

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION: DEVELOPING A MOBILE INTERVENTION FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DYSFUNCTION

Susie Choi, Julia Long, Victoria Trimm, Bridget Wallace

Team Leaders: Kibby McMahon, Caitlin Fang, Dr. Zachary Rosenthal, and Dr. Timothy Strauman

BACKGROUND

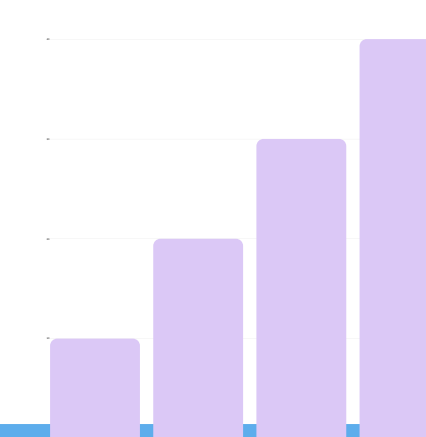
Problem: Trouble with relationships and social interactions can lead to poor physical and mental health outcomes (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2017; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010)

Explanation: Some may have trouble maintaining relationships due to an inability to manage, or “regulate” their emotions

Preliminary Study: Ran online study through Amazon Mechanical Turk (n = 501) to examine how current emotional state and difficulties regulating emotions affect ability to perceive other's emotions.

Found individuals perceive other's emotions less accurately when they feel more intense negative emotions themselves, $F(1, 499) = 20.33, p < .001$,

Difficulties regulating emotional experiences also predicted lower emotion perception accuracy, $F(1, 498) = 11.69, p = .001$.



THE STUDY

Current Question: Can an intervention that helps people regulate emotions through mindful breathing and phone-based reminders improves their ability to perceive other people's emotions?

