

FAQs about Virtual Reality (VR)

Is VR more effective than traditional techniques?

More than a decade of controlled studies have shown the effectiveness and efficiency of VR-based therapies intervention on mental disorders, especially anxiety and specific phobias. Its level of clinical effectiveness is higher than the traditional imagination exposure technique. It is also as effective as in vivo exposure. (Oprış et al., 2012; Meyerbröker et al., 2010; Parons et al., 2008; Emmelkamp et al., 2002). However, using VR does not mean completely forgoing other approaches. Quite the contrary. Both VR technology and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can enhance the effects of standard intervention.

Can I expect quick results with VR?

Results obtained from any line of therapy will differ from one case to the next. Depending on the condition that you have, you may need more or less VR therapy sessions. Your therapist will help determine the number of sessions. In comparison with the traditional imaginative techniques, VR delivers quicker results because not everybody has the same imagination capacity. Also, VR reduces logistic time and costs associated with in vivo exposure. This means that you don't need to step out of your therapist's office to be exposed to the stimuli of which you are afraid. (Maldonado, 2002).

Is VR like playing a video game?

Yes and no. On one hand, like video games, VR finds stronger appeal in people who engage their imagination to the furthest extent possible during sessions. Using your imagination can help foster a sense of immersion. VR has been shown to work well with children for just this reason. On the other hand, though, VR is different from video games in that its unique technological capacity helps enhance the sense of presence. In other words, when you use this technology, your ability to distinguish between the virtual world and reality could become negligible (Jose Gutiérrez Maldonado, 2002).

Can VR be a Substitute for Real-Life Experiences?

Various studies have shown that VR can promote a sense of presence and trigger bodily responses similar to in vivo exposure (Morina, N. et al., 2015). These reactions will help your therapist to work through them in sessions without the need for you to be placed in or exposed to an actual, high-risk scenario.

Why Virtual Reality?

Many people with mental conditions tend to prefer VR interventions because in vivo exposure can be too intense (García-Palacios et al., 2007). VR gives your therapist more control of the environment to which you are exposed, so that the level of exposure adjusts to and fits your needs and the intervention process. Also, VR therapy respects your confidentiality, being that you won't need to leave your therapist's office like in cases of real-life exposure.

