

VR Trips Help Treat Depression in the Elderly

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(gentle music) - [Woman] Oh my, so beautiful, whoa! - Don't think I could've climbed those stairs even in my youth. - [Woman] I don't think I could either. Man, I'll tell you something. - There are 10000 Americans turning 65 and becoming seniors everyday. And of that group, six million adults, over the age of 65 are experiencing late life depression right now in America. I realized we could use VR, actually as tool to spur social contact and social interaction to take people back to a place that they had fond memories of. Their childhood home, somewhere that they know and love, or we could take them to somewhere that they've never been before. Once we put on the headsets, you can tell they've never seen anything like it before.

Their mind is completely blown. My name is Carleigh Berryman, I am the founder of Viva Vita, which brings virtual reality to seniors. (upbeat music) Mental health is just now beginning to be taken more seriously in senior care. In the past, it was just kinda seen as, yes, you get older and you get a little sad, because why wouldn't you? They're more willing to just accept it as a part of life, and they typically won't ask for help and ask for treatment. And at the same time, virtual reality was really up and coming. And so, putting the two together, it was kind of just an aha moment. - There are different spots that we're gonna look at along the wall, and we'll go into these different locations and it's going to be like a 360 photograph. We all see the same thing at once so that they really have a shared experience. - We've been to Paris, we took a tour of London, we went to my hometown in Guyana, I swam with the fish, flew with the birds, entered paintings, it's wonderful. - And we've partnered with one program called Art Plunge where they're in, essentially a museum, up in the stars, and there are a collection of famous paintings, "Starry Night", "Creation of Adam", "The Mona Lisa", and they're able to look through the different paintings, and actually jump inside a painting. They can then see it all around them and it kind of comes to life. - It's a great experience for people who are, shall I say, trapped in their bodies. - Oh, today was great.

Today was marvelous. Imagine that being on the Wall of China this afternoon. - What we wanted to do is bring new experiences to them, something that they can get out of bed and look forward to in the morning. And it's really a chance for them to continue to learn and continue to explore the world, even if they're confined to their room or to their wheelchair. I've had people say, "I feel so free here. " - The Yellow Sea and the East China Sea-- - Oh my, whoa! - We received our seed funding and allowed us to get our initial batch of equipment and set up and everything.

And looking to early 2020 as we began to expand the team and expand our locations. With more sessions, we'll have more data to really determine the effect and the efficacy of our sessions, specifically, and how that's playing a role in their mental health, their mood, their levels of energy, and their feelings of positivity. And that's something that we can monitor through repeat sessions. I've always just felt a really deep connection and respect for our seniors. We are at the forefront of technology. We're bringing in new devices and new experiences, and we're thinking outside the box. - I have son who's an engineer. And I was telling

him about doing this, and he said, "Oh my god, how lucky you are. " (chuckles) And he says, "Go whenever you can. " So I do. Only if Carly can come. - [Woman] (chuckling) Oh, yeah. - So she can take care of the controls when we all get lost.

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