole day with no plans
- ♡ Same comfy clothes, no guilt
- ♡ Food that needs no thinking
- ♡ No replying to anything
- ♡ Favourite film, on repeat
- ♡ Early night
- ♡ Outside for ten minutes
- ♡ _____

I'm keeping this day free

_____

People I'll reply to later

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Three things that went OK

♡ _____

♡ _____

♡ _____

Got through it? That counts. Even if it was messy.

Next year, I want to remember

_____

_____

_____

You made it through.

However Christmas went, that counts as a win.

Want more help like this?

Vibe Check is our app, coming soon. Pick your vibe, get the tools that fit. Somewhere to calm down, get stuff done and empty your head.

- Calm tools that are always free
- AuDHD calm mode
- Private: everything stays on your device

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The ADHD Vibe shares things that help many people. This is a wellbeing guide, not medical advice. If you're struggling, please talk to your GP.

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