

Participation Sheet for Program Evaluation

Restoring Resilience: A Trial of Meditation to Reduce Distress and Absenteeism in Ambulance Workers

Purpose:

We'd like to invite you to take part in our research study. Participation is entirely voluntary. Before you decide, we'd like you to understand why the research is being conducted and what your involvement would entail. This information sheet is designed to help you decide whether or not to take part and to answer any questions you may have. Reading it should take about 10 minutes. Thank you for considering participation in this study.

What is the study?

We are investigating whether Transcendental Meditation (TM)—a meditation technique intended to promote calmness—can reduce stress, improve overall quality of life, and impact stress-related absences from work.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been invited because you work for either the London Ambulance Service or the Yorkshire Ambulance Service, where the TM programme is being implemented.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is entirely your choice. You do not need to provide a reason if you choose not to take part, and you will not be placed under any pressure to change your mind. Your decision will not affect your employment status, job performance reviews, or access to existing support services.

If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part. If you do decide to take part then you are free to leave the study at any time without this affecting your employment status, job performance reviews, or access to existing support services. You do not have to give a reason but any information you have already given will remain part of the research and the research team may contact you to ask if there are ways in which you think the service could be improved.

What does taking part involve?

If you agree to participate, you will first be asked some questions about your demographics, general health, and psychological wellbeing. You will then be invited to complete three online surveys—at three months, six and nine months after the study begins. Each survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete via a secure platform (Jotform).

In addition, you will be asked to complete a short twice monthly form via Jotform to report any absences from work and the reasons for them.

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As a token of appreciation, participants who complete all scheduled surveys and twice monthly self-reports will receive a £30 voucher.

What are the possible risks or disadvantages of taking part?

While Transcendental Meditation is generally considered safe, some people may experience brief and minor effects—such as unusual bodily sensations or, in rare cases, a temporary cold sore. Very infrequently, meditation practices have been reported to bring up psychological difficulties in particularly vulnerable individuals. For this reason, anyone currently experiencing significant psychiatric instability will not be eligible to take part. The training itself is delivered through a structured and highly supported process: participants receive a standardised four-day course of instruction, followed by regular group or individual checking sessions, with ample opportunities for ongoing support provided online or through remote platforms whenever appropriate. The TM instructors involved in this study are experienced in working with people who have been exposed to high levels of stress or trauma, and the research team remains available throughout participation to help you access NHS services immediately should you need additional psychological or medical assistance. It is important to understand that this study is a research intervention rather than a clinical one, and it is not intended to replace or delay access to formal NHS mental health care.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

While we cannot promise direct benefits to you personally, we hope that TM may help you better manage stress and anxiety, and improve your overall wellbeing and health. Your participation will also contribute to the growing evidence base for TM, which may support future funding and encourage others to reduce stress and improve wellbeing.

How will participants be selected for the programme?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be randomly assigned (like flipping a coin) to one of two groups. One group will begin the Transcendental Meditation programme shortly after the study starts. The other group will continue with their usual routines during the study period and will be offered the same meditation programme after the study ends. This approach helps us compare outcomes fairly, while ensuring that everyone who takes part has a chance to benefit from the programme.

Transcendental Meditation (TM):

You will learn Transcendental Meditation either during the study or shortly after it ends, depending on which group you are randomly placed in. The technique involves the use of a sound (mantra) to effortlessly allow the mind to settle down to a state of inner calm. It is a simple, natural and effortless practice, and unlike other meditation strategies, it does not involve concentration or control of the mind. The practice does not require any religion, philosophy, or change in lifestyle. TM will be delivered to participants by certified instructors of the programme in a standardised format. The TM technique is not based on religious or other philosophical beliefs and does not involve major changes to one's lifestyle.

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Four experienced certified TM instructors will conduct the course. All teachers also have up-to-date DBS certificates. All certified TM teachers have been extensively trained in the teaching of the TM programme, verifying continued correctness of effortless practice of the technique, and conducting additional follow-up sessions. The same standardised TM course sequence will be used for all participants in the project.

Outline of Transcendental Meditation Teaching:

Learning TM will involve individual and group sessions over 12 weeks (about 60-90 minutes per session), including the core instruction in the TM technique which will involve five sessions, consisting of:

Step 1: Attend an introductory talk with a certified TM teacher via Zoom. This will give the participant a chance to find out more about TM, ask any questions, and decide whether they would like to go ahead with the course. After the talk participants can also have a personal chat with the TM teacher.

