Procedure

TSST sessions will run between 1.30pm to 8.30pm (1pm set up; 8pm clean up), with only one participant undergoing the Task at each time, but up to 3 participants may overlap in the reception room pre- or post-task.

After arrival at Room A, participant will first be briefed, provide verbal consent and screened (first verbally, then through a screening survey on iPad (0 TSST Screening)) for whether they have adhered to the requirements for salivary cortisol collection.

* If they failed the verbal screening, do not proceed with screening survey. Make a note of what requirements they violated and reschedule their TSST session for the **next Monday** using Doodle on iPad.
* If they passed the verbal screening, let participant proceed with screening survey on iPad. If they fail the screening survey on the iPad, repeat the above instructions.

If they have adhered fully, they will have their weight and height measured. If not, they will be asked to reschedule another in-person session. They will also be given the E4 Empatica watch to wear.Then, they will be told to rest for the next 15 minutes while completing pre-task survey (1 TSST Baseline) on affect (PANAS-X), perceived stress level and task appraisal.

5 minutes before leading them to the Task Room, the participant will have his/her first cortisol sample (‘baseline cortisol’) collected as well as their blood pressure measured.

Then, he/she will be taken into a second room (Task Room), where two individuals (one male and one female) will be sitting at a table pretending to be the committee members, with a video camera set up on a tripod stand on the table. Participant will be introduced to the task he/she would have to perform by one of the ‘evaluators’, which is to deliver a speech promoting themselves for a job position of their own choosing, in an interview with the company’s selection committee evaluators. Participants will also be told that the speech will be video-recorded.

Following these instructions, the participant will return to room A and be given the pre-task survey to complete and have their blood pressure measured again. Then, they will be given a piece of note handout and a pen to prepare for five minutes. After 3 minutes of preparation, another saliva sample (‘pre-task cortisol’) will be collected. After a total of 5 minutes has passed, the participant will be led back into Task Room to deliver his/her speech.

The evaluators will be trained to keep a straight, unemotional and serious facial expression throughout the speech, and to not provide any positive verbal or non-verbal feedback. If the participant finishes his/her speech before the five-minute mark, evaluator 1 will respond in a standardised way with “You still have some time left. Please continue”. Should the participant go on but stop again before the five-minute mark, Evaluator 1 will repeat the same statement. After that, if the participant stops again, Evaluator 1 will ask a series of questions provided in his/her script to prompt the participant. If the participant asks the evaluators questions at any point of the task, evaluator 1 will direct the participant back to the speech with “Please continue with your speech/Please answer the question”. Evaluator 2 will remain silent and record observational notes of the participants’ behavior, affect, facial expressions and relevant quotes.

After 5 minutes of speech task, Evaluator 1 will ask the participant to serially subtract the number 13 from 1,022 as fast and accurately as possible. On every failure, the participant will be asked to restart at 1,022 (“Stop. Please restart from 1,022”) until 2.5 minutes have passed. The participant will also be prompted to go faster after 30 seconds and 60 seconds passed. Then, participant will be asked to do the same task but by subtracting number 7 from 1,022 for the next 2.5 minutes. Again, participants will be prompted to go faster at 30 seconds and 60 seconds.

After 5 minutes of arithmetic task, the participant will be led back into room A, where he/she will have their blood pressure taken and be given a post-task survey to complete while resting. Then, cortisol sample (‘post-task cortisol’) will be collected. During this time, participants will be discouraged from doing any physical activity or converse with any other participants. After 20 minutes, participant’s cortisol sample and blood pressure will be taken again and another one collected at 40 minutes post task. Participant will also be given post-task survey to complete at both 20 and 40-minute mark.