

**University of California, Davis
Consent to Participate in Research**

Title of study: Psychobiological Effects of Meditation Experience

Principal Investigator: Quinn Conklin, MA and Clifford Saron, PhD

Purpose of the study:

The goal of this study is to assess meditation experience in relation to mental and cellular health as the effects of the pandemic unfold over the coming year. We'd like to learn more about the stressors you are experiencing and the role, if any, that contemplative practice plays in how you are coping with the conditions of the pandemic. We will investigate these questions using self-report measures of mental health and well-being, in addition to assessing telomere length—a biological measure of cellular aging that will serve as an index of stress exposure.

Who is eligible to participate in this study?

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are over the age of 18, are currently residing in the United States, and have some previous experience with meditation practice.

What happens if you agree to participate in the study?

If you agree to participate, we will ask you to complete 4 assessments over the course of one year. All of these assessments can be completed from your home. To provide you with the necessary study materials, we will ask you for your name, email address, phone number and mailing address.

We will ask you to complete the first study assessment as soon as possible. The remaining assessments will take place approximately 4 months, 8 months, and 1 year from now.

The first assessment will have three parts:

1. **Online Questionnaires.** We will ask you to complete a series of online questionnaires about your experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, your meditation history, and a number of other standardized surveys used to measure stress, individual differences, prior life experiences, and mental health. There will be two sets of questionnaires. The first set will take about 2 hours to complete and you will fill these out on the first day that you participate in the study. The second set will take about an hour and a half and you will have a full week to complete these. You can complete these questionnaires from home and over multiple sittings. You will be paid \$60 for completing these questionnaires.

It is possible that some of the questionnaires will be emotionally triggering because they will include personal questions about your medical history, potentially traumatic life experiences, and other difficulties you may have encountered as a child or adult. For your privacy, your responses will be identified with an anonymous participant ID number only; neither your name nor any other identifying information will be attached to your questionnaire responses or telomere data. We have also prepared a list of resources for you, should these questionnaires evoke any emotional responses you would like support with.

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2. **Weekly Journaling Exercise.** We will also ask you to complete a weekly journaling exercise on 4 occasions over the coming month. The journaling exercise should take about 45 minutes to an hour each time, and will involve a brief set of questions and short writing prompts. These will ask about your diet, sleep, physical activity, and the stressors and emotions you’ve experienced over the last week. You will be paid \$15 each time you complete this journaling exercise (\$60 total over 1 month).
3. **Blood Collection.** Finally, we will ask you to provide a few drops of blood to measure your telomere length. We will mail you a kit containing the materials needed to collect this sample from home. You will use a sterile lancet to puncture the tip of your finger, and a small tube to collect a few drops of blood. This procedure should take no more than a few minutes and should be relatively painless—though you might experience a sharp but momentary pain. The kit will also contain packing materials and a prepaid shipping label so that you can return the sample to our lab (at the UC Davis Center for Mind and Brain). You will be paid \$25 for completing this aspect of the study.

After this first assessment, there will be three follow-up assessments. At the 4- and 8-month assessments, we will ask you to complete a shortened version of the online questionnaires and one iteration of the weekly inventory and journaling exercise. You will be paid \$40 for completing each of these intermediate assessments.

At the 1-year assessment, we will ask you to complete a final set of questionnaires, one iteration of the weekly inventory and journaling exercise, and to provide a second blood sample so that we can measure changes in telomere length. You will be paid \$35 for these questionnaires, \$15 for the journaling exercise, and \$25 for this blood sample, for a total of \$75 at this assessment.

Compensation:

You can earn a total of \$145 in the first month of this study and \$155 for the 3 follow-up assessments, for a **total of \$300 over the 1-year study period.** You will have the option of receiving incremental payments by check, PayPal or Venmo after you have completed each assessment.