Step 2: Personal one-to-one in-person instruction in the technique. This takes 60-90 minutes.

Step 3: The instruction is then followed by 3 consecutive days of 2-hour follow-up sessions. This can be done in two ways:

- At-home learning: offers flexibility with about 1.5 hours of course materials viewed throughout the day, supported by daily online meditation 'check-in' sessions with their personal teacher.
- In-person: 2-hour daily sessions with the participant's TM teacher.

With both options, a TM teacher will offer continuing individualised support and guidance.

Step 4: A further 60-90 minute follow-up session around 10 days after learning, either over Zoom or in person.

Step 5: Monthly meditation sessions over Zoom with a TM teacher and peers, recommended for at least 6 months.

Additional sessions (individual or group) will be available as needed during the first three months of the project.

Home Practice:

As part of the programme, you will be asked to practice Transcendental Meditation (TM) twice a day—once in the morning and once in the evening—for 20 minutes each session. Your practice will be tracked using the TM app.

How will we use information about you?

We will need to use information from you for this research project. This information will include your name, contact details, and your responses to demographic, health and

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psychological wellbeing questionnaires, your TM app usage screenshots, and your twice-monthly absence self-reports. People will use this information to do the research or to check that the research is being done properly.

People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. Your data will have a code number instead.

University of Westminster is the sponsor of this research and is responsible for looking after your information. We will not share your information related to this research project with any other organisations. All data analysis will be carried out by the research team at the University of Westminster.

We will keep all information about you safe and secure by:

- Storing data on password-protected University servers
- Restricting access to named members of the research team
- Replacing your name with a unique study ID number (pseudonymisation)

International transfers

Your data will not be shared outside the UK.

How will we use information about you after the study ends?

Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that you took part in the study. We will keep your study data for 5 years. The study data will then be fully anonymised and securely archived or destroyed.

What are your choices about how your information is used?

- You can stop being part of the study at any time, without giving a reason, but we will keep information about you that we already have.
- You have the right to ask us to access, remove, change or delete data we hold about you for the purposes of the study. You can also object to our processing of your data. We might not always be able to do this if it means we cannot use your data to do the research. If so, we will tell you why we cannot do this.

Where can you find out more about how your information is used?

You can find out more about how we use your information:

- by asking one of the research team
- by sending an email to Nicola Cooke, the University's Data Protection Officer, at N.Cooke@westminster.ac.uk
- by ringing Nicola Cooke, the University's Data Protection Officer, on XX
- at www.hra.nhs.uk/patientdataandresearch

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What will happen to the results of the study?

The findings may be published in reports and academic journals related to health or economics. If you would like a copy of any resulting publication or a summary of the results, please let the research team know. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication.

Who is organizing the study?

The study is being conducted by the University of Westminster and University College London in collaboration with the David Lynch Foundation UK (DLF UK). DLF UK is a registered charity that provides stress-reduction programmes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups affected by trauma. The foundation also offers programmes tailored for students and teachers, and supports research into TM's impact on academic performance, ADHD and other learning difficulties, anxiety, depression, substance use, cardiovascular health, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Safeguarding, Religious Freedom, and Access to Support Services

Your safety, wellbeing, and personal autonomy are central to this study. Participation in the Transcendental Meditation (TM) programme is voluntary, and you are free to choose whether or not to take part in the practice. You will never be pressured to learn or continue TM, and all participants' religious and cultural beliefs will be respected. TM is a secular technique and is not associated with any religion; taking part in this study will not conflict with any faith tradition or personal belief system. All TM teachers involved in this study have completed adult safeguarding training, and the study team follows NHS and University safeguarding policies. If at any point you disclose information indicating that you or someone else may be at risk of harm, the study team may need to follow safeguarding procedures to ensure appropriate support is provided. In addition to the study's own wellbeing procedures, external support services are available should you require further assistance at any time. These include your GP, NHS Talking Therapies, crisis helplines (e.g., Samaritans: 116 123), and local mental health services within your Ambulance Trust. Participation in this study does not replace medical or psychological care. If you experience distress or feel you require additional clinical support, the research team will help you access the appropriate NHS services immediately.

Insurance and Indemnity

This study is covered by insurance arranged by the University of Westminster as sponsor of the study (Professional Indemnity insurance underwritten by AXA Insurance UK Plc). This does not affect your legal rights.

Who do I contact if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns or complaints about anything to do with the study then you can write to the research person in charge:

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Thank you for your time!