

**Information for Participants
UNIVERSITY OF KLAGENFURT**

Project Title: A randomized controlled trial of a bot-based self-help program

TITLE: Randomized Controlled Trial of a Bot-based Self-help Program

PROTOCOL NO.: FRCB-2020
IRB Protocol #20202243

SPONSOR: Meta Platforms, Inc. ("Meta")

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STUDY-RELATED

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Purpose and Overview: You are being asked to be a volunteer in a research study aimed at studying how to improve well-being. The study is conducted by the University of Klagenfurt in partnership with Meta Artificial Intelligence. The purpose of this study is to test a new self-care application that is designed to improve well-being and reduce stress. The study includes completing a questionnaire and follow-up surveys. In addition, you will be assigned one of two possible intervention groups that involve either using a messaging self-care bot from Meta (Intervention Group A) or being directed to a self-help website (Intervention Group B). The self-help website provides a menu of external resources with information and exercises on emotional well-being and self-improvement.

You will not be paid to participate in the study. You may or may not benefit from the study. Possible, but not guaranteed, benefits include learning new self-care, stress management, or communication skills, or reduced stress and greater well-being. We hope to learn ways to help people better manage stress and engage in self-care in the future.

Eligibility to participate: Only English-speaking individuals 18 years of age or older living in the United States are eligible to participate.

Procedures: If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire (which will take about 5 minutes). You will then be randomly (by chance, like flipping a coin) assigned to one of two groups described above. If you are assigned to the Intervention Group A, you will get access to a messaging self-care bot from Meta. You will receive daily messages from the Meta self-care bot. You can choose to respond to the messages via WhatsApp or delay responding until a time that is more preferred. If you are assigned to the Intervention Group B, you will receive access to online wellness resources via a self-help website with information and exercises on emotional wellbeing. In both groups, you can choose how much time you spend and how quickly you prefer to work through the content. Approximately 1 month later, you will be asked to complete an online survey that takes about 10 minutes. You will be asked again to complete the brief survey, provided through a website, 6 months and 12 months later.

Risks / Discomforts: This study involves minimal risks, costs, and discomforts to you. This judgment is based on past research with similar procedures. It is possible that participating in the study may lead to psychological distress from your increased awareness of problems or stressors in your life. Based on the University's experience with other similar studies, discomfort is fairly uncommon and, should it occur, is expected to be only temporary. You may stop participating at any time and choose not to answer individual questions. A link to counseling resources will be made available to all participants.

Benefits: The following direct benefits to you are possible as a result of being in this study: (1) greater knowledge and understanding of self-care skills; (2) improved coping skills to deal more effectively with stress; (3) reduced psychological distress and greater well-being; and/or (4) improved communication skills. However, we cannot and do not guarantee that you will receive any of these or other benefits from this study. We hope to learn ways to help people better manage stress and engage in self-care in the future.

NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL ADVICE. No part of this research study is intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. **The research study is not intended to provide therapy, diagnosis or treatment for a medical condition.** Always seek the advice of your physician or other health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. **While you may get access to certain general medical information or wellness tips during an intervention, this study cannot and is not intended to provide medical advice, mental health services, or other professional services.**

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and based on your consent. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you participate, you may still choose not to answer individual questions. You may withdraw your consent at any time (using the contact details below) without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and this means you will no longer participate in the study.

Alternatives to Participation: The alternative is not to participate in this study.

Payments or Costs to You: There are no costs or payments to you for being a participant in this study. Information from this study, including information from your participation, may lead to discoveries, inventions, or development of commercial products. You and your family will not receive any rights, interests, benefits, or payment if this happens.

