

Consent Form

Title of Study: Impact of the online program Moving Forward on mood and wellbeing.

You are invited to participate in a six-week study to evaluate the impact of a writing therapy called **Moving Forward** developed to help people better manage life change or transitions. The program is offered free of charge and without appointment at a clinic. It includes information on coping with change through writing and self-compassion and 6 weekly writing sessions of about 45 minutes. A 3-month follow-up will also be conducted.

This study is being conducted as part of an undergraduate thesis in psychology by Tijay Talbot, 4th year student at the School of psychology of the Université de Moncton (506-858-4000, poste 4406 et info@etherapies.ca) under the supervision of Dr France Talbot, professor and psychologist (tel. 506-858-4000, ext. 4200; courriel france.talbot@umoncton.ca).

Why are we conducting this study?

Research suggests that writing with a focus on integrating positive and negative memories of one's life can facilitate coping with difficult, stressful events and have a positive effect on psychological health. This study proposes a new form of writing therapy focused on one's life history and self-compassion. We hope that the proposed program will increase people's well-being and self-compassion. Also, this study will evaluate the impact of this therapy when offered via the Internet, which may make it easier to access.

What does your participation in this study involve?

- To complete an application form
- If the program is appropriate for your needs, you may log into your etherapies account and complete a few online questionnaires (15-20 minutes) which include general questions (e.g., civil status, level of education), questions about treatment for mental health problems, your mood and well-being and self-compassion during difficult times. We will ask you for some personal information that will only be used for the purposes of the study. It includes your name, phone number, and email address, password, your doctor's name and phone number – if you have one - or the name and phone number of someone we can contact in case of an emergency. We do not have the intention to communicate with this person nor

- with your family doctor and will do so only in the case of an emergency if we were to be concerned about your safety.
- After completing this questionnaire and form, **within 5 business days**, you will receive a call from the study coordinator, Tijay Talbot, to review the study procedures and answer any questions participants may have.
 - To connect to your etherapies account each week using your username and password.
 - The study involves completing an online questionnaire each week. This questionnaire is about symptoms of depression and takes about 5 minutes to complete. It will assess your symptoms during the study.
 - The study also includes weekly automated messages that will guide participants through the management program and the study. Instructions, reminders, and encouragement are offered.

- **Week 1 to 6:** Information on using writing to facilitate adaptation to change and on self-compassion; **6** writing sessions of about 45 minutes, one session per week, aimed at exploring your life story in relation to change while learning from previous experiences, showing self-compassion and reconstructing your life goals. These sessions are online and require no special writing skills. Additional tools are presented, including inspirational stories. Each week, we will ask you to submit your writing session. This will help us ensure that the instructions are followed.
- **End of program:** Online questionnaires to help us evaluate the impact of the treatment, which takes about 20 minutes. These questionnaires are the same as those completed at the beginning of the study. They also include questions about your satisfaction with the therapy.
- **3-month follow-up:** The same questionnaires will be completed one last time.

Following Week 6, we will email you a summary of your results. Any publication on the results obtained will be placed on the etherapies website when available under the "Research" tab.

Potential risks and inconvenient:

It is expected that the **Moving Forward** program will produce a decrease in depressive symptoms and an increase in well-being. However, the writing sessions may initially result in a temporary increase in depressive symptoms. It is expected that as the writing sessions progress, these symptoms will gradually decrease.

Participants' depressive symptoms will be assessed weekly during the therapy program. If your symptoms worsen, we will contact you by email or telephone as appropriate to discuss the situation. We may then terminate your participation and help you find the right help for you. If you feel distressed during the study, you can also contact Professor France Talbot (tel. 506-858-4000, ext. 4200; france.talbot@umoncton.ca) at any time. At the end of the study, you will be emailed a list of mental health resources in New Brunswick.

In the event of an emergency:

Please contact your family doctor or call 9-1-1. You may also visit the emergency room of the hospital nearest you.

