

**BROWN UNIVERSITY**  
**CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION**

Understanding Reciprocity in People with Autism across Peer-to-peer systems

**KEY INFORMATION:**

You are invited to take part in a Brown University research study. Your participation is voluntary.

For a list of contacts to speak with about health concerns or abuse, see the "Mental Health Resources" section below.

- **PURPOSE:** The study is about Internet based cognitive behavioral peer support for individuals with Autism. To participate in this study you do not need to identify as having Autism.
- **PROCEDURES:** You will be asked to participate in two 1-hour online sessions, where you will communicate with a peer who is trained in at least 15-20 hours of cognitive behavioral therapy principles. During this session, you will discuss an issue or a situation that is troubling to you. You may discuss any topic that you choose to. You will work with the trained peer to find a new way to think about your issue. After the session, you will be asked follow-up questions about your experience by Brown University researchers. This will take about 5 minutes.
- **TIME INVOLVED:** The study will take up to 2.5 hours of your time.
- **COMPENSATION:** You will receive a \$40 amazon gift card after completion of the study. If you end your participation in this study early, you will receive a prorated amount of compensation for your time.
- **RISKS:** Potential risks include eyestrain, wrist pain, etc. consistent with about 2 hours of computer usage and/or emotional distress due to online peer support sessions. Please see the "What are the risks?" section below for more details.
- **BENEFITS:** Potential benefits include the possibility of an improved emotional state due to peer support sessions, ability to view a troubling situation in a new light, and the understanding of basic cognitive behavioral therapy principles.
- **ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION:** This study involves participating in an online cognitive behavioral based peer-support session. Alternative ways to receive peer support may include the following online sites: Support Group Central, Hey Peers, and 7 Cups. These sites, however, are not direct comparisons to the peer-support methods used in this study.

**1. Researcher(s):**

Zainab Iftikhar [zainab\\_iftikhar@brown.edu](mailto:zainab_iftikhar@brown.edu)

Jeff Huang [jeff\\_huang@brown.edu](mailto:jeff_huang@brown.edu)

Sara Syed sara\_syed@brown.edu

## **2. What is this study about?**

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the use of internet based cognitive behavioral therapy, and individual's levels of reciprocity in an online platform. We are seeking to identify ways in which internet based cognitive behavioral therapy platforms can be better designed to help individuals with Autism and the general population.

You are being asked to be in this study because you are an individual who is 18 years of age or older and you are fluent in English. You have the ability to engage in hour long conversations and feel comfortable sharing about an issue that has been troubling you. You have typing skills. You may or may not identify as having Autism.

## **3. What will I be asked to do?**

During this study you will be asked to participate in two online peer support sessions. During these sessions you will be asked to share an issue or situation that is troubling to you. The peer will be a user who has received about 15 to 30 hours of basic cognitive behavioral therapy training. The peer will not give you any advice or recommendations. The peer will also not provide you with any diagnosis.

During the sessions you will be asked to answer the peer's questions. These questions may include further explanation on the troubling situation, your past and current emotional states, and how you are feeling. You are not required to answer any question that you do not want to or elaborate further than you choose to share.

After this peer session, you will be asked to fill out a brief survey about your experience. This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete. This may include questions on your thoughts related to the peer session, as well as components of the online interface that was used to conduct the session. Again, you may refuse to answer or skip any questions.

Your participation in this study will take about 1 hour for each of the two peer sessions, for an estimated total of 2 hours.

## **4. Will I be paid?**

You will be given the option to receive a digital Amazon gift card as compensation for your time. You will receive a \$20 gift card for each session you complete, for a total payment up to \$40. If you choose to drop out of the study early, you will receive a partial compensation, prorated to \$20/hour (for example, participants who dropout after 30 minutes of the study, will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card). You must complete at least 30 minutes of the study to receive any prorated compensation.

## **5. What are the risks?**

Risks from this study include any potential stress or disadvantages that may result from the peer sessions. You may choose to discuss any issue you want during these sessions, but these sessions can be stressful or triggering, so please consider whether that is the case for you before agreeing to participate. You may stop participating in this study at any time without penalty.

In the event that you feel psychologically distressed by participation in this study, we encourage you to call Dr. Jeff Huang, 115 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02912 at 401-863-5808 who will direct you to appropriate resources for your needs. If you are feeling distressed and are unable to contact a person associated with this study, please contact the disaster distress hotline from the CDC at 1-800-985-5990.

Potential physical risks include eyestrain, wrist pain, etc. consistent with about 1 to 2.5 hours of computer usage.

As with all studies, there is a breach of confidentiality risk. Please see the section titled “How will my information be protected?” to learn how we will minimize this risk.

#### **6. What are the benefits?**

You may not directly benefit from being in this research study. Some potential benefits include an improved emotional state from peer sessions and the ability to view your troubling situation in a new light. Other potential benefits are that you may learn the basic principles of cognitive behavioral therapy.

#### **7. How will my information be protected?**

In order to protect your information, we will be storing data collected from the study on encrypted platforms and on a private laptop that will be stored in a locked room.

The only identifiable information we will collect is your email address, for communication purposes. We will not link your email address to any of the study's data. As all information collected will be coded so that it is not linked to any identifiable information. This information may be shared for future research. However, this information will not be made publicly available. All records of peer to peer sessions will not contain any identifying information about the participants.

#### **8. Are there alternatives to this study?**

This study involves participating in an online cognitive behavioral based peer-support session. Alternative ways to receive online peer support may include the following sites: Support Group Central, Hey Peers, and 7 Cups. These sites, however, are not direct comparisons to the

peer-support methods used in this study. Support Group Central and Hey Peers involve online group support. This study, however, involves one-one-one peer support. 7 Cups has a one-one-one peer support option, however, it is not based around cognitive behavioral therapy principles, which this study uses.

#### **9. What if I want to stop?**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. Even if you decide to be in this study, you can change your mind and stop at any time.

If you refuse to participate in or leave the study, your current or future relationship with Brown University will not be affected.

#### **10. Who can I talk to if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions about your participation in this study, you can contact Sara Syed at [sara\\_syed@brown.edu](mailto:sara_syed@brown.edu). You can also contact her advisor Jeff Huang at [jeff\\_huang@brown.edu](mailto:jeff_huang@brown.edu).

#### **11. Who can I talk to if I have questions about my rights as a participant?**

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Brown University's Human Research Protection Program at 401-863-3050 or email them at [IRB@Brown.edu](mailto:IRB@Brown.edu).

#### **12. Mental Health Resources**

These assessments will not be reviewed immediately. If you have questions or experience emotional distress, please refer to the list of resources provided below.

Disaster distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

National Institute of Mental Health: 301-443-4513

In the event that you feel psychologically distressed by participation in this study, we encourage you to call Dr. Jeff Huang at 401-863-5808 who will direct you to appropriate resources for your needs. If you are feeling distressed and are unable to contact a person associated with this study, please contact the disaster distress hotline from the CDC at 1-800-985-5990.

#### **13. Consent to Participate**

You will be asked that you have read and understood the information in this document, and that you agree to volunteer as a research participant for this study.

A copy of this form will be available on our website: [\[URL TO WEBSITE\]](#)