

Facebook twists reality again and risks ruining your children

By Keith Ablow, [| Fox News](#)



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg gestures while delivering the keynote address at the f8 Facebook Developer Conference Wednesday, April 30, 2014, in San Francisco. (AP)

Facebook's recent \$2 billion acquisition of the virtual reality company Oculus VR means that millions of people -- lots of them teenagers -- will be able to put on an Oculus Rift headset and, as Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg puts it, "enter a completely immersive computer-generated environment." [Zuckerberg says](#) people who have tried the Oculus Rift feel like they are "actually present in another place" and say it's "different from anything they've ever experienced in their lives."

Here's the problem: If the Oculus Rift were a pharmaceutical or a medical device, rather than a gaming headset, the FDA would study it for years and demand rigorous clinical trials in volunteers before approving it. It would want to make certain the device had no unexpected side effects -- like depression or attention deficit disorder or anxiety or delusional thinking. And it would want to make sure it was not addictive.

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But since the Oculus Rift is just part of a game, there's no oversight.

Is no one concerned that Mark Zuckerberg's zeal for completely immersing people in alternate realities might be toxic for them? Has anyone wondered whether his quest reflects an underlying contempt for something he lived through for real -- or for our shared reality, our real relationships and solving our real problems?

I can't be the only one wondering whether someone who encourages people to make hundreds of false "friends" and block unwanted feedback and transport themselves into games where they pretend they are knights or murderers is the best shepherd to follow.

There is no FDA in the technology space to make sure that new inventions distributed to tens or hundreds of millions of people aren't going to hurt them. But maybe there has to be. Because any agency worth anything would be proactive about the data streaming in about Facebook users suffering a disproportionate [amount of depression](#) and video game aficionados [increasing](#) their risk of attention deficit disorder. And any such agency would insist that 1,000 people or more use the device as much as they want, then look at what happens to them over the course of a few years, before deploying it to the whole country as something "fun."

Zuckerberg's obvious theory (given that he expresses no conscious desire to do harm) is that Facebook and the Oculus VR are good businesses and good ways to communicate and have fun. My theory is that Facebook is an addictive technological drug that, like every drug, gives people temporary pleasure and, ultimately, causes many people to become psychiatrically ill. And my theory is that the Oculus VR will make matters worse. And my theory is that "geniuses" like Zuckerberg are precipitating an epidemic of psychiatric illness -- with features of narcissism and depression and dissociation and violent behavior -- such as the world has never known.

There are lots of Americans who already sit around and play games like Wartune until they have no money left in their bank accounts, have let their jobs go and have ruined their relationships. And that's without wearing a headset that makes them think they are actually in an alternate universe, or a [KOR-FX](#) vest that makes them feel like they are actually being kicked or shot or, perhaps, that someone is trying to set them ablaze.

We are deploying powerful technology drugs to our young people and expecting that they will have no untoward impact on them or the world, even as data stream in telling us that these technology drugs are toxic -- even in their current, relatively weak form. Eventually, we will realize that visionaries like Zuckerberg were, at best, blind to the harm they were doing.