



# Talking Mimes VR Delivery: Facilitator Guide

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## Before putting participant through VR



- ▶ Test and prepare your kit ahead of time
  - ▶ Ensure headsets are fully charged, in "**do not disturb**" mode, and Wifi is off. You should get 5-11 runs on a single charge.
  - ▶ Use good quality headphones (ideally over-ear with noise cancelling).
  - ▶ Pack spare AA batteries for remotes, and chargers for headsets and headphones.
  - ▶ On Quest headsets, either setup the guardian/boundary to the size of the room at the venue, or disable the guardian/boundary altogether.
  - ▶ Arm straps (e.g. strips of velcro) and a chair with arms are ideal, but not required.
  
- ▶ Take the participants completed Talking Mimes pre-questionnaire.
- ▶ Explain the experience:

"It's a 12 minute first person experience where you become the main character - someone who's "locked-in". This means you can't reliably control your movements or communicate. It's based on **real experiences** of people with severe physical disabilities and was developed in partnership with them. So everything you're about to experience has either happened or is a close proxy. \*
- ▶ Give them some context:

"The room where you start off is in a respite care facility. And the first person you meet is your mother and full time caregiver, Joy. For most people that's enough context, but let me know if you want more information"

\* We do not recommend including a trigger warning as research indicates they are not effective and can be counterproductive: encouraging potentially harmful avoidance and causing or enhancing unnecessary anxiety and distress rather than reducing it (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/21677026231186625>). If you need to include a trigger warning then we suggest a non-specific minimal warning at the end of the experience explanation: "Because of this realness it can be emotionally challenging for some people, but it is a meaningful and valuable experience, with elements of fun even. So it's a worthwhile journey to take as long as you are willing to take it?"

## VR experience

- ▶ Put on the HMD (VR headset) yourself, check the charge (should be **at least 20%**) and navigate to Apps > Talking Mimes
  - ▶ Run the app and wait until the written instructions appear.
  - ▶ Ask the participant: "There are optional closed captions and an audio description track available for people who benefit from them, do you require either of these?". If yes, follow instructions in app to turn on, and wait until you get audio or visual confirmation they are on.
  - ▶ Ask them to put the HMD on and adjust for comfort. For Quests, show them how to adjust the width of the lenses (moving lenses directly on Quest 2; IPD slider/wheel on 1, 3, and Pro).
  - ▶ When they're ready, ask them to get comfortable and face forward. Then tap the main button on remote (the (A) button on The Quests) once and ask "Can you see an anti mime symbol and some writing?", or if they are blind/low vision, just pull and release the trigger quickly and confirm you can hear the audio description instructions repeat.
    - ▶ If not, check the power light on the HMD, you may need to press the power button once quickly, wait a moment and run through the above again.
    - ▶ If they still can't see the anti-mime symbol, or hear instructions, try long pressing the Oculus button on the remote, then run through the above again.
    - ▶ If still no joy, ask them to take off the headset and troubleshoot with it on your own head.
  - ▶ Ask permission/consent to strap them to the arms of their chair (if possible / appropriate), explaining that the person they are about to become is also strapped to the arms of their wheelchair due to their movement issues.
  - ▶ When they're ready, plug the headphones into the headset and place them over their ears.
    - ▶ Make sure you have the **correct left/right ears** (this is important for the experience)
    - ▶ Activate noise cancelling on the headphones if available.
    - ▶ Adjust the volume, asking how many dim bars they see on the right - depending on sensitivity of the participant's hearing, this should usually be three bars from top.
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- ▶ Say "When you get to the end, it's worth sticking it out to the end of the credits. Ok, I'm about to start you off."
  - ▶ If they don't require audio description, double click the main / (A) button and confirm "Are you fading into a room?"
  - ▶ If they are blind / low vision and require audio description, ensure it is turned on, and say "When you hear 'Video started', nod to let me know" then double click the (A) button.
  - ▶ Start countdown on your phone/stopwatch for total run time including credits (13:20).
  - ▶ Put the HMDs you're not using on charge.
- ▶ If the experience gets interrupted, you can double click the main button / (A) to start/pause and use the controller joystick to fast forward or rewind to get back to where you left off.

## Debrief

Give the participant time to decompress. Some people might not want to talk at all, and that's fine. Listen quietly and without judgement to anything they have to say.

If they have reactions like "thank god it's not me" or "I wanted to die", guide them with questions about **what specifically made them feel this way** (to highlight and process the behavioural and social issues we need to address).

Also explain that because the VR narrative is only 12 minutes long, while it's a shock to be stripped of your agency, you don't get to experience what happens over a longer period. People go on extraordinary journeys of self-discovery, develop mental toolkits, and psychological strength they didn't know they were capable of. You can also talk to examples of some extraordinary upsides of disability (<https://talkingmimes.com/pwac>) and the happy, fulfilling, and productive lives of people locked-in with severe physical disabilities:

- ▶ **Stephen Hawking** - brilliant scientist who transformed our understanding of the universe. Imagine what it would mean for humanity if he gave in to despair, or did not have access to the assistive technology to continue his work in physics and science communication. Note his disability was actually an advantage for his work in theoretical physics (see above link).
- ▶ **Martin Pstorious** - successful IT career, best selling author, hugely popular TED talk.
- ▶ **Nick Chisholm** - life became larger after the acquired disability: his charismatic entertaining personality online resulted in marriage proposals from the other side of the world, with documentaries and live theatre productions made about him.

Optional questions:

- ▶ How did you feel going through the experience?
- ▶ What were some thoughts that went through your mind?
  - ▶ Can you be more specific?
  - ▶ Can you say that in another way?
  - ▶ What's another way of framing or thinking about that?
- ▶ What do these thoughts and feelings suggest to you about yourself?
  - ▶ what does that mean to you?
- ▶ What surprised/struck you about the experience?
- ▶ How has the experience influenced how you may see/interact with people with disabilities?

If you are not pairing the experience with a workshop, then provide them with the take home handout - [https://talkingmimes.com/TMMD\\_closing\\_handout.pdf](https://talkingmimes.com/TMMD_closing_handout.pdf)