

Plain language statement

Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences



Project: Threat and safety behavioural index study

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Introduction

We would like to invite you to participate in a project at the University of Melbourne.

This project studies how humans explore and avoid when threat is present. The project involves you answering some questions online about your thoughts and behaviours (30 minutes). Then you will complete a series of games online where you make decisions about how to act (1 hour).

This document contains detailed information about the project and is designed to clearly explain all the procedures involved prior to your final decision about you taking part.

Please read the following information carefully and feel free to ask any questions about the project.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide an electronic signature saying you want to participate (this is called a consent form (over 18) or assent form (under 18)). Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to participate if you do not want to.

What will I be asked to do?

To participate, you will be directed to a link that will provide the questionnaires and online games.

The games in the scanner involve cartoon pictures of animals, forests, weapons, potions, and poisons. In some games we will ask you to rate the safety of the picture, in others we will ask you to make a decision about exploring or avoiding. You will be taught about how the games work prior to starting. On some trials you will win the game and you will be “safe”. When you are safe you will either hear nothing or a pleasant tone like a slot machine win. On other trials you will lose the game and will hear an unpleasant white noise. You will receive feedback on your responses throughout the games.

What are the risks?

None of the procedures involved in this study have any serious threat to your physical safety or well-being. We would like you to consider some helpful information below.

Some of the questionnaires contain items that some may find uncomfortable or upsetting to think about. For example, we will ask whether you have psychiatric symptoms and will ask about your sleep and well being.

You may find some of the tasks to be boring or irritating. Tiredness including eyestrain is possible. Noise will be used during the study, which does not cause any physical damage or pain but may be irritating or uncomfortable.

If you express discomfort, you can (1) Pause the task and take a break. Regular breaks will be provided throughout so you do not get too fatigued. (2) Stop the study and receive payment for your time without returning to complete the study. (3) Use the contact information for mental health services provided.

What are the benefits?

It is hoped that this research can develop a better understanding of how the human brain develops and how that might lead to anxiety.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

By participating, you give permission to the investigators collecting and using the information you provide for the research project. All data will be stored on secure servers on the University of Melbourne High Performance Computing system. Access to these data will be available to named, password-carrying researchers only. In the long term, non-identifiable data (i.e., data with all participants' identifying features removed) from this study will be stored indefinitely and made available to external investigators for use in research projects. The data provided by you is confidential and will not be linked to your identity.

What if I want to withdraw from the research?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. However, data you provide that has been processed and de-identified cannot be withdrawn. That data will not be able to be tied to your identity.

Withdrawing from the research would have no effect on your relationship with the University of Melbourne or any member of the School of Psychological Sciences. It would not affect your grades, assessment or any ongoing or future treatment.

Who is funding this research?

This research is funded by a grant to Dr Sarah Tashjian from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (Grant #2033400).

For Children/Adolescents under age 18 and Parents/Guardians/Caretakers of Children under age 18

Parents/Guardians/Caretakers will need to give permission for minor participants under age 18 to participate in the study. No data collected from minor participants will be shared with parents/guardians/caretakers. All data provided is confidential. By signing the consent form, parents/guardians/caretakers consent to the investigators collecting and using the information your child provides for the research project. By signing the assent form, children/adolescents under age 18 give permission to the investigators to collect and use the information they provide for the research project.

Where can I get further information?

If you have not understood any of this information, please contact any of the researchers listed above. This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about this research project that you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010 (Tel: +61 3 8344 2073; Fax: +61 3 9347 6739; email: HumanEthicsComplaints@unimelb.edu.au). All complaints will be treated confidentially. Please note that you are contacting ethics about HREC No. 30999.

How do I agree to participate?

If you wish to participate, please continue to the consent/assent form at the link provided.