

## **Bronwyn Bickle – Counsellor**

Bronwyn Bickle is a counsellor who has had Meniere's disease for two years.

“Many people find it difficult to seek help outside of the home including those with chronic illness, individuals living with a disability and those experiencing anxiety”

I started having noticeable symptoms of Meniere's disease two years ago, though looking back now I've had symptoms for much longer than that.

I'm still in the middle of trying to gain a formal diagnosis, though my ENT has stated that with my level of symptoms it's more about managing day-to-day life.

I've lost a small amount of hearing in the left, and regularly have tinnitus, light sensitivity, sensitivity to movement in my peripheral vision, nausea for no apparent reason, and a whole host of other 'minor' symptoms.

I am fortunate in that I have not had an episode in almost a year. I have a supportive GP, Audiologist and Optometrist who understand the symptoms and help me look, not so much for solutions, but for ways to manage my situation.

I have also had an autoimmune disease for 28 years and as we know many people say Meniere's is autoimmune related, although my ENT and GP will not commit a clear answer to this.

So, I understand the frustrations, fear and fatigue that come with chronic illness. I am managing my Meniere's for the moment through a holistic approach including physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

My triggers include stress and anxiety, so for me it is important to address these factors on a daily basis. I also avoid coffee, and unfortunately have found exercise can exacerbate my symptoms if I'm having a bad day. As we all know, it is a frustratingly fine balancing act. I started studying counselling approximately 6 years ago. I have always had a passion for mental health and it was a very organic career shift away from retail and photography. I now have a Graduate Diploma in counselling, and continue to study including my current Bachelor of Psychological Science and Sociology.

The last 2 years of study have been by far the hardest with Meniere's lurking in the background, and being a single parent, it really is a hard slog but very much worth it. I have good days where I achieve a lot, and bad days where I need to lay down in a dark, quiet room.

Since the Meniere's started I have been very worried about finding employment, and how I would manage driving to and from work every day, and being on my feet without rests. But counselling is the perfect fit particularly working with individuals with chronic illness, as I understand the good and bad days, trying to function within the medical model, the frustrations and the highs and lows.

Starting a private practice was my way of creating an opportunity for myself, where opportunities are thin on the ground for individuals with chronic illness especially if you don't qualify for the NDIS. I offer online counselling only, which allows me to manage my own symptoms from home whilst helping people who may be in a similar situation. Many people find it difficult to seek help outside of the home including those with chronic illness, individuals living with a disability and those experiencing anxiety.

Online counselling can be a convenient way of seeking therapy whilst remaining in a safe and comfortable environment.

**For your information:**

Brownyn lives in rural South Australia. She has designed her website so as to lessen the likelihood of triggering for individuals with visual disturbances (scrolling through websites is one of my triggers). She is currently learning Auslan and hopes to offer sign counselling in the future.

If you would like to connect with Bronwyn see:

[www.floraisonmentalhealth.com.au](http://www.floraisonmentalhealth.com.au)

<https://www.facebook.com/floraisonmentalhealth>