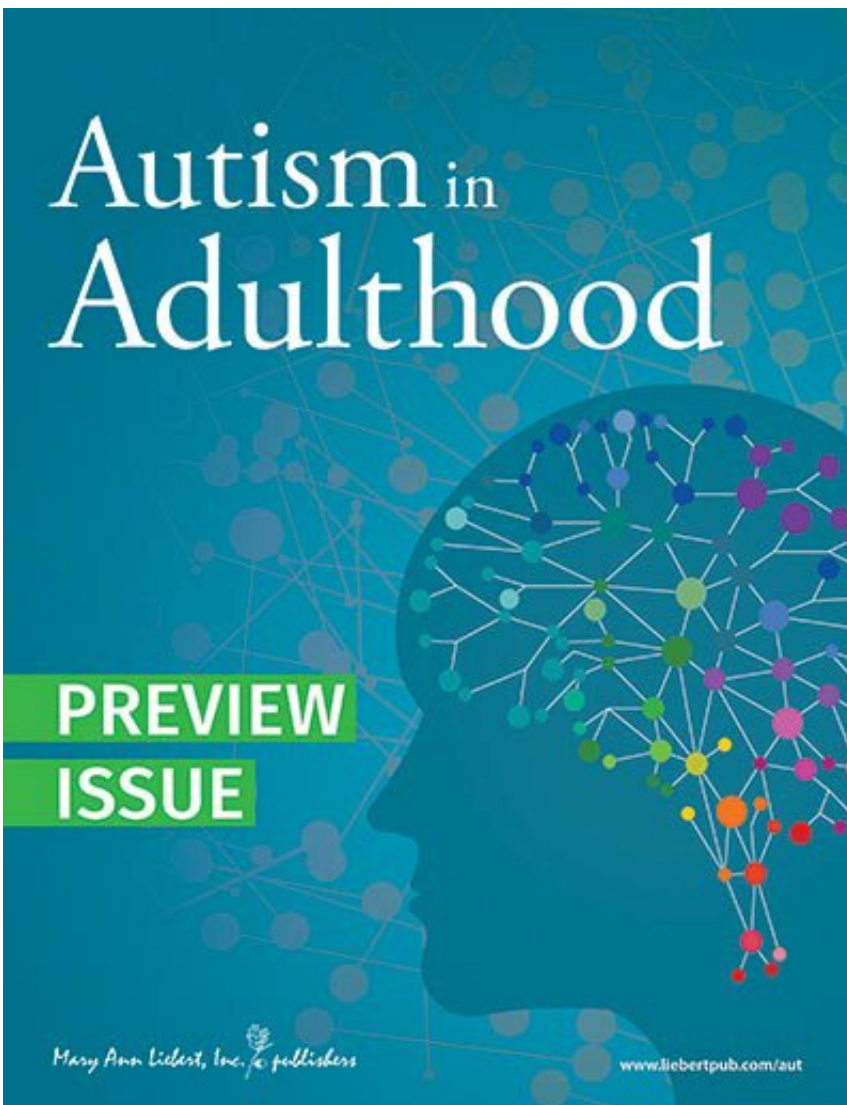


# Virtual reality a promising tool for reducing fears and phobia in autism

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Credit: Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers

In a new pilot study, autistic adults showed real-life, functional improvement after a combination treatment approach that included graded exposure to fear and anxiety-producing experiences in a virtual reality environment. The design and preliminary results of this novel approach are published in *Autism in Adulthood*.

In the article entitled "Using Virtual Reality Environments to Augment Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Fears and Phobias In Autistic Adults," a team led by Professor Jeremy Parr from Newcastle University and NHS Foundation Trust, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K. describe a [pilot study](#) in which they tested a combined cognitive behavioral (CBT) therapy and immersive virtual reality approach in adults aged 18-57 on the autism spectrum. The participants received one educational session followed by four 20-minute therapeutic sessions of gradually increasing exposure to the feared stimulus to minimize anxiety.

"Phobias commonly co-occur with autism and often cause significant distress. While results are very preliminary, it is exciting to see innovative strategies for an issue that has been so hard to treat. Emerging Practices papers, such as this one, look towards the future by highlighting new avenues of research that have potential for improving quality of life for [autistic adults](#)," says Christina Nicolaidis, MD, MPH, Portland State University and Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, Oregon and Editor-in-Chief of *Autism in Adulthood*.

**More information:** *Autism in Adulthood*, [DOI: 10.1089/aut.2018.0019](https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2018.0019)

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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