Here are some things to think about before you decide whether to join this study:

Our policy and procedures are designed to maintain the confidentiality of your data. However, as with all research, there is a chance that this confidentiality could be breached. We are taking precautions to minimize this risk. We will collect your questionnaire data using Qualtrics—a well established survey platform used by the University. Qualtrics uses state-of-the-art encryption technology to maintain security of the data you enter. You can read more about Qualtrics security practices at <https://www.qualtrics.com/security-statement/>. As your data are collected within Qualtrics they will be password protected, with dual authentication required. Within Qualtrics, you will be assigned a randomized participant ID number that will subsequently be used to identify your data. The data files we then store and analyze will be identified with these participant IDs only, and will not contain your personally identifiable information. Your blood sample will be identified with a separate sample ID number. The list connecting these numerical IDs to your identifying information will be kept in a separate password-protected and encrypted file. Only trained research personnel will be granted access to your data. Your name and identifying information will not be used in any publications or presentations that result from these data. People from UC Davis who oversee and monitor research to see if it is done properly may review the information we collect about you. We will use the samples and data we collect for the following research purposes: 1) to measure changes in telomeres; 2) to investigate the relationships between telomere length and individual differences in meditation experience, stress exposure, psychological traits, and life experiences; and 3) to examine relationships between meditation practice and psychological well-being.

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This study will not involve banking your data and/or specimens with your identifiable information (e.g., your name, medical record number, or date of birth) for future use. However, we may still want to use your data or specimens to answer additional research questions that have not yet been determined. If we do decide that we would like to use your data or samples to answer additional research questions, we will contact you to obtain additional consent. We will not use your samples for additional research without your knowledge and permission.

Although this study does involve measuring telomeres, which are an aspect of your DNA, we will not use your specimens for genetic or genomic testing. **You will not receive information regarding your individual telomere length.** You will also not receive any commercial value or income that may result from the use of your samples and data.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You can choose to participate now and change your mind at any point in the future. Whatever you decide, there will be no penalty to you.

If you choose to leave the study, please let the researchers know. Note that if you withdraw from the research study, the data and samples that have already been collected will not be removed from the study database unless you specifically ask that they be removed. You may request that no new additional research be done with your data or samples.

You will not receive any direct benefit if you take part in this study. We hope this research will help us understand some of the stress-related consequences of this pandemic and what strategies, including meditation practice, individuals might use to cope with these kinds of stressors in the future.

The risks of this research are minimal. You may feel minor discomfort and there is a slight risk of infection when collecting blood. You may also experience negative emotions when filling out questionnaires about your life experiences.

We have compiled a list of resources should you experience any emotional or psychological difficulty after answering any of our questions. This is provided at the end of this document and will be included at the end of the secondary questionnaire you complete.

Experimental Subject's Bill of Rights:

It is your right that this research be explained to you, including:

- The nature and purpose of the research study
- The procedures to be followed
- Any common or important discomforts and risks
- Any benefits you might expect
- That whether or not you take part is entirely up to you
- That you can choose to participate without force, fraud, deceit, duress, coercion, or undue influence
- That you can choose not to take part
- That you can agree to take part now and later change your mind
- That whatever you decide it will not be held against you
- That you can ask all the questions you want before you decide

What are my rights when providing electronic consent?

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- California law protects specific rights when you are asked to provide electronic consent:
 - You have the right to obtain a copy of the consent document in non-electronic format
 - You have the right to provide consent in a non-electronic format
 - If you change your mind about electronic consent, you have the right to request your electronic consent to be withdrawn. You can then provide consent in a non-electronic format; however, a copy of your electronic consent will be maintained for regulatory purposes. If you wish to withdraw your electronic consent, please tell the study team.
- This agreement for electronic consent applies only to your consent to participate in this research study

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigators:

Quinn Conklin at 530-341-3505 or qconklin@ucdavis.edu
Clifford Saron at 415-307-9757 or [cgsaron@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdsaron@ucdavis.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the University of California Davis, Institutional Review Board at 916-703-9158 or HS-IRBEducation@ucdavis.edu.

To enroll in this study, please confirm the following:

- ___ I acknowledge that I have read the information about the study and my rights as a participant
- ___ I consent to completing the online questionnaires and journaling exercises
- ___ I consent to completing the at-home biological sample collections
- ___ I consent to be contacted for follow-up assessments over the next year

Opportunities to contribute to future research: We would like to add your contact information to a registry of individuals with prior meditation experience who might be willing to participate in future studies. Please initial below if you are willing to have your name and contact information added to this registry.

- ___ I consent to be contacted for future research opportunities

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

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Mental Health Resources:

We have compiled the following list of resources should you experience any emotional or psychological difficulty after answering questions about your prior experiences:

Meditation Related Resource

If you feel you have experienced any difficulties due to meditation, you may contact Dr. Willoughby Britton at (520)-245-1855 or willoughby_britton@brown.edu. Dr. Britton is the Director of the Clinical and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory at the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University, and has expertise in potentially adverse effects of mediation.

