

## INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

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**Study title:** Efficacy of a self-help smartphone-supported psychological intervention (ACTIDOTE) in preventing depression among university students.

This study is run by the **Pôle Santé Psychologie (PSP), University of Geneva**

In collaboration with the Quality of Life technologies lab (Computer Science University Centre, UNIGE) and the department of psychiatry. (Geneva University Hospitals HUG).

### **Purpose of the study**

The experience of low mood, lack of pleasure and loss of interest in the activities that were previously enjoyed is very frequent in the student population. However, only a small fraction of those affected is seeking help and receive an evidence-based treatment. For those who remain without help for several years, there is substantial risk of seeing their symptoms getting worse and being exposed to a range of difficulties in the social, academic and health domains. The purpose of our study is to provide students with a self-help, flexible intervention that can be easily accessible via smartphone (iOS and Android). In ACTIDOTE, we capitalise on the potential of mobile technologies to deliver an evidence-based method designed to help you engage more in pleasant and rewarding activities, and thus eventually improve your mood and your motivation.

We are aiming to collect data on the feasibility and acceptability of ACTIDOTE and on its efficacy in improving mood and motivation in a student sample from the University of Geneva, the Graduate institute (IHEID) and the HES-SO. If our findings confirm that ACTIDOTE can be an efficient tool in improving low mood and preventing depression, then it will be made freely available to every student.



## Taking part in the study

To take part in the study, you will first have to complete the screening questionnaire online (Patient Health Questionnaire – PHQ9). If your score corresponds to the score range we are looking at in the study, you will be invited to check if you meet the additional inclusion criteria and sign the consent form. Once your participation confirmed, you will be asked to complete a series of baseline questionnaire and then directed to a link where you can download the app and start the ACTIDOTE program

## Duration of the study

The ACTIDOTE program has a duration of 5 weeks. You will also be contacted 1 and 6 months after the end of the program to complete some follow-up questionnaires online (15 min).

## Start of the ACTIDOTE program

If you meet the criteria to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign the consent form and email a copy to [actidote@unige.ch](mailto:actidote@unige.ch). You will then receive an activation code to download the application. On your first use of the application, we will ask you to email us ([actidote@unige.ch](mailto:actidote@unige.ch)) your identification code that you can find in the settings menu. This code has been randomly generated and this is the only information that will relate to the data collected by the application over the course of the study.

Randomisation: For the current study we aim to compare the results between a group of students who have completed the full ACTIDOTE program (ACTIDOTE condition), a group who has completed a program of the same duration but which includes only one of the two modules of the ACTIDOTE program (ACTIDOTE\_C condition), and a group who does not complete any intervention over the 5 weeks of the study (waitlist condition). During the initial assessment, you will be randomly allocated to one of these 3 conditions. If you are assigned to the ACTIDOTE\_C or the waitlist condition however, you will have the opportunity to access the full ACTIDOTE program once the study period is over.



## ACTIDOTE condition

*Week 1: SELF-MONITORING module:* After downloading ACTIDOTE on your phone, you will be starting the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the program which is the “self-monitoring” module. Over the first 7 days, you will receive 3 notifications a day (at noon, afternoon and evening) asking you to record your daily activities and rate how pleasant and important they were for you. You will also receive a notification each evening (at a time you can choose yourself) asking you to rate your overall mood of the day. Each recording of your activities and mood will only take a few seconds to complete. In addition to these questionnaires, your activity level will be monitored via the sensors of your phone (accelerometer and geolocation). You will be able to check your activity and mood data anytime by clicking on the menu « profile » of your application. During this phase, you will also be in contact with your “ACTIDOTE coach” who can provide support on demand and in real time and answer any question you may have. At the end of the self-monitoring week, you will get a message from the coach to help you get ready for the second phase of the program which is the “activation” module.

*Week 2 to 5: ACTIVATION module:* Over the following 4 weeks of the program, you will be asked to plan and do at least one ANTIDOTE activity each day and practice mental simulation exercises about your planned activities. An ANTIDOTE activity can be defined as an activity which is either intrinsically pleasant (Pleasure Activity or PA: e.g., eating a meal you like, watching a movie or taking a bath) or an activity that you do not necessarily like doing but which can bring about a feeling of mastery or achievement (Mastery Activity or MA: e.g., doing some cleaning or paying bills) Your challenge in ACTIDOTE is to plan and engage in at least 3 Pleasure and 3 Mastery activities each week to reach an adequate balance and improve your mood. Before each upcoming activity, you will be asked to practice brief mental simulation exercises which are available in your application. The aim of these exercises is for you to increase your motivation and feel ready when it is time to act.



### ACTIDOTE\_C condition:

If you are assigned to the ACTIDOTE\_C condition, you will complete the self-monitoring module over the 5 weeks of the study program. You will be asked to record your daily activities and mood by answering short questionnaires sent by your application 3 times a day via push notifications. You will also be able to monitor your activity and mood data throughout the whole period of the study by going into the “my profile” section of the application menu.

### Waitlist condition:

If you are assigned to the waitlist condition, you will not be undertaking any intervention over the 5 weeks of the study period, but you will be asked to complete the same initial and final assessment phases as in the other study conditions. Once the study period is over, you will be offered to access the full ACTIDOTE program.

### Assessment Phases and end of study

The study includes 5 assessment phases: 1) A screening phase (T0) to determine whether you are eligible to participate 2) a baseline assessment (T1) before starting the ACTIDOTE or the ACTIDOTE\_C program 3) A post-intervention assessment (T2) at the end of the 5 weeks of the program 4) A first follow-up assessment (T3) 1 month after the end of the program 5) a second and final follow-up assessment (T4) 6 months after the end of the program.

### **Benefits for the participants**

The ACTIDOTE application aims to help students improve their mood and their motivation by engaging in pleasurable and rewarding activities. It is therefore possible that you may benefit from undertaking such program. The ACTIDOTE-C program, which only includes the self-monitoring module of ACTIDOTE could also have some positive effects on mood, even though presumably to a lesser extent.

### **Participants rights**

You are free to accept or decline to participate in the study, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.



## **Data confidentiality and security**

We take your security and privacy very seriously and comply with the applicable Swiss and European laws on data privacy and security. ACTIDOTE collects your responses to surveys and your daily recording of activities and mood. All information is kept strictly confidential and will be only accessible to the research team. You are being assigned an identification code and none of your personal data will have your name on it.

## **Withdrawal from the study**

You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The withdrawal process only requires you to email the research team on [actidote@unige.ch](mailto:actidote@unige.ch) to let them know about your wish to withdraw. While your mood is being assessed one week after beginning the program, you may be excluded from the study if your score indicated a significant deterioration or put you at risk of serious harm. In this rare situation, we will get in contact and encourage you to seek help from a mental health professional.

## **Compensation for participation**

For participating in this study, you will be rewarded a 20 CHF gift coupon (Migros or Coop).

## **Risks to participants**

There is no risk associated with the participation in this study.

## **Contact**

If you have any further questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact the responsible investigator:

Dr Arnaud Pictet

Rue De-Candolle 4, 1205 Genève.

Tel : +41 (0)79 754 69 24

Email : [actidote@unige.ch](mailto:actidote@unige.ch)