Confidentiality and Data Security: The following procedures will be followed to keep your personal information confidential in this study:

General Data Collection and Access Restrictions: The only identifying information about you that will be asked by the University is your email address, so that it is possible to reconnect with you 1 month, 6 months, and 12 months after the start of the study to get your feedback. Your email address will be stored in a separate database with your participant number (a random code that is used to link your responses over time) and this database will be deleted at the end of the study. The University will not share your email address with anyone outside the University research team and will not use your email address for any other purpose than contacting you at those time points to take the survey again. If you are part of Intervention Group A, you will be given a link to connect with Meta's self-care bot through WhatsApp, but the University will not have access to your WhatsApp identity, your Facebook identity or any of your private Facebook information.

If you have questions or concerns about any messages you receive from the bot, please contact the principal investigator or the Institutional Review Board at the contact information provided below. Do not contact Meta or WhatsApp.

The data collected from you under the study will be used to test and improve a new bot-based program aimed at improving well-being and helping personal growth. If you are part of Intervention Group A, Meta may also use the data collected through the self-care bot to improve the bot. The results of the study may be reported in scientific publications or conferences after the results are aggregated such that they do not identify any particular individual.

Online Survey Responses and University Data Storage: Your responses to the online survey will be stored by the University in a secure, access-controlled location for at least 10 years and will be used for research purposes only. Your responses will be stored without any identifying information about you and will be linked with only your randomly-assigned study participant number. They will be kept confidential and will not be shared with Meta or WhatsApp. Email addresses will be deleted by the University immediately after the study is completed.

Self-Care Bot Data: If you are randomly assigned to Intervention Group A, you will be provided a link to use a new self-care bot provided by Meta through WhatsApp. Your interaction details and conversations with the bot will be collected by Meta and securely stored on Meta infrastructures and are subject to Meta's Terms of Service and Data Policy (<https://www.facebook.com/terms>; <https://www.facebook.com/policy>). To the extent there is a conflict between this form and the Meta Terms of Service or Data Policy, this consent form governs.

For the purpose of this study, Meta will share some aspects of your interactions with the bot with the University under a randomly assigned participant number, which is a code that will be used to link those interactions with your responses to the survey. When shared with the University, this randomized code will not be associated with your Facebook or WhatsApp identity or any of your other Facebook information, and will be deleted at the end of the study.

The bot interactions data that Meta will share with the University will be limited to:

- numerical data about how you've engaged with the bot, such as number of days chatted with the bot, number of messages exchanged, number of characters typed in free-text entry messages, time spent talking to the bot, and number of sessions you started and completed
- content you have viewed, such as the self-care modules started and completed out of the total set of modules that the bot proposed for you
- your feedback and satisfaction data, such as the scores you may have given at the end of each self-care module and any free-form feedback you may have entered.
- your free-text responses you have provided in response to questions asked by the bot, in de-identified form and not linked to specific participants

Data Deletion of University Online Survey Responses: When completing the survey, you can withdraw from the study at any time and your survey data will be deleted. After your data is rendered anonymous or de-identified, it will not be possible to delete your data since there will be no way to identify which data was yours.

Limits to Confidentiality: This study involves the use of websites (e.g., youtube.com, mayoclinic.org, healthline.com), apps (i.e., WhatsApp), or other software (e.g., web browsers), whose use is governed by the relevant product's or site's own privacy policy and terms. In addition to the privacy policies and terms of the other products or sites, Meta's Terms of Service and Data Policy also apply as described above.

Questions about the Study and additional information for Research Participants:

- This study is being conducted through a collaboration between the University of Klagenfurt and Meta Artificial Intelligence. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact the study principal investigator, Prof. Dr. Heather Foran, at the University of Klagenfurt, Institute for Psychology. (email: well@aau.at).
- This study has been evaluated by the Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 855-818-2289 or researchquestions@wcgirb.com
- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to be.
- You have the right to change your mind and leave the study at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty.
- Any new information that may make you change your mind about being in this study will be given to you.

By clicking the agree button below, it means that you have read the information given in this consent form, and you would like to be a volunteer in this study. You can download and save this consent form.

Consent

Do Not Consent