

# Virtual reality to manage psychological distress in adolescents

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A new systemic review found that all studies reported benefits when using virtual reality (VR) to manage psychological distress in adolescents. These benefits occurred across a range of treatment

scenarios, according to the study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*.

Adolescents face unique life challenges relating to puberty, schooling, self-identity, intimate relationships, and financial dependence. Adolescence is a critical period for the onset of mental health disorders.

Virtual reality is a promising treatment modality for mental health issues. It is a rapidly evolving field that involves the use of immersive computer technology to imbed users into interactive digital worlds.

The studies included in this report showed that VR interventions can quickly reduce negative symptoms. Both active (playing an interactive game) and passive (watching a movie) VR experiences were therapeutic for distressed adolescents. Adolescent participants rated their VR experience favorably and attrition rates were low.

"These preliminary findings suggest VR is a valuable treatment modality for adolescent [psychological distress](#)," state Joshua Kelson, Ph.D., from Charles Sturt University, and coauthors. "However, conclusions on the effectiveness of VR in managing [adolescent](#) distress are limited by the lack of high-quality controlled studies, and the heterogeneity found in existing ones."

**More information:** Joshua N. Kelson et al, The Use of Virtual Reality for Managing Psychological Distress in Adolescents: Systematic Review, *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* (2021). [DOI: 10.1089/cyber.2021.0090](https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2021.0090)

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