

DINIS SANTOS

I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT IS, ASK YOUR MUM!



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A Humorous Chronicle-Style Parenting Guide

From the Author:

OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE! | Humorous Chronicles, Sept 2025

Title: I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT IS, ASK YOUR MUM!

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1st Edition, 2025

ISBN: 9789403819471

 **Nutcase Tales**

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Dedicated to Eva, Íris, and Tatiana

The three who pull me towards the light when everything feels dark.

They are a force of nature.

The reason I'm here.

And more than that, the reason I want to keep being here.

Dinis Santos

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Preface

Becoming a father is probably one of the greatest adventures — and at the same time, one of the greatest challenges — a person can face.

Three years ago, I dived headfirst into that journey. Back then, I thought I knew a lot. That I could “handle” this tiny creature handed to me. That I’d read enough, prepared enough, to do it right. I quickly learned that I didn’t have the faintest idea what I was doing.

Now, I’m a father again. And once more, it feels like the very first time. The same thrill — but also the slightly terrifying realisation that I’d have to relearn everything. Everything, again.

The funniest part? Some things never change. Especially that sentence that should be printed on the cover of every parenting manual: “I don’t know where it is, ask your mum!”.

It’s my war cry. My motto. A survival mantra and, at the same time, a tribute to that near-mythical figure known as Mum — equipped with built-in radar, ancient wisdom, and a level of patience that defies scientific explanation.

This book was born from the urge to share the raw, ridiculous, chaotic and moving side of parenthood — from the perspective of a father who refuses to be a background character in his own story.

You won’t find miracle tips or perfect parenting formulas here. What you’ll find are real-life chronicles, dripping in irony, laced with honesty, and fuelled by humour. Because let’s face it — some days, humour is the only defence against the madness of raising children.

More than just entertainment, this book has a purpose: to chip away at that outdated notion that the father is some kind of stand-in parent — a spare pair of hands for nappy changes and bath time.

Fatherhood is a lead role. It demands presence, vulnerability, and effort. It's exhausting — but the reward is priceless.

Being a father is a constant path of personal growth. It means learning — every single day — to be more patient, more attentive, more present. It's about challenging your own assumptions, letting go of ego, and accepting that messing up is part of the process. It's learning how to learn, with humility, with empathy, and with love.

Becoming a dad again brought all that home for me — again. It was both a shock and a rediscovery. The baby is different, sure. But the doubts, the chaos, the stumbles? Still the same. Only now I've got a little more experience. And a few more bags under my eyes.

In these chronicles, you'll walk beside me through nappies, mashed food, sleepless nights, tantrums, hostage-style negotiations, impossible questions, and tiny victories that fill your chest with pride (and your eyes with tears).

And yes, I still ask Mum a lot of things. But I also respond, help, fail, and laugh — as a dad.

Writing this book meant laughing at myself — but also celebrating a love that redefines me daily.

If you're a dad, about to be one, or just want to peek behind the curtain of this tragicomedy we call parenting — this is for you.

You'll laugh. You'll see yourself in these pages. You'll feel less alone. And, with luck, you'll start seeing fathers not as sidekicks — but as part of the core cast.

Welcome to the madness.

Dinis Santos

Part 1

The New Dad – A Survival Manual



No one really prepares you (But everyone has an opinion)

Before you become a dad, something strange starts to happen around you: everyone — absolutely everyone — turns into a parenting oracle. That distant uncle you saw once at a christening — the one who only showed up for the food — suddenly becomes a guru on child development.

That colleague from the second floor, who owns a dog and thinks it's the same as having a child, gives you a knowing look, full of Himalayan wisdom: "Make sure you sleep while you still can..."

And you smile. You smile because you have no idea what she means. And also because you don't want to look like an idiot.

Spoiler alert: you are. You just don't know it yet.

During your partner's pregnancy — which is basically the warm-up lap before an ultra-marathon through a minefield — the most common thing you'll hear is stories. Opinions. Tips. Unsolicited advice, delivered with the force of a passive-aggressive storm.