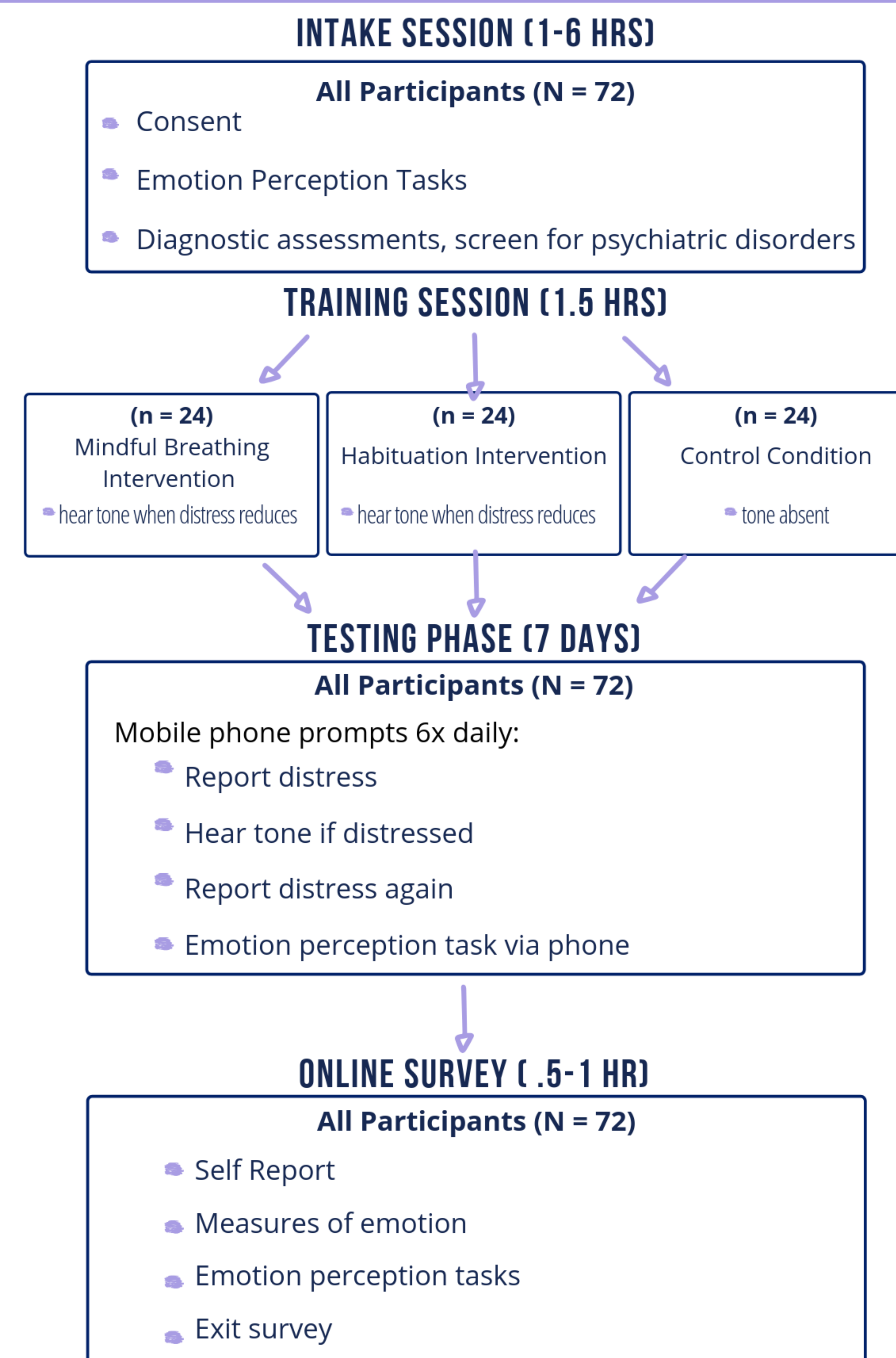
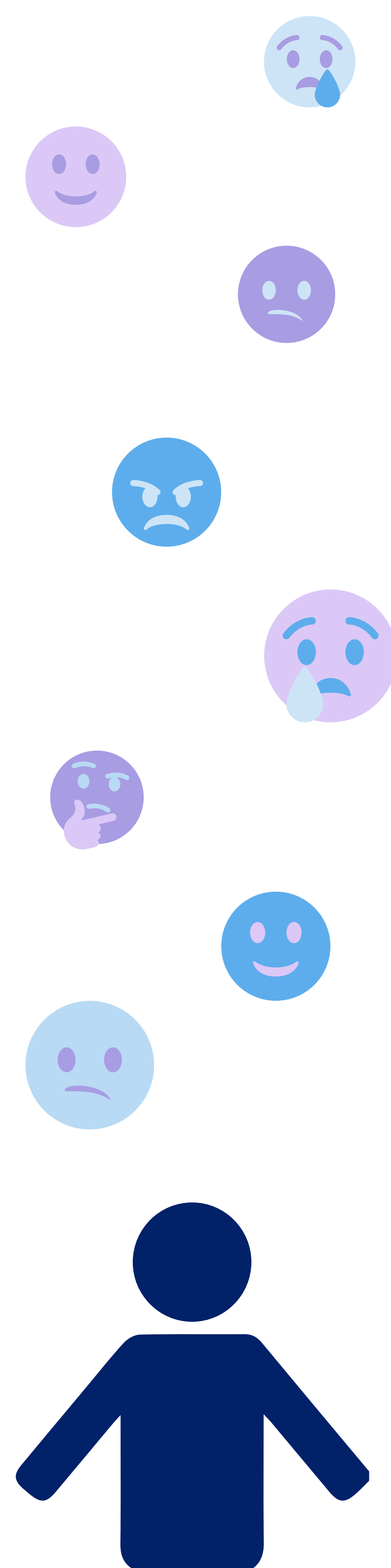
Aim 1: Determine whether people who learn a mindful breathing skill in a lab setting to regulate their emotions perceive other people's emotions more accurately than people who do not learn this skill.

Aim 2: Find out whether phone-based reminders to practice this skill improves emotion perception over time.



METHOD

- Sample:** 72 adult psychiatric outpatients
- Intake session:** Participants are assessed for psychiatric diagnoses and complete emotion perception tasks
- Training Session:** Randomized allocation to Mindfulness condition, Habituation condition, or Control condition. All participants complete a stressor task, with specific instructions according to condition
- Testing phase:** Participants receive mobile phone prompts for one week
- Online Survey:** Complete self-report measures of psychological functioning and emotion perception tasks



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Mission: Apply findings from this research to develop an accessible, online resource where people can learn social and emotional skills.

Tools: Developed a website for people to test their ability to perceive other's emotions and receive suggestions about how to improve their social skills, based on empirical findings.

Features:

Game-like quiz in which the user guesses the emotion portrayed by faces shown for only 1 sec.

Quiz results that reveal how accurate the user was and whether they have a bias to perceive faces as happy or angry

Guidance for how to develop mindfulness skills to improve accuracy of and ameliorate bias in emotion perception

