

VIRTUAL EMPATHY SOFT SKILLS TRAINER (VESST)

IMMERSIVE EMPATHY TRAINING FOR FRONT-LINE PERSONNEL

Technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Immersive Training Environments (ITE) have long proven their effectiveness for training and therapy across many domains, including military, medicine, and aviation. This innovative, immersive technology is not typically available or used to its full potential in providing front responders, palliative care professionals, and social workers training or mental health resources.

Engineering & Computer Simulations is changing that by bringing over five years of development of multiple projects for various DoD and federal customers into a new product line, the Virtual Empathy Soft-skills Trainer (VESST). VESST supports the development of a variety of soft skills that front-line personnel must employ during challenging interactions or sensitive subject matter. These engaging lessons immerse the learner in intensive conversations set in realistic environments. The learner interacts with high-fidelity avatars that create a sense of realism by portraying nuanced and evocative responses. The avatars deliver immediate reactions to a learner's choices, showing the consequences of bad decisions, and the benefits of utilizing empathy, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills. The system provides after-action review and remediation upon completion of a scenario. This provides front-line personnel a safe space to navigate the challenges of identifying empathetic interactions, learn from their mistakes, and develop strategies for managing outcomes.

Sample of Existing Scenarios:

- Basic Crisis De-escalation
- Respectful Communication with Transgender Individuals
- Respectful Communication for Racial Bias
- Requests for Native Language Services
- Requests for a Gender-Specific Provider
- Listening to Overwhelmed Parent
- Empathic Listening During Crisis Assistance
- Palliative Care
- Mental Health, Depression, Cognitive Impairment

