

A Spider Phobia Can Ruin Your Health?



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"I had been known to jump out of my car and leave it running on the road due to seeing a large spider inside the car.

Can the mental anxiety from a spider phobia impact your physical health as well? The simple answer is yes, especially if you are suffering from Long Covid or other chronic health conditions. Founder of the Spider Courage Experience Britain Stelly and Jane Green, founder and Chair of the multi-award winning Sussex Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes and Hypermobility Disorders (SEDS), put the theory to the test!

The fear of spiders, arachnophobia, is one of the most common phobias in the world affecting between 3.5% to 6.1% of the entire human population (Schmitt, WJ; Müri, RM, 2009). Many people suffering from this fear experience extreme anxiety and endlessly worry about their next encounter with spiders. The impact this has on mental health is obvious, but constant anxiety can affect far more than just the mind.

One of the worse aggravants for Long Covid and other chronic illnesses is anxiety. Anxiety releases histamine and other chemicals to cope with a situation. A normal release of these chemicals acts beneficially to protect and heal a healthy body. When too much is inappropriately triggered and released, they can have a negative effect, flaring symptoms and raising inflammation in the body increasing fatigue and pain. (Eccles, 2021) This is why it is crucial to lessen anxiety during this pandemic when our health is already under elevated threat.

Thankfully, curing a spider phobia can actually be treated in only one day! Featured several times in the media with even celebrity clients, the Spider Courage Experience run by Creature Courage offers a multi-faceted approach to spider phobia therapy into one cost effective session to ensure a high success rate.

Creature Courage's approach is holistic, considering a person's entire mental health. The techniques used are versatile to address overall anxiety and build courage in any situation.

"We help liberate people's minds and get them thinking more positively about all aspects of their lives to keep the phobia away for good, increase the quality of life', founder Britain Stelly emphasises.

Stelly is also a Long Covid sufferer and has developed long-term health problems from only a mild case of covid. Experiencing firsthand how devastating the condition can be, she teamed up with Jane Green from SussexEDS (SEDS) to help highlight the connection between physical and mental health.

Green is autistic and has Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS), a connective tissues disorder, which can include many additional chronic health symptoms that can present in a very similar way to Long Covid. Green has a lifetime history of proof of how the anxiety from the spider phobia affected her physical body.

"I had been known to jump out of my car and leave it running on the road due to seeing a large spider inside the car. In the autumn, when we see more spiders, I am hyper-vigilant. This anxiety affected my whole body, especially with increased fatigue, pain and inflammation. I was constantly worried when I might see a spider".

Green wants to inspire others to address their fears and get rid of unnecessary anxiety. The liberation of her spider phobia has been hugely beneficial.

"I feel so much better being back in control of my anxiety around spiders. Anxiety for people with EDS and other co-occurring conditions can mean an overload of chemicals and enzymes, sometimes leading to allergic reactions or even anaphylactic attacks, so getting in control of my phobia was incredibly important!"

Green recently took part in an experimental trial testing a

novel theory called ADIE to reduce anxiety in autistic adults. This looked at how accurate a group of autistic adults were at perceiving a key inner senses called the interoception sense. This sense helps us to know what is happening inside our bodies if we are too hot, cold, hungry or tired or anxious. So, the idea was to help people become more aware of their own heartbeat in order to effectively 'calm their emotions'. (Wired, 2019).

In 2017 Professor Garfinkel, cognitive neuroscientist at UCL, designed an experiment using the concept of interoception to treat spider phobias for autistic adults with computer simulated spiders. It was found that using interoception techniques helped 31% more people recover from a spider phobia as opposed to 16% in the control group. (Watson et al, 2019)

Professor Garfinkel told us "Our fear response and feelings of anxiety are closely linked to changes in our body, including the perception of these changes, such as the pounding of our heart. Good insight into these internal bodily signals, a process known as interoception, can provide early access to these signals, allowing us to regulate them before they start to spiral. Calming down our bodies can also serve to calm down our minds".

Green really wanted to get control over the anxiety caused by her spider phobia and connected with Creature Courage to spread the message of how important the mind and body working together is for overall health, especially with sufferers of Long Covid and chronic illnesses. ###

Creature Courage is the UK's leading animal phobia specialists run by Britain Stelly. For more information on Creature Courage please go to www.creaturecourage.com, and for the Spider Courage Experience page: Facebook: The Spider Courage Experience and Creature Courage Contact number 0800 970 4417. For press release photos please go to: Jane Green is founder and Chair of the multi-award winning Sussex Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes and Hypermobility Disorders (SEDS) social enterprise (founded in 2018) and advocates for hypermobility and autistic issues in health, education, social

care, transport accessibility and employment.

Beyond bones: The relevance of variants of connective tissue (hypermobility) to fibromyalgia, ME/CFS and controversies surrounding diagnostic classification: an observational study

Schmitt, WJ; Müri, RM (2009). "Neurobiologie der Spinnenphobie". Schweizer Archiv für Neurologie. 160 (8): 352–355. Archived from the original on 23 August 2016.

Listening to your heart might be the key to conquering anxiety

Watson DR, Garfinkel SN, Gould van Praag C, Willmott D, Wong K, Meeten F, Critchley HD. Computerized Exposure Therapy for Spider Phobia: Effects of Cardiac Timing and Interoceptive Ability on Subjective and Behavioral Outcomes. Psychosom Med. 2019 Jan;81(1):90-99. doi: 10.1097/PSY.0000000000000646. PMID: 30300237.

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