

towards  
meaning  
counselling

# WINTER WELLNESS

from your autistic therapist



# Shorter days, cold, wet weather....



## Feel uneasy?

Worried about navigating Christmas festivities? Or perhaps you might just like to know how to find joy in the everyday?

I understand.

Or maybe you like the colder months? There is beauty in the seasonal change.

Whatever your take on autumn and winter, let's explore the fundamentals of **good mental health** all year round. I encourage you to consider what brings you balance and enjoyment and how to get more of it.

# ABOUT YOUR THERAPIST

## AND FELLOW AUTISTIC PERSON

**Lii Brooke**



My name is Lii. I am autistic.

I am a qualified counsellor and a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

In my Beaconsfield-based practice, called Towards Meaning Counselling, I support autistic adults with all aspects of navigating life. Reach out, I would be delighted to hear from you!

HOW I CAN HELP

<https://www.towardsmeaningcounselling.co.uk/>

*Let's start with a  
visualisation...*

[LISTEN TO IT HERE](#)

# YOU ARE PRECIOUS

Imagine yourself at a seaside, what does your seaside look like? What kind of seascape might make you feel **comfortable**?

Perhaps you are not by the sea, perhaps you are tucked away in your favourite armchair or in a fantasy world completely of your making.

That's the place. The place where you feel **calm joy**...

Imagine now you are holding a shell, what kind of shell is it? What is its shape, its colour? I now ask you to bring that shell closer to your eyes and really examine its surface, turn it around, notice all its **unique** characteristics.

This shell is precious, it may no longer be intact. There are imprints of all it has been through, swept along by the sea waves and buried in the sand. Its surface carries its story, what elements it has lasted through. It is both **fragile and strong**.

It is **inimitable and beautiful**, there is no other shell exactly like it in the whole world. And nobody aside from you is holding this shell and can see the shell better than you do.

That shell is you. **Only you truly know what it is like to be you.**

# ACCEPTING YOURSELF

And just like that wonderful shell you held in your mind just now, you are precious and inimitable. In my clinical experience as a counsellor I have come to realise that good mental health starts with accepting yourself as you are and **looking after yourself** to the best of your ability. It is then that you will likely have the balance and strength in your life to extend your best to others.

What does accepting yourself mean? I would say it is being honest with who you are right now and what your past is. Now, I completely understand you may not like everything about yourself. There may quite understandably be some aspects you may wish to **change**. For example, I am very impatient with my children. This is something I want to work on. However, I would not have the chance to improve if I don't first accept the fact that I am impatient.

Equally, I am quite sure there are lots of aspects of your character you may like very much and rightly so! **High self-esteem is an important component of mental wellbeing.**

# FOUNDATIONAL NEEDS

The renowned psychologist, Abraham Maslow, defined several groups of universal human needs, known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Those groups could be broadly classified as:

- physiological
- safety & security
- belonging
- self-esteem
- self-actualisation

This model was developed in the middle of last century. I find it is particularly pertinent now because it proposes a **holistic understanding of wellbeing**. Specifically, that one must look after their body so as to look after their spirit. Of course, we have all likely heard the folk wisdom of "healthy body, healthy mind".

In my experience as a counsellor, supporting autistic adults, I have observed that my clients can easily forgo their physiological needs and this contributes to emotional distress.

I would suggest that on an ongoing basis you look after yourself by making sure you attend to your rest, your nutrition, exercise and social connection\*.

### **Rest**

- Are you taking sufficient breaks during the day?
- Is your night-time sleep of good quality?

### **Nutrition**

- Is your food intake balanced and sufficient?
- Are you getting the nutrients your body needs? In the dark months it is especially worthwhile considering a vitamin D supplement. If you are feeling lethargic, how are your iron levels?

### **Exercise**

- Do you exercise regularly?
- Do you enjoy exercising? If not, consider finding the right activity for you.

### **Social connection**

- Is there a person or a group of people you feel emotionally supported by and feel a sense of belonging with?
- Consider ways you could feel comfortable interacting with others.

*\*in the way that is right for you*

# THE WINTER FESTIVE BREAK

Not all of us celebrate Christmas, of course. There may be other religious or secular festivities at different times of year that you find **overwhelming**.

Now, I have rushed in here, assuming you find large-scale celebrations overwhelming. You might not. You might love the sensory excitement that they bring. We are all wonderfully different.

If however the thought of visitors in your home, obligatory dinners and present-giving with all its excess makes you wish you could sleep through it, I am with you. You might feel like the celebration is “happening to you” and there is no choice but to tough it out, which can end in spectacular meltdowns you would rather avoid.

Here is my personal list of tips, I hope you find it useful:

- **Be aware** of what you enjoy and what drains your resources
- Take **control** of your experience by planning in advance and **negotiating** with significant others to have your needs met
- **Communicate** why you might wish to participate on your terms
- **Create a space to retreat to and allow yourself breaks to self-regulate**



# ACTS OF KINDNESS

Remember to **be gentle with yourself**, especially if you are going through a tough time. Notice the tone of your **internal voice**. Speak to yourself as you would to your best friend. Hold that precious shell lightly.

One more thing that I would like to share with you is the importance of small acts of kindness first to yourself, then to others.

Can you think of something small and genuinely nice you could offer yourself every day over the next week? It could be half an hour in peace with your favourite book, a cup of special tea, a slice of cake, a new fitness class, a walk in a place that makes you happy...

Plan an act of kindness for each day of the week and notice what it brings.

# Lastly, some ideas for the colder days



- Enjoy the **outdoors** when the weather allows
- Consider investing in a **daylight** lamp
- Keep your home **warm**
- If you like taking baths or showers, perhaps explore using a few drops of essential oil to **lift your mood**
- It may be worth adding **nutritional supplements** from reputable sources to your diet
- If going out to **exercise** is unappealing, try a routine online
- Keep up the positive **social interactions**

**Remember, only you are holding that beautiful shell.  
Take care of yourself, always.**

If you have found this short article useful and would like counselling support, please reach out.

I help you to:

- discover your genuine self
- manage emotions
- negotiate fulfilling relationships
- thrive at work

My previous clients said they had found the sessions beneficial and walked away with renewed hope. In-person therapy in Beaconsfield HP9 or online anywhere in the UK. Price per appointment is £80.

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