

## Participant Information and Consent Form

<b>Title</b>	<b>Social Media + Therapy: A digital ethnography project (SM+T project)</b>
<b>Principal Investigator</b>	Dr Natalie Hendry Digital Ethnography Research Centre, RMIT University

### What does my participation involve?

#### 1 Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research project, which is called **Social Media + Therapy: A digital ethnography project (SM+T project)**. You have been invited because you saw information about the project on social media, and are aged 18 to 40 years, live in Victoria, Australia, and currently are, or have been in the past, a client, patient or consumer of a therapist, counsellor, psychologist or similar.

This Participant Information and Consent Form tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved with taking part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about. Before deciding whether to take part, you might want to talk about it with a relative or friend.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be asked to sign the consent section. By signing it you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read
- Consent to take part in the research project

You will be given a digital copy of this Participant Information and Consent Form to keep.

#### 2 What is the purpose of this research?

Social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, TikTok or Facebook etc.) allow people to create, share, discuss, and critique content related to therapy, mental health and self-care. This can include posts about mental health issues, as well as memes about the struggles of self-care or videos that explain therapeutic ideas. Some researchers identify that this is an example of "therapy culture," that is, the ideas, values, practices and knowledges that are shared in society about therapy, mental health and self-care. Little is known about how this therapy culture on social media influences what people do in therapy, how it makes them feel, or how it might help or hinder what happens both in and outside of therapy.

This project explores how social media complement or challenge what people do in therapy. For this research project, "therapy" encompasses a broad collection of different modalities and approaches to care, such as psychotherapy, psychology, counselling, psychoanalysis, CBT, DBT, ACT, psychodynamic therapy, family therapy, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR), occupational therapy for mental health, life coaching, creative therapies like art, music or dance therapy, kinesiology, somatic therapy, hypnotherapy etc.

Dr Hendry invites people who currently are, or have been in the past, a client, patient or consumer of a therapist, counsellor, psychologist or similar, to participate. These people may be more likely than other people to notice how therapy culture circulates on social media.

The aim of the project is to understand the “therapeutic work” that happens on social media, outside of a therapy session or appointment. This will help inform digital therapy work as well as understand how social media influence people’s wellbeing and care.

The project has been initiated by the researcher, Dr Natalie Hendry and follows her earlier research analysing social media content, practices and cultures about mental health, therapy and self-care. Dr Hendry has experience in research using about mental health, trauma and social media, as well as interview and digital research methods. She has lived experience of mental health challenges and being a mental health carer. Her research has been funded by the RMIT Vice-Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Research Fellowship fund.

### **3 What does participation in this research involve?**

If you decide to take part in the research project, you will first be asked to complete an Expression of Interest form online asking for your contact information, how you would like to be contacted, how you learnt about this project, and to confirm that you are eligible to participate. Providing this information will take approximately 5 minutes. The information you provide will be securely stored and if you do not participate in the project, deleted.

If you are eligible, participation will involve three interviews. You will be able to choose if you would like to be interviewed online (e.g. digital video platform such as Zoom, Skype or FaceTime) or face to face. Interviews will each run for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interview days, times, locations and/or platforms will be organised by you and Dr Hendry. For face-to-face interviews, you will be able to negotiate an interview location with Dr Hendry, subject to Victorian government and RMIT University COVID-19 restrictions.

Before each interview, you will be asked to provide consent by signing the consent form (digitally for digital video interviews). Interviews will be audio recorded and files will be uploaded manually to the RMIT server. For in person interviews, these will be recorded by a smartphone; for digital video interviews, these will be recorded by the interview software and Quicktime program on the researcher’s computer.

*The first interview* will focus on how you use social media, what you see or hear on social media about therapy, self-care and mental health, and how this relates to your experiences of therapy. Questions in this interview might include “What ideas from therapy do you see circulate on social media? Which platforms?” or “How do the profiles you follow on social media help or challenge the goals you have in therapy or things you want to change in life?”

*The second interview* will focus on social media content that shares ideas, practices and values related to therapy. You will be invited to bring a device with you (e.g. mobile phone, iPad etc.) and “show and tell” different social media apps, profiles or accounts that share content or do things related to therapy. This might include influencers who advocate for mental health care, advertisements from therapists, or meme accounts about mental health or self-care.

*In the third interview*, you will be invited to clarify points from your earlier interviews and/or your opinions about the general themes emerging in the project.

There are no costs associated with participating in this research project. Participants will be compensated with a supermarket or other relevant voucher to the value of \$90 per participant for the entire project.

### **4 Other relevant information about the research project**

The project aims to recruit 16 to 20 participants. Each participant will be invited to talk about the same topics, however, as the interviews will be guided by their responses, Dr Hendry may ask participants different questions relevant to their experiences.

