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Virtual therapy for **depression** sufferers;   
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**Virtual** **reality** **therapy** could help people with **depression** to be less critical and more compassionate towards themselves, a study has found.

More than half of the patients using the immersive therapy reported improvements in their mental health, with several experiencing a marked drop in the severity of their condition.

In the study, carried out by scientists in Britain and Spain, patients were given a headset and asked to express compassion towards an upset child, reassuring the virtual youngster until it stopped crying.

After a few minutes the patients took the place of the virtual child and saw the adult deliver their own compassionate words and gestures back to them. The eight-minute scenario was repeated three times at weekly intervals. Researchers at UCL and ICREA-University of Barcelona tested the therapy in 15 patients with **depression** aged 23-61. Nine reported reduced depressive symptoms a month after the therapy, of whom four experienced a clinically significant drop in **depression**.

The findings have "huge potential" to revolutionise the treatment of **depression**, said study co-author Professor Mel Slater: "The recent marketing of low-cost home virtual reality systems means that methods such as this could potentially be part of every home and be used on a widespread basis."

Study lead Professor Chris Brewin said: "By comforting the child and then hearing their own words back, patients are indirectly giving themselves compassion."

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH