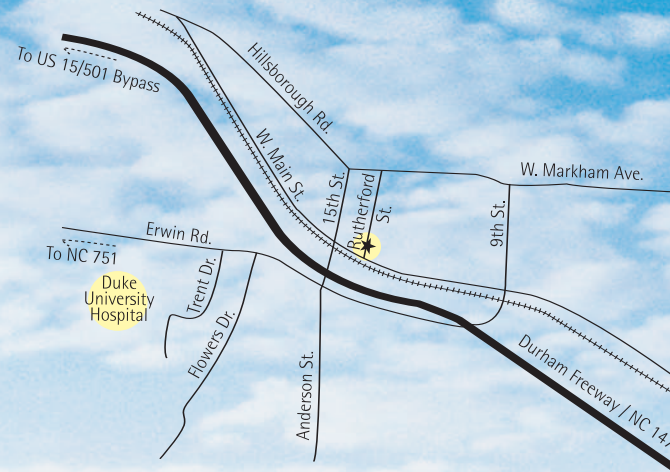


If a fear is keeping you  
from fully enjoying your life,  
you are not alone

Anxiety disorders make life difficult, or even unbearable, for many people. Treatment to overcome an anxiety usually involves practicing new behaviors while being exposed to the feared situation. With repeated exposures, the fear response is gradually replaced with the desired behavior. Although effective, this approach typically requires the therapist and patient to repeatedly venture out into the real world in an effort to encounter the fear-inducing experience. Each trip requires an extended period of time in an uncontrolled environment, so progress may be slow.

Fortunately, now there's an effective treatment program that can help you quickly break free from a life-limiting phobia. If flying, public speaking, heights, or thunderstorms make you anxious, therapists affiliated with the Duke University Medical Center can help you conquer your fear in a safe, confidential environment. Through the use of virtual reality technology, you now can overcome your anxiety in a matter of weeks.



Duke Virtual Reality Program  
Duke University Medical Center  
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences  
718 Rutherford Street  
Durham, NC 27705

IF FEAR IS LIMITING YOUR LIFE...  
BECOME

VIRTUALLY  
FEARLESS



DUKE Virtual Reality Program

## How does Virtual Therapy Work?

As a person goes through the program the therapist teaches the client relaxation techniques to deal with the symptoms provoked by exposure to the virtual environment. Then, using the latest computer technology, the therapist will recreate the sights and sounds of a fear-provoking situation in a “virtual” environment. You will enter this simulated environment by putting on a head-mount display—like those used in virtual reality games. Using a computer keyboard, the therapist then can control everything you see and hear.

For example, if you have a fear of flying, over the course of several sessions you can experience a variety of flight-related situations. Each part of the flying experience—sitting on the runway, taxiing down the runway, taking off, flying in both good and bad weather, and landing—can be repeated over and over again as needed. If a particular situation, such as take off, causes you the most anxiety, the therapist can replay this simulation as many times as necessary until you are comfortable with it. During each exposure to the anxiety-provoking sensations, you will practice replacing a fear response with new behaviors. Over time, your anxiety level will decrease as you successfully respond to the feared experience.



## Why should I choose this therapy?

There are several distinct advantages to using a therapist-controlled, simulated environment for the treatment of an anxiety.

- **Greater safety and unlimited repetitions**

The simulated, or “virtual” environment can be easily controlled to ensure that you receive the appropriate experience in a safe manner. The entire treatment program can be completed within the security of the therapist’s office. There is no need to waste time venturing out into the real world in the hope of encountering anxiety producing sights and sounds. By controlling all aspects of the environment, the therapist can repeatedly expose you to each phase of a fear-



provoking event until it is mastered. This effective, efficiently delivered treatment program can shorten the time required to overcome your anxiety. Finally, a life-long fear can be overcome in a matter of weeks.

- **Easily scheduled, confidential sessions**

Because you can receive your treatment in the therapist’s office, each session can fit within the standard 45 to 50 minute therapy hour. If you desire, multiple sessions can be scheduled within the same week to accommodate your busy schedule. Since you don’t have to leave the therapist’s office during a treatment, the risk of running into friends or becoming panicked in a public place is eliminated. Your privacy is further assured with free, conveniently located and privately accessed parking.

- **Insurance reimbursement of fees**

Unlike standard anxiety treatment sessions involving real world experiences, each virtual reality session can be completed in less than an hour. Research indicates that 6 to 8 sessions are required to achieve maximum benefit. But because these therapeutic sessions are brief and typically can be completed over a period of six to eight weeks, they are often covered by medical insurance plans.

## How can I get more information about this treatment?

To take your first step toward a life free of fear, contact the Duke Virtual Reality Program for more information or an appointment.

CALL: 919-416-2440 or 1-888-ASK-DUKE

EMAIL: [desua001@mc.duke.edu](mailto:desua001@mc.duke.edu)

Or visit <http://mentalhealth.dukehealth.org>

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*The Virtual Reality Program is a fee-for-service clinic, with the exception that the program is a participant provider with Duke Employee Health Plans.*