National Resources

Trauma Response & Crisis Care (TRACC) Community Care: Covid-19 (and beyond) support to activists, organizers, BIPOC, QTPOC, and first responders. This [Google form](#) can connect you with providers of short-term community care and support.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: free 24/7 hotline for those who are suicidal or emotional distress
[800-273-8255](tel:800-273-8255)

Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN): free 24/7 hotline for survivors of sexual assault
[800-656-4673](tel:800-656-4673)

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): helpline for those struggling with mental illness
[800-950-6264](tel:800-950-6264)

Veteran’s Crisis Line: free 24/7 hotline for veterans or active members of service
[800-273-8255](tel:800-273-8255), press 1 when prompted

Blackline: free 24/7 hotline geared towards the Black, Black LGBTQI, Brown, Native and Muslim community. You can call or text.
[800-604-5841](tel:800-604-5841)
<https://www.callblackline.com/#about>

California Bay Area Resources

Sonoma, Lake and Mendocino County Crisis Line: free 24/7 hotline for those who are suicidal or in crisis
[855-587-6373](tel:855-587-6373)

Marin County Crisis Line: free 24/7 hotline for those who are suicidal or in crisis
[415-499-1100](tel:415-499-1100)

Yolo County Crisis Line: free 24/7 hotline for those who are suicidal or in crisis
[530-756-5000](tel:530-756-5000)

California Peer-Run Warmline: free 24/7 non-emergency line providing emotional support to those in distress
[855-845-7415](tel:855-845-7415)

Informational

Trauma & PTSD Info: some brief information about trauma
<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/November-2017/PTSD-and-Trauma-Not-Just-for-Veterans>

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Food Security Resources:

We have compiled the following list of resources should you be experiencing food insecurity.

National Resources

US Food Assistance

Website for getting help accessing food anywhere in the United States and signing up for long-term food support programs, such as food stamps.

<https://www.usa.gov/food-help>

USDA National Hunger Hotline

Hotline that connects callers with local emergency food sources in their community. Hotline hours are Monday through Friday, 7a.m. ET (4a.m. PT) to 10p.m. ET (7p.m. PT).

866-348-6479

<https://www.hungerfreeamerica.org>

California Resources

OnwardCA

Website for finding resources among the Covid-19 pandemic, especially relating to those who lost their job or other income source. The website has links for accessing food, money, shelter, childcare resources, job opportunities, and more. Either search the options yourself or enter in some personal information and the website will cater resource offerings to your needs.

<https://onwardca.org>

San Francisco-Marin Food Bank

Food bank serving San Francisco and Marin Counties. Call or check the website for food distribution locations and times during the Covid-19 pandemic.

415-282-1900

<https://www.sfmfoodbank.org>

Redwood Empire Food Bank

Food bank serving Sonoma County. Call or check the website for food distribution locations and times during the Covid-19 pandemic.

707-523-7900

<https://refb.org>

Second Harvest Food Bank

Food bank serving the Silicon Valley. Call the helpline for information about food distribution locations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

800-984-3663

<https://www.shfb.org>

Sacred Heart Community Service

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Food pantry and service center serving San Jose and surrounding South Bay Area residents and homeless individuals. Call or check the website for food distribution locations and times during the Covid-19 pandemic.

(408) 278-2160

<https://sacredheartcs.org/>

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano

Food bank serving Contra Costa and Solano Counties. Call or check the website for food distribution locations and times during the Covid-19 pandemic.

855-309-3663

<https://www.foodbankccs.org>

Alameda County Community Food Bank

Food bank serving Alameda County. Call the helpline for information about food distribution locations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

510-635-3663

<https://www.accfb.org>

Yolo County Food Bank

Food bank serving Yolo County. For seniors and vulnerable populations during the Covid-19 pandemic, food delivery services are available. Call or check the website for food distribution locations and times.

(530) 668-0690

<https://yolofoodbank.org/get-help/>

Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services

Food bank serving Sacramento County. Call the helpline for information about food distribution locations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

(916) 456-1980

<https://www.sacramentofoodbank.org>

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