**TECH**

**Rewiring the Brain**

Because the terrifying situations some people have lived through become etched into their psyches so deeply, effective treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has been hard-won. In the past, soldiers were simply said to be suffering from “shell shock” and had few opportunities to heal. Others with profound anxiety may not have even had their experiences validated as trauma.

People with PTSD commonly avoid certain thoughts and emotions to protect themselves but remain locked in PTSD because they are not able to ascertain the true threat level in ordinary circumstances. Avoidance, if left unchecked, interferes with thoughts, memories, and emotions, which can lead to increasing isolation, depression and risk of suicide.

Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy (VRET) is now being used to help armed services veterans and others recover. The technology uses high quality computer graphics, 3D displays and multi-sensory feedback to create the illusion of interacting with a computer-generated environment resulting in intense feelings of ‘immersion’ and ‘presence.’

Through VRET, people whose lives are being limited by PTSD are gradually assisted by trained clinicians to confront their worst fears or “revisit” places or emotions that trigger their fear.

The patient is carefully immersed in a virtual situation specifically made to look and feel similar to the one they may have encountered during their trauma, then led through a supervised successful navigation of the environment and events to reform beliefs and memories surrounding it.

Studies show that VR treatment can also be helpful for those experiencing social anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, phobias and other common mental health conditions.

**READ MORE:**

Tull, Matthew. “How Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy (VRET) Treats PTSD.” Verywell Mind, Verywell Mind, 5 Feb. 2020, [www.verywellmind.com/virtual-reality-exposure-therapy-vret-2797340](http://www.verywellmind.com/virtual-reality-exposure-therapy-vret-2797340).

Lake, James. “Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy for PTSD in the Military.” Psychology Today, Sussex Publishers, 19 Feb. 2017, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/integrative-mental-health-care/201702/virtual-reality-exposure-therapy-ptsd-in-the-military.