

**PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER**

You are invited to participate in a research study but before you agree, it is important that you understand the nature of the research and what your participation would involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and I will be happy to answer any questions.

**Who am I?**I am an undergraduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London, currently studying for a BSc in Counselling. As part of my studies I am required to undertake a research project, and this is the research you are being invited to participate in.

**What is the research?**My study aims to explore what self-care means to you, as a novice counsellor, and what you have learned thus far about self-care from your own experiences as a developing professional.   
It is hoped that new knowledge in this area could help to broaden the perspective of self-care, normalise the stresses of therapeutic work and the struggles of balancing care of self and care of others and invite more open discussion on the subject, including how it could best be covered during training.

My research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

**Why have you been asked to participate?**

You have been invited to participate in my research as someone who fits the profile I am seeking, which is BACP registered counsellors who have been actively practicing for no more than 5 years, and who would be willing to reflect on, and share, their experiences of their self-care journey since qualifying. I welcome UK resident counsellors of any age, religion, gender or culture and regardless of modality, specialism, or work setting.   
I emphasise that I am not looking for ‘experts’ on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way and you will be treated with respect. You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate and should not feel coerced.

**What will your participation involve?**You will be provided with an interview guide outlining a short list of the topics I would like to explore with you, along with a consent form. If, after reviewing the topics, you agree to participate in my research, you are asked to sign and return the consent form. You will then be invited to take part in an informal interview, lasting around 1 hour, which will be a chat about your own experiences of self-care, so there are no right or wrong answers. The interview will be held face-to-face online via Microsoft Teams, at a mutually convenient date and time, and this would be audio-recorded. Please consider your own environment when agreeing a date and time for the interview and ensure you have a safe place where you can talk freely to maintain your privacy.  
After the interview you will be provided with a debrief letter confirming what will happen to the information you have provided, and signposting some additional information and support that may be of interest.   
I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping to develop further knowledge on self-care.

**Your taking part will be safe and confidential**Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times. You do not have to answer all of the questions, you can choose how much or how little of your experiences you wish to share, and you can pause or stop the interview at any time without needing to give a reason.

Personal data will be handled in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and the UK Data Protection Act 2018. Any identifiable personal data collected from you will be securely stored electronically, in a separate password protected computer file on University of East London servers. The folder will be anonymised as a participant number to further protect your privacy and will be accessed and used only by me and solely for the purpose of the research project.

Your interview will be transcribed, and pseudonymised to protect your identity before being securely stored in a password protected research folder, on University of East London servers. This means your name will be replaced with a pseudonyms, and any other potentially identifying information, including but not limited to names of people or places, references to family relationships, organisations, occupations or religious or cultural background will be removed from the transcripts, subsequent data analysis and the final report and replaced with pseudonyms throughout. Brief verbatim quotes from your interview may be used in the final research report, but any such quotes will be attributed to the assigned pseudonym to protect your identity.  
Anonymised data may be seen by my supervisor and examiners, and the final research report may be viewed by other students and academics at the University of East London.

**How long will your data be retained?**When the research project concludes in October 2021, all personal data will be deleted immediately. Your consent form and anonymised data may be retained by me for up to three years to allow some or all of the information resulting from the study to be published in academic journals. During this time, the data will be safely stored on a password protected computer file, accessed only by me and all data will be deleted after three years.

**What if you want to withdraw?**You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time prior to, or during the interview without explanation, disadvantage or consequence, and all data collected from you at that point would be deleted immediately.

Separately, you may also request to withdraw your data even after you have participated provided that this request is made within three weeks of the date of the interview, after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible.

**Contact Details**If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Linda Hillery, via my email address [U1817843@uel.ac.uk](mailto:U1817843@uel.ac.uk)  
  
If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor:

Sonja Falck, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ,

Email: s.falck@uel.ac.uk

**or**

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Tim Lomas, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.

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