Consenting script

[Make sure you have a consent form and screening form on a clipboard with a pen] [Introduce yourself]
Before we begin, there are a few instructions I’ll go over to ensure your safety inside the scanner and to make sure the experiment runs smoothly. Please feel free to interrupt me at any time if you have any questions.

Have you ever been scanned before? (If they have: “So you know the basic gist of how this works, but I’ll go through the precautions anyway”)
[You probably want to see whether they’ve been scanned for medical or research purposes, e.g., functional MRI or not, etc. you might also want to find out where they were scanned (if for research) – e.g., Harvard? MIT? Just so you have a sense for how familiar they are with the scanner environment, etc.]

The MRI scanner is basically a powerful / giant magnet (that detects changes in the oxygen-level of your blood which we use as a proxy for brain activity). Because of this strong magnet, the primary safety concern is that there be no metal in or on your body (e.g., earrings, other piercings, belts, change, hair pins, etc.) before you enter the scanning room. We have several steps to ensure this: I’ll have you fill out a metal screening form to make sure there’s no metal in or on your body and that you are safe to scan; also, we’ll have you change into scrubs and then right before entering the scanner we’ll use a metal detector (like at the airport) to double-check that you’re metal free.

Our second major concern is your comfort. You’ll be lying down on your back in the scanner for approximately an hour, so please use the restroom before we begin. The scanner can detect extremely slight movements – on the order of 1-2 millimeters – which mess up the experiment, so it’s important to us that you try to remain as still as possible during the experiment. To make this a bit easier, we’ll give you pillows for your head and underneath your legs so that your back lies flat. Also let us know if there’s anything we can do to make you more comfortable since that will help us keep you still during the scan. Also, the scanner is somewhat noisy, so we’ll give you earplugs to wear before the scan starts.

When you’re in the scanner, we’ll be in the control room watching you, and we’ll be able to communicate with you over an intercom. We’ll make sure that you can hear us fine before we start scanning. Once we start scanning, we ask that you do not speak back to us (except in emergency situations), because talking moves your mouth, which moves your head, which, again, interferes with the experiment. Instead, we’ll give you a squeeze ball that we’ll ask you to squeeze to respond to us (for example, we’ll say we’re ready to begin the experiment, if you’re ready to go, please squeeze the ball). Importantly, the squeeze ball will also serve as an emergency button when the experiment is running. If for some reason you feel extremely uncomfortable or something goes wrong such that you want to stop the experiment, you can squeeze the squeeze ball, we’ll immediately stop the experiment, figure out what’s wrong, and decide if we can continue or not. So you’ll have the squeeze ball in your left hand, and you’ll
have a button box with four buttons in your right hand. That’s for the experimental tasks, which I’ll explain in just a moment.

Do you have any questions so far?

So, what will happen first once you’re lying down on the scanner bed is a series of “structural” or “anatomical” scans. In total, these will take about 8 minutes or so. During this part, you’ll just lie still – you won’t actually be doing anything during this part, as we’re just taking pictures of your brain structure / anatomy and not function. This will be the only part of the scan session when you won’t be reading or watching anything on your screen.

After these structural scans will be the “functional” runs, when you’ll actually be performing various tasks. In this experiment, there are N tasks.

[ToM Localizer] In the true/false task, you’ll be reading a series of short stories, a few sentences long. After each story, there’ll be a statement that you have to evaluate as true or false according to the story you just read. So you’ll press one button for true and another for false. Also I’ll note that usually we tend to read stories for gist, but these statements pertain to details of the story, so make sure to read the stories for details. You’ll get the hang of it after a couple of stories.

In the next task…

…

These tasks will be interleaved throughout the scan session, so you might do two runs of the true/false task and then two runs of the XXX task, but you’ll know what’s coming up, b/c we’ll tell you over the intercom, and also you’ll see the task name on your screen.

Like I said, during the “functional” runs, you’ll see stories (or videos) on your screen anytime the scanner is running – so if there are long stretches of time (e.g., a minute or two) that you do NOT see anything, and the scanner is running, please let us know by squeezing the ball. This means that we probably forgot to turn the monitor back on in between runs. You’ll know b/c you won’t have seen instructions or the task name when we tell you we’re ready to go.

– Talk about button box and which buttons they’ll use to respond

Does this all make sense? Any questions?

Here are two forms to fill out – the first is the metal screening form I mentioned earlier, which lets us know if you’re safe to scan. The second is a consent form saying you agree to participate in this experiment. I want to emphasize that this is for research purposes only – we don’t do any clinical diagnosis and can’t provide you with any information or pictures of your brain. (If they ask, it is the center’s policy that prohibits us from providing a picture of their brain; some other places are okay with it).