 Appendix B — Debriefing Form

Thank you very much for participating in today’s session. We are very grateful for your feedback and hope you found the experience interesting and enjoyable.

At the beginning of today’s session, we told you we were studying how guided relaxation affects attention. We have some more specific goals that we couldn’t tell you about at the beginning. The reason we concealed our specific purposes is because, often, when people know the exact purpose of a study, they respond in ways that support the hypotheses, rather than responding naturally. We felt that we could obtain natural responses and more valid results if you did not know our full purpose. We hope that you understand our decision and that you do not feel upset about being partially misled.

The primary purpose of our study is to determine if mindfulness meditation induces a more open form of attention, allowing for better recognition and processing of stimuli. Sometimes in our daily life our mind becomes overwhelmed by all that we have process, and we may miss something important by focusing too much on one thing. We used a combination of behavioral methods, as well as electroencephalogram (EEG) to investigate the neural and psychophysiological correlates of human attention. Half of the participants in this study were randomly assigned to mindfulness meditation, and the other have to somatic relaxation.

The finger-tapping task you completed is a deceptively simple task designed to detect the “mode” of processing your brain is using at any given moment. When you press the button at an inconsistent pace (off-rhythm), your brain is likely exerting effort to maintain performance. However, if you keep a steady rhythm, your brain is likely more relaxed and open to experiences. This latter state is known as being “in the zone” (former state is “out of the zone”). The rapid serial visual presentation (RSVP) task is designed to measure how fixated you become on a given stimulus (the first number, T1), and if this fixation prevents you from detecting a stimulus closely following it (the second number, T2). We wanted to investigate if meditation can induce “in-the-zone” processing, and if this processing can help people avoid fixating on T1 and detect T2. We are also investigating the neurological correlates of your behavioural performance and meditation to see what the underlying mechanisms behind this change are. We wanted to see if any changes we may find are unique to meditation, or if simply relaxing is enough.

We believe that meditating induces “in-the-zone” processing via the default mode network – a brain network associated with rest and introspective thought. This mode of processing may be more sustainable, as your brain does not become fatigued by forcefully attending to a single thing, and may leave more resources for other stimuli.

The research is still in progress, so we would really appreciate if you do not tell others about the specific details of this study. If you have any other questions, please feel free to ask or you may contact the researchers, John Eusebio (john.eusebio@mail.utoronto.ca) or Dr. Michael Inzlicht (michael.inzlicht@utoronto.ca), at the Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, Scarborough Campus.

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board, <ethics.review@utoronto.ca>.

Thank you again for participating!