As with any therapy, we suggest that participants visit their doctor to make sure there are no physical health problems that may be causing or contributing to their symptoms of depression. No medical or psychological counseling is offered in this study.

Cost and Compensation:

There is no cost to participate, except that participants must have access to the Internet and a telephone. No compensation is offered for participating in the study. However, there is no cost for the therapy and no travel is required.

Potential benefits:

The **Moving Forward** therapy program was developed to reduce depression, increase well-being, and manage life changes or transitions. However, we cannot guarantee that participants will receive benefits from the study.

Confidentiality:

All information collected in this study is confidential except for a few situations where we are required to break confidentiality and communicate with a third party (e.g., a relative, authorities). These include situations where there is an immediate risk of harm to oneself or another person; abuse or neglect of a child under the age of 16, a court order to share the contents of a file, and sexual abuse by a health care professional.

Throughout the study, you will use the same username and password that you used to open your secure etherapies account. This account will be used for writing sessions and completing questionnaires to protect your identity. Only the principal investigators involved in this study, a research assistant, Vanessa Fournier, doctorate student in psychology at the Université de Moncton and the administrators of the Markanyx Solutions Inc. computer system will know that you have participated in the study. Participants will receive weekly secure messages (emails) during the follow-up of the program offering instructions, reminders, and encouragement. Only your first name will appear in the messages you receive. These messages will be written in Moodle and will be available on the etherapies platform. You will need to log in to your etherapies account to access them to protect the confidentiality of the information. When a message is sent to you, you will receive an email stating that you have a message. No other information will be included in these emails to protect the confidentiality of the information. You will be informed in advance of the email address used. Please note that e-mail communication over the Internet is not secure. Although it is unlikely, it is possible that information included in an email could be intercepted and read by parties other than the person to whom the email is addressed.

Study participants' questionnaires will be administered online using Moodle software connected to a server on the etherapies platform secured using the Transport Layer Security (TLS) protocol. Writing sessions will also be conducted using this software. All information obtained in this study will be treated as strictly confidential. A code will be used instead of your name in the study data. Your responses to the questions will be entered into a computer database. In addition, the research reports will report only group results and not individual results. Confidential information obtained in this study will be destroyed five years after the study is completed. The anonymous data file will be kept for seven years following the publication of the study results. Only the study investigators and Markanyx Solutions Inc. who created and manage the etherapies platform will have access to the database. Once the study is completed, the data will be deleted from the platform. A copy of the participants' texts, which will be identified by a code only, will be put on a USB key that will be kept under lock and key in the Telepsychotherapy Unit of the Université de Moncton.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question. You may also decide to end your participation at any time, without any prejudice. If after starting the study you no longer wish to participate, you may contact us and we may terminate your participation. You may also terminate your participation without explanation or without contacting us. If you terminate your participation, we

suggest that you consider receiving treatment for your symptoms. Your family physician should be able to guide you in this regard.

Questions about the study:

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For more information on the use of the etherapies platform, please see the sections of the etherapies website on privacy, terms of use and disclaimer.

If you have any questions prior to signing the consent form or at any time during the study, please do not hesitate to contact us: Tijay Talbot (tel: 506-858-4000, poste 4406; email info.etherapies@umoncton.ca), Professor France Talbot (tel: 506-858-4000, ext. 4200; email france.talbot@umoncton.ca).

If you have any ethical concerns about this project or wish to make a complaint, you may contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the Université de Moncton (Université de Moncton, Pavillon Léopold- Taillon, Moncton, E1A 3E9; tel: 506-858-4000, ext. 4310; e-mail: fesr@umoncton.ca). Please note that a copy of this form will be sent to you by email. Please print it and keep a copy.

I understand the information about this study. I understand that I may ask questions in the future and that I may terminate my participation at any time without having to justify myself in any way. I hereby consent to participate in this study under the conditions just specified above. By clicking on "I agree", we will consider that you agree to participate in the study according to the conditions described above.

Please save or print to keep a copy of this form. To return to the page to create your account, please close this window.