

**Project Title:** Exploring Digital Bereavement

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Dear participant and co-researcher,

You are invited to voluntarily participate in a PhD research project being conducted by researchers at RMIT University. Please read this carefully for information about the study and be sure that you understand it before deciding if you will participate. If you have further questions, please ask Sharon, the study's lead investigator.

### **Who is involved in this research project?**

This research is being conducted by Sharon Greenfield, who is a PhD Candidate in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University. She is most recently from Portland, Oregon, USA.

This study and Sharon's PhD is supervised by Professor Heather Horst and Dr John Postill at RMIT University.

### **Why have you been approached?**

You have been approached because you are between 16-24, have lost someone close to you over at least 1 year ago, are going through the process of bereavement, and have either shown an interest in the research by responding to a recruitment announcement or through word of mouth. I am approaching various people from various backgrounds, from different family sizes, economic backgrounds, and ethnicities.

### **What is the project about?**

This project looks to understand in what ways young people (specifically 16-24) use digital media while going through bereavement. It will be focused upon understanding how your digital media engagement unfolds, what kind of digital media you create during this period.

This project aims to explore the following:

- How do young people use digital media when they are experiencing loss and bereavement after a death?
  - What are the digital media objects (artefacts) made during grieving and bereavement? What meanings do they have to the bereaved?
  - How and to whom do these objects get shared? Does a kind of continuing bond happen through these digital media objects?

This is a research project and should not be considered therapy. This qualitative research data could have a potential outcome of informing future policymakers when creating policy on how to communicate with young people who are going through bereavement.

### **If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?**

I invite you to voluntarily share your experience and knowledge of digital media use, including social media. You can OPT to do one, two, or three of the activities below:

#### *Semi-structured interviews (interview, 60 minutes in length)*

A time will then be set up for an in-person interview either on the RMIT campus, at a local community room, or at the place of your choice. An outline of some of the questions to be talked about can be emailed to you prior to the meeting, however know that these questions are just a general basis and it's expected that more questions usually arise out of the back-and-forth of the discussion.

We will talk about your digital media creation expertise and use, and I may ask you to show me the mobile device you use, the apps you use, and an example of digital media you have created. These interviews usually last about one hour and will be audio recorded for transcription. Images may be taken of you using your mobile device but any identifying features will be disguised.

#### *Day-in-the-life digital media creation walkthrough (show how you create digital media, 60-90 minutes in length)*

A time will be set up with you for a day-in-the-life walkthrough where you show how you use mobile digital media and create digital media. I will ask you to show me how you make something in digital media. I will ask questions while you make something about your process. Additionally, any previously created examples of previous social media creations like a YouTube video or Instagram photo that you created can be used as a basis to talk about and go through the steps that you took when creating it. These walk-throughs usually take an hour to an hour and a half.

#### *Technology diary (requested minimum of 5 texts)*

A mobile number for the project entitled 'Dear RMIT Diary', will be available to SMS text or image thoughts you have when you are creating mobile digital media. There is a requested five text minimum from you, although the intention is for the stream-of-thought ability to be fun. The data is confidential and researchers will be the only ones who may view the secure-protected texted input.

### **What are the possible risks or disadvantages?**

The risks are that discussing the past, present, or future may be uncomfortable or create emotional strain. If you find that the project participation is upsetting, just let me know and we can stop the interview. You may choose to contact the counselling services provided below. You also may cease project involvement at any time prior to publication, and your data will be removed and will not be included in the publication of the research.

In accordance with the Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, every effort will be made to identify, gauge, minimise, and manage risks.

### **At each stage of the project, the research will review with participants their consent to the stage.**

You may pause or withdraw from the research study via email or phone call at any time prior to publication.

### **What are the benefits associated with participation?**

There is no direct benefit to you as a result of your participation. However, your participation in an interview may help the social sciences in understanding how young people use digital media.

### **What will happen to the information I provide?**

Your data includes all audio, images, and/or video recording, as well as transcripts of that data and SMS or SNS data. Your data will remain confidential during the course of the research known only to the researchers stated above. Your personal data and the results from the study are available to you upon request. Research data will be kept securely at RMIT for 5 years after which a supervising researcher will destroy the data.

The data will be transcribed and analysed, but you and your images will be anonymous in any publication of the transcribed data and a pseudonym, so your real name will not be known, will be used instead. You may suggest a pseudonym if you like. In addition, I may have interest in publishing images either you have created or that I created of your digital media usage if it is relevant to the research. These images will never show your face. These images will be titled anonymous or will use your pseudonym – your real name will not be known. I will contact you prior to the first publication, to find if you object to these images being used in a publication, which may include a PhD thesis and journal articles and books, which are all publically accessible through a library. If you object to an image being included, let me know, and I will not include it in the publication.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically required or allowed by law, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission. You may potentially disclose sensitive or private information relating self-harm, harm of others, risky behaviours, or illegal matters. While I'm appreciative to you for being open with your experiences, depending on the specific situation I may stop the interview, direct you to the counselling services available, and negotiate putting the research project either on hold or ending the participation.

### **Time and insight appreciation**

You will receive a \$10 Amazon eGift Card for your insight and time after each of the three activities of the research you complete for a total of \$30: interview, day-in-the-life, and Dear RMIT Diary (minimum 5 texts).

### **Has this research been approved?**

This project has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (#HREC 20097). This committee protects the rights of the people participating in the project.

### **What are my rights as a participant?**

You have the right to withdraw from participation at any time prior to publication. You have the right to request that any recording cease. You have the right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed prior to the point of publication, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for you. You have the right to be de-identified in any photographs intended for public publication, before the point of publication. You have the right to have any questions answered at any time.

### **Whom should I contact if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions, you may contact the lead researcher, Sharon, by the below email, phone, or text.

Yours sincerely,  
Sharon Greenfield  
PhD Candidate  
Email: [project@sharoncountry.com](mailto:project@sharoncountry.com)  
Phone & text: +1 503 997 5662

 @SharonG  @sharondigital  @sharondigital

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email [human.ethics@rmit.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@rmit.edu.au)



**The Dougy Center**  
*The National Center for Grieving Children & Families*

## **RECRUITMENT ORGANISATION AND COUNSELLING CONTACT**

### **The Dougy Center**

The National Center for Grieving Children & Families

Phone: 503-775-5683

Toll Free: 866-775-5683

Fax: 503-777-3097

Email: [help@dougy.org](mailto:help@dougy.org)

<http://www.dougy.org>

The Dougy Center is a non profit organisation which is the predominant international leader in the field of working with young people in bereavement. They provide support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults, and their families grieving a death can share their experiences. They provide support and training nationally, and internationally to individuals and organisations seeking to assist children in grief. Their model is now replicated in more than 500 programs in the U.S., Canada, Africa, Australia, Europe and Japan.