

# Calming Virtual Reality App Use at Muskegon Middle School

The idea for using the VR headsets came when I took a class on mindfulness in schools. We learned many techniques but most centered on a singing bell ( a small bowl and mallet ) that would help direct the students when to find their mindful space and we would work on lengthening the time they were able to remain in that present state, aware of the current moment vs all that draws them away.

When trying to work with my students with these basic mindful techniques I quickly realized that for the majority of them, they were unable to manage even brief moments of focused time. Most of my students have suffered trauma and stress in their lives and are reactive and tense upon entering school daily, make poor and reactive choices when in the classroom and are hostile or easily agitated when trying to be redirected to a better behavior choice, let alone being comfortable or trust in a quiet or calm state.

My school is one where most of my kids describe themselves as " having anger problems" and respond with anger in most situations, it is one of the primary issues I deal with daily. The second issue that arose was that I was not meeting this group of students where they are in 2020.....solidly embedded in technology and the quiet singing bell and breathing was far beyond their ability as it is even for most us adults.

Acknowledging quiet mindfulness was too advanced, I needed to backtrack and help these students start with being able to at least disconnect from their strong emotions, anger, tension and frustration as a first step. I explored the idea of headphones for music, videos, or CD's to help them, in the moment of distress to be able to instantly disconnect from the trigger and calm themselves before we could work on a better or more productive response, as well as work on scheduling time for certain students who have regular outbursts to come in and practice calming techniques before they are in that state of mind.

While researching ways to support calming techniques for students with trauma, I came across the use of Virtual Reality headsets. There is a lot of research that supports this approach and virtually 1000's of apps to help support disconnecting from triggers, calming and mindfulness.

I was approved to purchase 4 Oculus Go VR headsets and researched apps that would promote calming, deep breathing, relaxation as well as apps that would provide interesting distracting options with the goal of purely disconnecting the student from the present moment and redirecting the feelings and emotions.

We have been very successful thus far. The students have responded very well, enjoying the apps, learning and practicing how it feels to be angry or agitated and allowing themselves to be redirected into a state of distraction then calm, allowing for a better conversation following a VR session and a more productive result of their emotion. Some frequently are able to regroup and rejoin their day.

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We are using the VR headsets for the purpose of calming, redirecting, learning and as a reward for good choices. There are many choices of apps on the VR headsets for the students to use. We have a variety of deep breathing, calming and mindfulness apps. We have nature hikes and travel apps and some fun games that can be used as a reward.

We have created 4 walled off cubbies with bean bags and tapestries to promote a sense of space and safety while wearing the VR headsets. We allow students 10-20 minutes either as a scheduled session independent of counseling, before a counseling session, or on an as needed basis for students who have the use of VR as part of their treatment plan so they can stop into the counseling center when agitated or upset.

We are a work in progress but so far we are very excited with the results. The students really are responding positively to the use of VR and for the most part, are using them properly. We recently were approved for another 12 headsets so each of our school wellness sites will have a pair to use with our students.

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[This spreadsheet has a list of the most popular Relax and Meditation Apps](#) for the Oculus Go (provided by Oculus). [From: Oculus for the Go - Relax and Meditate Apps](#)

Updated 2-22-23

- [6 Best Meditation, Mindfulness & Relaxation VR Apps for Oculus Quest 2](#)
- [Relaxing VR Games to Help You Unwind](#)
- [Best Meditation and Relaxation VR apps in 2022](#)
- [The best meditation apps on Meta Quest 2](#)
- [The Best VR Meditation Apps for Oculus Quest – Updated for 2023!](#)
- [20 Great VR Games for Relaxation & Meditation](#) - not all work with the Meta Quest 2

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