You'll meet the "natural birth with candles and chanting" tribe. The "epidural or die" squad. The sleep extremists who swear by white noise apps. And the sentimentalists who

believe you should “cuddle them until they’re 18, then decide what comes next.”

Everyone speaks. Everyone knows. Everyone has absolute truths.

But no one — absolutely no one — tells you what you really need to know. Like, for instance: you should’ve started looking for a nursery spot before your partner even got pregnant.

Yes, you read that correctly.

There are nurseries that only accept babies who were registered while still in their larval stage. And even then, they’ll need connections. Ideally, you should’ve emailed the local preschool the same day you went to the gynaecologist for the first check-up. But no one warns you. It’s like some kind of parental *omertà*.

They just say:

— Having a child changes everything.

But they don’t mention that “everything” starts with a monthly fee of £350 to £600 for a nursery where your baby hasn’t even decided if it wants to engage with society yet.

And if you dare ask, “When should I start looking into this?” the most infuriating answer in the history of humanity will inevitably arrive:

— It depends.

Depends on what? The moon phase? The alignment of Mercury and Mars?

No. It depends on whether you live in an area where babies outnumber available places.

Birth rates in the UK may be dropping, but when it comes to vacancies in state nurseries or those with clean stairwells and toys that haven’t been there since the Thatcher era — you’ve entered the real Hunger Games.

And the childminder? Ah yes, the mystical childminder. The one who “looks after them like they’re her own” but somehow charges the equivalent of a second mortgage. Not to mention

the extras: meals, wipes, nappies, and the occasional spiritual donation in the form of a Victoria sponge.

So, dear almost-father: before you buy your first babygrow, you really ought to do the following:

☒ **Checklist for the Aspiring Dad**

1. Nursery Map of Your Area

Make a list. Include addresses, prices, opening hours, and the WhatsApp group's collective sanity (that part comes later — you've been warned).

Schedule visits. Yes, visits. Some places have a waiting list just to join the waiting list.

2. A Realistic Budget

Do the maths. Not the "we'll cut back here and there" version. The real maths. Nursery fees + nappies + formula (if things don't go according to the idealistic breastfeeding leaflet) + hygiene products + medical check-ups + new clothes every month because the baby grows like it's been exposed to radioactive yeast. Do the sums — then sit down. With a glass of wine. And breathe.

3. Parental Leave Planning

Don't wait until the third trimester to think about it. Check out your legal entitlements. Ask HR. Do net income simulations.

Spoiler no. 2: confidence is lovely — but it doesn't pay for childcare.

4. Rework Your Routine

Will you stop going to the gym? Most likely. See your friends less? Absolutely.

Enjoy a quiet coffee? Never again.

So plan now: who's doing the nursery drop-off and pick-up?

Nurseries close at 5:30pm — not at 10pm like Tesco.

Do you have family support? Is your mum on board? Is she in shape? Does she know what a disposable nappy is? Careful — grandparents are a blessing, but many are still living in the 1990s and think a chest rub with Vicks solves everything.

5. Stick to Essentials. Avoid Nonsense.

The baby market is the funfair of emotional capitalism. Wipe warmers? A robot that rocks the baby while playing jazz? An infrared thermometer that links to your phone?

Resist.

You'll need that money for bulk nappies on wholesale deals.

Now that I've frightened you enough, let me say this: it's all worth it. Of course it is! But it helps to know what you're walking into before you assume love and patience will be enough.

Being a dad isn't just one big leap into the unknown — it's a series of leaps. Sometimes blindfolded. Sometimes with a baby in your arms and two bags on your back, one of them full of toys that make noise at 3am.

But if you know where you're heading — and pack snacks, spare clothes, and a backup plan — it gets easier.

Still hurts, though.

But you'll laugh. A lot. Sometimes at yourself. Sometimes because otherwise... you'd cry.

And one last bit of advice: before you become a dad, listen less to people — and more to the silence.

Take your partner out for dinner and gaze at that glass of wine like it's your last wish.

Because what's coming is hard.

But it's beautiful.

And no one warned you that sometimes... beautiful also means total chaos.