

WCPA Clinical Division presents
Technology in Clinical Psychology:
Using Virtual Reality and Biofeedback to Treat Anxiety and Phobias
The Case Example of Aviophobia- Fear of Flying

May 31, 2019 from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
Little Theatre at Scarsdale High School



PRESENTER: Michele Barton, Ph.D.

Aviophobia (Fear of Flying) is a pervasive problem that affects hundreds of thousands of individuals annually. The Federal Aviation Administration Air Traffic Organization reports providing service to more than 43,000 flights and 2.6 million airline passengers daily. Amongst the 2.6 million flyers industrialized populations have daily, one third have anxiety associated with flying. Additionally, one third of the one third of those afflicted with that anxiety fit full criteria for diagnosis of Aviophobia or Fear of Flying (FOF; Oaks and Bor, 2010a). Several CBT protocols have been developed for alleviating associated distress to get these anxious people flying freely (Clark, 2004). In vivo Virtual Reality (VR) therapy has been utilized in the offices of tech savvy clinicians for many years (Kim et al., 2008). Historically this equipment was very expensive, extensive, and not easy to operate. Recent developments in stand-alone VR technology have revolutionized the world of Aviophobia extinction.

Since flying is not something most people do on a regular basis, even after a successful phobia extinction, the fear can return with equal intensity. VR therapy can be a practical, cost-effective way to facilitate and optimize continued exposure and maintenance of treatment gains between flights. The Oculus Go unit, for example, is an inexpensive, user-friendly device, and includes internal audio, head motion integration, and WiFi. With use of this cue to VR technology, in conjunction with biofeedback and the guidance of a trained CBT therapist, many phobic individuals can overcome aviophobia in the comfort of their own home, engaging in regular exposures remotely between sessions to compliment the treatment process and strengthen new coping tools. Dr. Barton looks forward to demonstrating this innovative treatment technology for members of

WCPA and guests.

References:

Clark, G, Rock, A. Front Psychol. 2016 June; 7:754

Kim, S, Palin, K, Anderson, P, Edwards, S, Lindner, G. J Anxiety Disord. 2008;22(2):301-9

Oakes, M., Bor, R. Travel Med Infect Dis. 2010 Nov;8(6):327-38

Dr. Michele Barton Dr. Michele Barton is the Founder and Director of Psychology Life Well, as well as the Director of Training and Clinical Director of the Biofeedback and Virtual Reality Therapy programs at The Child & Family Institute. Dr. Barton has extensive experience using a variety of evidence-based treatments across diverse populations and clinical settings and is highly specialized in CBT combined with the use of Biofeedback and Virtual Reality Therapies. Dr. Barton graduated with honors from Purchase College with a B.A. in Psychology and a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Biological Science. She began her graduate career at Columbia University-Teachers College Masters in Psychology Program, followed by a Clinical Health Psychology PhD Program at Yeshiva University, where she earned degrees in Clinical Psychology and Clinical Health Psychology. Dr. Barton conducted her doctoral research at the New York State Psychiatric Institute at Columbia University's Department of Medical Genetics, where she completed her Doctoral Dissertation studying the genetic contributions associated with children at risk for psychological disorders based on parental diagnosis. During her post-doctoral fellowship, Dr. Barton specialized in applications of CBT coupled with intensive training in the utilization of non-invasive medical procedures including Biofeedback, Virtual Reality, Entrainment, and Neurofeedback prescribed to successfully replace or supplement medication in a number of psychological disorders including ADHD, Anxiety, OCD, Depression, Addiction, and Specific Phobias (e.g., fear of flying, public speaking, heights, animals, performance and social anxiety), among others. Dr. Barton was trained by leaders in the field, using cutting edge state-of-the-art equipment to establish groundbreaking treatment protocols and applications using psychophysiological technology.

This program is free for WCPA Members

There is a \$15.00 fee for non-members (to be paid at the door by check or cash)

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