*You do not need to talk in detail about your personal reasons for why you seek/sought therapeutic care.* The project focuses on how social media interacts with therapy ideas, values

and practices. You can decide how much information to provide about your own challenges. If you do share details, this information will remain confidential. Any identifying information (e.g. names of therapists, diagnoses etc.) will not be shared in publications or presentations.

*You are welcome to take part if the therapist or practitioner you see/have seen works in alternative therapies.* Some practitioners work in spiritual counselling or life coaching that brings together different modalities (e.g. somatic therapy, kinesiology, mindfulness, dream work etc.) and may or may not be members of professional associations. If you are unsure if your experience will meet the criteria for participating, you are welcome to contact Dr Hendry.

*You are welcome to take part if you experience specific mental health issues or if you do not.* Some people choose to work with a therapist to maintain their wellbeing, work towards a life goal, or learn more about themselves. Others are managing challenging mental health problems that may or may not be formally diagnosed. Whatever your experience and reason for seeking help, you are eligible to participate. However, if you are currently struggling with your mental health, you may want to discuss your participation with a friend or advocate, your therapist, doctor, care team/s and/or Dr Hendry. It might be helpful to wait until acute challenges have settled before participating, e.g. after moving house, after a planned medication change, a few months after an inpatient admission.

## **5 Do I have to take part in this research project?**

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project up to 3 weeks after your last interview or 3 weeks after you have received summary notes from your interview. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Participant Information and Consent Form to sign and you will be given a copy to keep. Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with the researchers or with RMIT University.

You may stop the interview at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

## **6 What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research; however, you may appreciate contributing to knowledge. Possible benefits may include informing mental health care initiatives that use social media (e.g. mental health advocacy projects) or informing how practitioners engage with social media to support their therapeutic work.

## **7 What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?**

### *Emotional and psychological distress*

While people often find it helpful to talk and write about their experiences, it is unlikely, but you may become upset or distressed during an interview. The interview is not intended to be therapy and you will not be encouraged to explicitly discuss your experiences of trauma, discrimination or mental ill-health. However, during an interview about the research themes you may find yourself experiencing unexpected or uncomfortable thoughts and feelings during or after the interview, even if you are typically comfortable talking about your life. It can be especially challenging during this time of COVID-19 and social distancing to talk about your experiences.

If you become upset or distressed during your interview/s, you may ask to change the topic of discussion, take a break, or end your participation. Dr Hendry is also able to redirect the interview and may ask you if you would like to change topics or focus. Dr Hendry will also be able to discuss appropriate support for you during or after the interview. A list of relevant organisations or services that you may contact as needed is attached to this form.

### *Confidentiality*

Whilst all care will be taken to maintain privacy and confidentiality, it may be difficult to ensure your interview is confidential if other people can overhear you or access your digital data.

For digital interviews: You may like to choose a day and time for your interview where you are less likely to be disrupted or overheard, or find a quiet place with adequate internet access for your interview. Depending on the platform you use, you will also be able to type to Dr Hendry and let her know if you need to stop or redirect the interview. Any digital platforms and digital communication could potentially compromise your privacy. The risk of this can be reduced by choosing a platform that you are familiar with, checking privacy settings and testing the platform. All digital interviews will use password-protected rooms/meetings. Dr Hendry is also able to discuss this in more detail and review your settings with you prior to the interview.

For face to face interviews: You may like to choose a day, time and place for the interview where you are less likely to be overheard. Dr Hendry is able to suggest some interview locations that will be comfortable and meet COVID-19 restrictions (e.g. booking a room at a local library or meeting in a local park distanced from other people physically so they cannot hear the interview).

All interviews: You can choose if you will show or share any social media content during the second interview via your device, e.g. screenshot of an advertisement or meme, a mental health influencer's profile. You are welcome to cover any details that you do not wish to share.

### *COVID-19 challenges*

Face to face interviews must meet the Victorian government's and RMIT University's guidelines for physical distancing. This might require us to wear masks and/or adhere to other social distancing protocols. If COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria change or you feel uncomfortable about meeting in person, you are welcome to postpone or cancel your interview, or participate in a digital interview instead. Dr Hendry will also check advice from the Victorian government and RMIT University before the interview. You will be informed if we need to change locations or dates.

## **8 What if I withdraw from this research project?**

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw up to 3 weeks after reviewing the interview notes from your last interview. You are welcome to withdraw after an interview for any reason and not participate in a second or third interview. If you decide to withdraw from the project, please notify Dr Hendry. You have the right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, this includes notes about your interview/s.

## **9 What happens when the research project ends?**

After your interview/s, should you agree to, Dr Hendry will send through a document with a summary of the interview themes you discussed and some quotes from the interview. You are welcome to review this document and check this information before it is analysed.

You may also request a summary of the overall project findings. These will be emailed to you at the end of the project, and may take over a year to reach you, depending on the duration of fieldwork and analysis.

## **How is the research project being conducted?**

### **10 What will happen to information about me?**

By signing the consent form, you consent to the research team collecting and using information from you for the research project. Information collected about you will include identifiable (e.g. your name, email address) and re-identifiable (e.g. pseudonym used for your interview notes) data. Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential. Digital data will be securely stored on password-protected RMIT servers.

Only Dr Hendry will have access to it. Paper data (e.g. consent forms, notes) will be securely stored by Dr Hendry. The data will be stored for up to 5 years. Following this, it will be destroyed.

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your express permission. You will be invited to choose a pseudonym that will be used in publications. No identifying information (e.g. the suburb you live in, where the interview took place etc.) will be used.

In accordance with relevant Australian and/or Victorian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to request access to the information about you that is collected and stored by the research team. You also have the right to request that any information with which you disagree be corrected. Please inform the research team member named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically allowed by law, (3) you provide the researchers with written permission. Any information obtained for the purpose of this research project that can identify you will be treated as confidential and securely stored.

### **11 Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research project is being conducted by Dr Natalie Hendry. There are no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to this project.

### **12 Who has reviewed the research project?**

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This research project has been approved by the RMIT University HREC. This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

### **13 Further information and who to contact**

If you want any further information concerning this project, you can contact the researcher:

Name	Dr Natalie Hendry
Position	Principal Investigator
Telephone	(03) 9925 8119
Email	natalie.hendry@rmit.edu.au

### **14 Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or questions about this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers listed in this document, then you may contact:

Reviewing HREC name	RMIT University
HREC Secretary	Vivienne Moyle
Telephone	03 9925 5037
Email	<a href="mailto:humanethics@rmit.edu.au">humanethics@rmit.edu.au</a>
Mailing address	Manager, Research Governance and Ethics RMIT University GPO Box 2476 MELBOURNE VIC 3001



**Title** **Social Media + Therapy: A digital ethnography project (SM+T project)**

**Principal Investigator** Dr Natalie Hendry  
 Digital Ethnography Research Centre, RMIT University  
 natalie.hendry@rmit.edu.au  
 (03) 9925 8119

## Support Services and Resources

There are a number of support services and resources available to different people to support their mental health, wellbeing or care. These may be useful to supplement the care or support you currently receive, or have received in the past, from a therapist, counsellor or psychologist.

**EXTERNAL SUPPORT SERVICES**

National crisis support contacts for individuals and communities:



**Beyond Blue: National Depression Initiative**

☎ 1300 22 4636 or [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service:  
 ☎ 1800 512 348 or <https://bit.ly/3ddDopW>

**Beyond Blue provides a hotline, online forums/ chats and an email service to improve the lives of individuals, families and communities affected by anxiety, depression and suicide.**



**Lifeline**

☎ 13 11 14 (24 hrs) or [www.lifeline.org.au/](http://www.lifeline.org.au/)  
**A telephone counselling service that provides access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.**



**SANE Australia**

☎ 1800 187 263 or <http://www.sane.org>  
**Provides information about symptoms, treatments, medications, where to go for support, and help for carers, research and evaluation, and education and training.**





### Study Melbourne

☎ 1800 056 449 or [www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/help-and-support/support-for-students-coronavirus](http://www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/help-and-support/support-for-students-coronavirus)  
The Study Melbourne Student Centre provides current and accurate information, connecting international students to helpful resources.



### Mind Australia

☎ 1300 286 463 or [www.mindaustralia.org.au/](http://www.mindaustralia.org.au/)  
Supports clients to live independent, productive and satisfying lives through a comprehensive range of services.



### Wellways

☎ 1300 111 400 or [www.wellways.org/](http://www.wellways.org/)  
Wellways Australia Limited is a leading not-for-profit mental health and disability support organisation.



### The Butterfly Foundation

☎ 1800 33 4673 or [www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au/](http://www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au/)  
Butterfly Foundation represents all people affected by eating disorders and negative body image – a person with the illness, their family and their friends.



### Embrace Multicultural Mental Health

[embracementalhealth.org.au/](http://embracementalhealth.org.au/)  
Provides access to resources, services and information in a culturally accessible format, for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (does not provide crisis services).



### The National LGBTI Health Alliance

☎ 1800 184 527 or [www.lgbtihealth.org.au/](http://www.lgbtihealth.org.au/)  
The National LGBTI Health Alliance provides health-related programs, services and research focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people (LGBTI) and other sexuality, gender, and bodily diverse people and communities.



### Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia

[www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/coronavirus](http://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/coronavirus)  
The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention national leadership body. It provides wellbeing tips and support resources during COVID-19.

### Other Options

You may also wish to see a private counsellor or psychologist. See *beyondblue* website or visit the Australian Psychological Society's "Find a Psychologist" service at: <http://www.psychology.org.au/ReferralService/About/>  
For a lower-cost option, speak to your GP about a referral to a Medicare-subsidised psychologist through the "Better Access to Allied Psychological Services" program which entitles you to up to 10 counselling sessions per year.