As mentioned in The Economist magazine, March 3, 2011 (article, see “seeking volunteers... use smart-phones” for anxiety).

Are you socially anxious? Do you worry a lot? Your iPhone, iPod Touch, or Android smartphone can help.

Researchers at Harvard University (Phil Enock and Richard McNally) are conducting a study offering free experimental training/treatment on your handheld device to reduce social anxiety and/or worry (generalized anxiety). Using short 2.5-minute sessions, the program seeks to reduce the tendency of anxious people to focus on threatening items around them.

Requires an iPhone, iPod Touch or Android smartphone (e.g., Droid) with Internet or Wi-Fi access. You must already have one to use for the 4 weeks of training. (If you do not have one of the devices, you can sign up to receive information about future studies.)

Sorry, BlackBerry and iPad devices DO NOT work for this study. (Some news articles have said this study works with BlackBerrys, but that is incorrect.)

ATTENTION -- The study will stop taking new participants after Monday, August 15, 2011. Please sign up (continue by clicking below) before then so that you can participate.
About Anxiety

This study is intended for people with high levels of either social anxiety or generalized anxiety/worry (or both). To clarify these terms:

- **Social anxiety** involves being shy, worrying intensely about what others think of you, and fearing situations such as talking in front of a group, dealing with authority figures and other social situations. You may worry that others will notice your anxiety, leading to embarrassment.

- **Generalized anxiety** is characterized by uncontrollable worry about many things, often including tension, restlessness, sleep disturbance, difficulty concentrating, or being easily fatigued.

The diagnosable mental illnesses associated with severe levels of these types of anxiety are Social Anxiety Disorder and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Many people who do not have such severe symptoms also struggle with these same issues.

Requirements

1. You must have your own iPhone, iPod Touch, or Android based phone (iPad not supported), with Internet or Wi-Fi access. Most but not all Android models will work.

2. You must be aged 18 or older.

3. You should have a relatively high level of social anxiety, worry, or generalized anxiety (or any combination of these).

4. You must be willing to commit to a 4-week flexible training program and answer questions about your anxiety.

5. You must have the English language skills to read and understand the instructions and the online consent form we will provide.

If you meet these requirements and would like to learn more, please continue below. If you do not meet these requirements, you can sign up to receive information about future studies.

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About the Training

The training is designed to reduce the tendency of anxious people to focus on threatening items around them. It consists of doing a simple task repeatedly, thus it requires your dedication. This method has a foundation in established theories of attentional processing, social anxiety, and worry. Similar methods have yielded strong results in numerous published controlled trials, and our first handheld study with this training was similarly encouraging.

Your commitment will be to perform a simple training task on your handheld for three 2.5-minute sessions per day for 4 weeks (a perfect record of completing these sessions is not required), along with answering a set of questions each week during training, then 1 month and 2 months after the training period as well. A 20-minute meeting (at Harvard) at the start and at the end of training may or may not be needed, depending certain factors and your availability (such as whether or not you live in the area).

Active vs. Control Training

You will be randomly assigned to one of 3 conditions:

1. Active training
2. Control training (like placebo)
3. Delayed active training

The control training is in some ways like a placebo pill. It has been associated in one study with reductions in social anxiety and worry after 4 weeks of training, but not in others: The active training is what has shown strong benefits over many studies.

In the delayed active training condition, you would first spend 4 weeks doing no training; instead, you only answer questions about anxiety and mood during this delay period. Then, you receive the active training for 4 weeks. At the start of the study, we will tell you whether or not you are in the delayed active training condition. If you are, you will know exactly what you are getting.

If you are assigned to one of the other two conditions, based on past studies, it is highly unlikely that you will be able to tell which version you are receiving. The procedure is double-blind, so that neither you nor we will know which training you are receiving until after the 2-month follow-up.

Free Training

For your participation, the compensation is the training itself, provided free of charge. (No payment to you will be made.) If you were assigned to the delayed active training condition, you receive active training Regardless of whether you receive the active or control version, you will have the opportunity to use the active training after the study (including 2-month follow-up period) for your benefit with no further study obligations.

Continue to sign-up information