

**Oh, the places you'll go!** *Living in a reality with multiple metaverses*  
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For those who want a glimpse into the future, read science fiction. Considering the buzz around the metaverse, start with *Snow Crash* by Neal Stephenson. He's the guy who coined the term in his 1992 dystopian novel that depicted a world where humans had avatars and lived between physical and virtual (VR) realities. For even earlier works that reference or center around a metaverse-ish theme, check out *True Names*, written by Vernor Vinge in 1981, or Morton Heilig's [Sensorama](#) machine patented in 1962. To test drive a ready-made metaverse, there's Minecraft, which kids and some adults have been playing in for more than a decade. Not all metaverses are fun and games, however.

In a recent [interview](#), Stephenson (who worked with Jeff Bezos on Blue Origin from 1999-2006) states he's more a fan of augmented reality (AR) than VR given its limitations. Eventually, as the technologies progress and seamlessly merge, AR and VR may shape a number of individual metaverses that defy any and all science fiction concepts. Until then, different entities are moving ahead to create their own versions. Take the city of Seoul, Korea, for example. On November 11, 2021, The Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) announced it will be the first major city in the world to enter the metaverse. Tentatively called Metaverse Seoul, it will become a virtual "communication ecosystem" for all areas of its municipal administration, including civil services, education, tourism, culture and finance. Part of the city's [2030 Vision](#) plan, almost \$3 billion has been invested so far.

Dozens of similar ambitious announcements have been made across the globe recently in a wide range of industries. Boeing, for example, plans to invest \$15 billion in its own metaverse, where mechanics wearing mixed reality headsets and robots help build 3D versions (digital twins) of airplane designs to conduct simulations. Boeing is also involved in the HBAR Foundation, a "force multiplier to help builders and creators overcome the challenges of bringing ideas to market." HBAR is the native cryptocurrency of the Hedera network, which is the favored enterprise-grade public network owned by some of the largest corporations in the world including Boeing, Google, Tata Communications, IBM and more. Recently, the [HBAR Foundation and MetaVRse](#), a web-based 3D creation platform, announced a partnership to build an enterprise metaverse encompassing training, sales, marketing and entertainment functions for the world's largest organizations on the Hedera platform.

Many believe a mixed reality universe can improve the health and well-being of people. [Studies](#) have shown that the brain doesn't necessarily distinguish between a real or imagined threat. The hypothesis is this: *If your thinking can make you sick (stressed, anxious, fearful), then doesn't it stand to reason that your thinking can make you well?* Now imagine a metaverse where people engage in mixed reality experiences that "trick" their brain into boosting their immune systems, reducing fear, anxiety and stress—and it carries over into the real world to empower them. Psychiatrists have already begun using VR to help combat soldiers who have post-traumatic stress disorders. With the [World Health Organization](#) predicting mental health conditions will be the leading cause of disease burden worldwide by 2030, that metaverse can't come fast enough.

Of course, there is no irony lost in the fact that digital technologies are being used to treat mental health disorders, which have [escalated in tandem with digital platforms](#) and increasing screen time—especially among kids. But tech cannot be solely blamed. Moderation is not just advice for drinkers. Moderation in everything is sound advice when it comes to immersive metaverse experiences, too. And there will be plenty to choose from moving forward.

In this Brave New World we are living in, there is more fear than ever. Many predict a metaverse would serve as an escape from reality and become addictive. But isn't it time to get excited about the future again? There is a world of good that can come from a simulated reality. People could go there to safely learn new skills, like driving a vehicle, operating machinery or performing surgeries. Imagine a paralyzed person being able to experience walking or running! Or a couple experiencing what it is like to be a parent before the child arrives. From new vehicle designs and city infrastructure changes to evaluating potential conditions while onboard a spacecraft and factory floor optimization, a simulated reality can bring tremendous value to the world—just like books. But it is still up to humans to decide which ones we will find most rewarding.