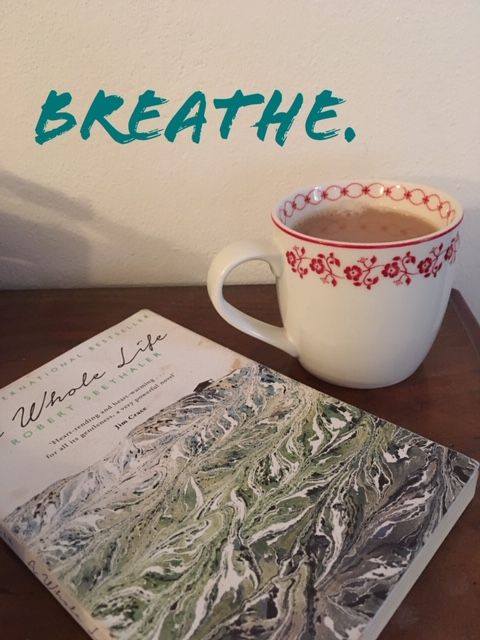
**Preparing for your online counselling session**

It’s really helpful to make a ‘space’ for your counselling session. If we were working in person (face to face) there’s certain things that I would do to prepare the room and hold the boundaries. I don’t have the same control over these when we’re meeting online. I prepare my own space, so that my attention can be focused on you, and I suggest that you too can support the session to make sure you get the most out of it, by considering the following:

* If possible, plan to be ready for your session a few minutes early so that you have a little time to settle
* Make sure that you are somewhere where you won’t be disturbed or have your privacy interrupted
* Get comfortable; make sure the room you’re in is warm or cool enough
* If possible use a PC or laptop; if using a phone you may be distracted by alert pop-ups, which will take your focus away from yourself – so disable these if possible
* Whatever device you’re using make sure it’s fully charged or plugged in
* Get yourself a glass of water or a cup of tea
* Have your diary or pen and paper handy so that we can agree our next session time/date
* The above points are what I imagine is useful – but it can help to close your eyes and imagine we were meeting in person – what would YOU want there to be in place for you to be as relaxed and comfortable as possible? This is YOUR session; please give yourself permission to be kind to yourself as you approach it.

Online counselling differs from face to face counselling in that we don’t have all the subtle clues of body language. While web-cam counselling might superficially seem just like face to face counselling, because of camera positions it is difficult to make eye contact – it can seem as if we’re not looking at each other – and this can have an effect on how we connect. With phone counselling we don’t see body language or expressions. Sometimes the actual connection over the internet means that we may mishear or misunderstand each other. I normally use earphones to cut out any environmental noise at my end and sometimes either/both of us may need to adjust volume to prevent sound interference. With text-based counselling, we don’t have clues from tone of voice or facial expressions.

So, please tell me if you think at any point that I’ve misunderstood you, and I will ask you questions from time to time to check my understanding.

