Start the New Year off on the right foot

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With Christmas finished and the New Year's celebrations over, January is the ideal time to take stock and decide what is most important to us in our day-to-day lives. The start of a new year gives us the opportunity to tackle those difficulties we have swept under the carpet over the course of the previous 12 months and look forward to a positive year ahead from a fresh perspective.

Dr Sherylin Thompson, a Registered Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, has some practical advice on how to start 2015 in a positive manner:

"**Set some New Year's objectives**. The start of a new year is the ideal opportunity to develop and stretch your skills. Setting and achieving some New Year's goals will give you a huge confidence boost, which in turn could give you that extra bit of energy needed to tackle those things you have been putting off – perhaps learning a new skill you feel less confident in, or doing something you have not done for a long time.

"**Get fit and eat healthily**. It might be that you want to shed those few pounds put on over Christmas, or that you just fancy getting a bit fitter, but the start of a new year offers up the ideal opportunity to start a new exercise regime. Maintaining the recommended 30 minutes of exercise a day will keep you feeling relaxed and your spirits high, so do not be put off by the unpredictable January weather – there are plenty of ways to exercise indoors, such as going to the gym or doing yoga. A well- balanced diet has also been shown to have a positive effect on mental wellbeing, and may leave you feeling healthier and more energetic.

"**Relax and enjoy yourself**. Make the effort to socialise with friends and family doing the things you enjoy, whether it be a daytrip out to a theme park, a walk in the countryside, or a visit to the local cinema. Relaxing and having some fun with like- minded people is a proven mood booster and a great way to de-stress.

"**Help others**. If you are looking at doing something positive this New Year, why not do some voluntary work? Lending a helping hand can be an extremely rewarding experience and can act as a great self-esteem booster while also providing the chance to meet different people and learn new skills.

"**Talk to others**. If the Christmas period brought family or relationship issues to a head, or you just find yourself stuck in a rut entering the New Year, finding someone you trust to confide in can be a productive way to solve such issues. Tell a good listener how you are feeling and you may be surprised at the positive effect that this can have on your outlook on life.

"**Seek professional help**. Sometimes it is difficult to talk about personal problems with the people we are closest to. A BACP Registered therapist can help you work through your problems to find practical, manageable solutions."

Therapy offers you a safe, confidential place to talk about your life and anything that may be confusing, painful or uncomfortable. It allows you to talk with someone who is trained to listen attentively and to help you improve things. Your GP can refer you for talking treatment that is free on the NHS. This will usually be a short course of counselling from the GP surgery's counselling service. If you are in education you may be able to access counselling through your school, college or university. If you are in employment many workplaces offer a counselling service either in-house or as part of an employee assistance scheme. Additionally, there may be counselling available in your area through a local community scheme or volunteer project.

If you decide to access counselling privately, BACP's public website http://www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk contains a wealth of information for anyone considering therapy including information sheets, videos, links to recent research, and a 'find a therapist' directory which helps you to find a private therapist in your local area.

Notes to editors

Dr Sherylin Thompson is available for follow-up comment. For any enquiries related to this press release, call our media team on 01455 883 342, or email media@bacp.co.uk. *For non-media enquiries please call our main switchboard on 01455 883 300.*

BACP is a professional body and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice and provides information for therapists, clients of therapy, and the public. We have over 40,000 members, working within a range of settings, including the NHS, schools and universities, workplaces and private practice, as well as third sector environments including voluntary, community and pastoral settings.

You can view this press release on BACP's website.

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