

## **Appendix A – Invitation letter**

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student at the University of East London and I am in the final year of a Master's Program in Applied Positive Psychology. I am currently working on my research project. My dissertation will investigate how learning about mindfulness and one's character strengths affects university students' flourishing and the beliefs they hold about their academic performance.

I would like to invite interested undergraduate students to participate in my study. Your participation is voluntary. However, your taking part in this study could help further our understanding of the role positive psychology can play in students' academic performance and wellbeing.

I am looking for healthy undergraduate students, aged between 18 and 25, who are studying full-time and who are not engaged in a regular meditative practice. Also, you must be able to understand and speak English.

You must be willing to participate in a 4-hour workshop and in a 2-hour focus group. The workshop will introduce you to elements of positive psychology. The focus groups will be an occasion to share about what you gained from the workshop, what has helped you and the changes which may or may not have occurred in your life as a result.

If you are interested, please contact me so we can further discuss your participation.

I look forward to your contribution to this study.

Thank you,

Di-Anne Robin  
Graduate student  
MSc in Applied Positive Psychology Program  
University of East London  
Email: [u1525994@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1525994@uel.ac.uk)

## **Appendix B – Information sheet**

### ***Impact of a short intervention using mindfulness and character strengths, on university students' self-efficacy and flourishing.***

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree, it is important that you understand what your participation entails. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Di-Anne Robin. I am a graduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London (UEL) and am studying for a Master in Applied Positive Psychology. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

#### **What is the research?**

I am investigating how learning about mindfulness and one's character strengths affect university students' flourishing and the beliefs they hold about their academic performance.

My research has been approved by UEL's School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

#### **Why have you been asked to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in my research as someone who fits the kind of people I am looking for to help me explore my research topic. I am looking to involve healthy undergraduate university students who are studying full-time and who are not engaged in a regular meditative practice. Participants have to be between 18 and 25 years old and must be able to speak and understand English.

I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way and you will be treated with respect.

You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

#### **What will your participation involve?**

If you agree to participate you will be asked the following:

- Fill out the VIA Survey of character strengths and bring the results with you to the workshop (the long version takes about 20 minutes). Survey can be done online on the VIA Institute on character's website: <http://www.viacharacter.org>
- Fill out a demographic questionnaire
- Participate in a 4-hour workshop (February X, from 9:00 to 13:00). In the workshop you will be introduced to mindfulness and to character strengths.

- The workshop will be audio recorded to help the researcher improve her animation skills. This recording would also serve to review and improve the content of the workshop.
- Use in your personal life what you will learn in the workshop:
  - practice a short mindfulness meditation 3-4 times a week;
  - use one of your signature strengths in a new way 1-2 times a week;
  - work toward a goal you will select during the workshop.
- Participate in one 2-hour focus group discussion. You will be assigned to one of the focus groups (Dates in March, from 10:00 to 12:00). This discussion will be like having an informal chat about your experience, what you were able to practice and the changes which may or may not have occurred in your life as a result.
- The focus group discussions will be audio recorded for research purpose.
- Your participation is voluntary.

I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research but your experience could be very valuable in helping to develop knowledge and understanding about the impact of learning about mindfulness and one's character strengths on the wellbeing of university students and the beliefs they hold about their academic performance.

### **Is it safe?**

There are no physical risks to participants in this study.

Mindfulness involves noticing what is present, the positive emotions (like joy or love) and the negative emotions (like stress or life dissatisfaction); this means that there is some risk of psychological or emotional discomfort due to participation in this study. However, emotional or psychological discomfort will be directly addressed by learning and practicing mindfulness activities. In this way, risks and discomforts will be managed and kept to a minimum.

### **What will you gain from your participation?**

You will be introduced to mindfulness and you will discover how to use your character strengths. Mindfulness has been shown to reduce rumination and stress and to increase self-regulation, the ability to focus and to boost working memory. It also improves general health and interpersonal relationships. Knowledge and use of one's character strengths helps reduce anxiety and stress and has also been linked to improved wellbeing and work engagement.

### **Your taking part will be safe and confidential**

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times and all information will be kept confidential.

Participants will not be identified by the data collected, on any written material resulting from the data collected, or in any write-up of the research. Pseudonyms will be used in lieu of real names. Any other identifying information will be deleted.

Participants' identity will be known to other group participants and in order to preserve confidentiality, all participants will be asked to sign a consent form to agree on keeping all

comments made during focus groups confidential. However, the researcher cannot guarantee that others in these groups will respect the confidentiality of the group.

Participants do not have to answer all questions asked of them and can stop their participation at any time.

**What will happen to the information that you provide?**

I will store all transcriptions and personal contact information on my password-protected laptop, with access limited to myself. The transcripts collected will be analysed and used toward a Master's dissertation and may be used for future publication.

Transcriptions will be kept for five years following the submission of my dissertation, after which, all data will be destroyed.

**What if you want to withdraw?**

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, after your participation in the focus group, it will not be possible to identify and remove your individual comments.

**Contact Details**

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Di-Anne Robin, MAPP Student, University of East London

Email: [u1525994@uel.ac.uk](mailto:u1525994@uel.ac.uk)

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor:

Dr. Tim Lomas , School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: [t.lomas@uel.ac.uk](mailto:t.lomas@uel.ac.uk)

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

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