

Fight the FEAR

Do spiders make your skin crawl, terriers fill you with terror and clowns creep you out? You're not alone, as some of the world's biggest stars have phobias too. **buzz** shows you how to face your fears



SNAKES AND INSECTS

Half of British women and a fifth of men are thought to be scared of spiders (arachnophobia), while 50 per cent of us are afraid of snakes (ophidiophobia). Scientists think these fears developed millions of years ago when our ancestors had to avoid poisonous critters in their caves, and a new study has also found that parents can pass phobias like these on to their children. Justin Timberlake and actress Eva Mendes are famous arachnophobes, while Nicole Kidman (left) has a more unusual insect issue – mottephobia, a fear of moths and butterflies.



“When you're scared of any kind of bug, the trick is to remove the mystery surrounding them,” says Diana. “One lady was scared of spiders, so together we looked at pictures of them in books and read as much as we could about them. Knowledge is power – it reduces fear. We played a computer game where a spider had to catch flies. This helped her so much that she went to Australia recently and was taking photographs of spiders in the wild.”

“**You can't tell if clowns are happy or about to bite your face off – Johnny Depp**”

ENCLOSED SPACES

No one likes being stuck in a lift or trapped nose-to-armpit on a busy bus or train. But for anyone with claustrophobia, the experience can be terrifying. Famous people with this fear include Uma Thurman, Drew Barrymore and Paris Hilton (below), who, when she was jailed in 2007, admitted she found her small cell hard to cope with. “I'm claustrophobic and I was going a little bit crazy,” says Paris, 30.



“This is a very common phobia and if left untreated, the person can develop further fears of being stuck in traffic or corridors,” says therapist Phil Parker. “Experts think this fear arises in a part of the brain known as the amygdale. In Neurolinguistic Programming, [NLP], a modern form of psychology, you



find out why one part of your brain is fearful of tight spaces or heights and then you're taught to rewire those pathways in the brain. In 80 per cent of cases, one 15-minute session of NLP is usually enough.” Find an NLP practitioner at www.britishtstituteofhypnotherapy-nlp.com.

Er, don't look down...



CLOWNS

Coulrophobia – a fear of clowns – affects one in seven people, including celebs Daniel Radcliffe, Christina Ricci and Johnny Depp, who sported clownish make-up in *Alice In Wonderland* (left).

“I guess I'm afraid of them because, thanks to their painted-on smiles, you can't tell if they are happy or if they are about to bite your face off,” says the actor, 47.

“We immediately work out how safe we are with someone by looking at their facial expression, so a mask makes us anxious,” explains psychotherapist Diana Parkinson. “Around six sessions of psychotherapy looking into your childhood to see where the fear stems from could really help.” Find your nearest psychotherapist at www.bacp.co.uk.

GIVING BIRTH

As many as one in six British women suffer from tocophobia, which is a morbid fear of having a baby – and that figure is thought to be on the rise. In 2007, actress Dame Helen Mirren admitted she saw a graphic video of childbirth when she was just 13 and that was the reason she never became a mother. “I swear it's traumatised me to this day,” says the Oscar winner, 65. “I haven't had children



CATS AND DOGS

To many of us, they're our four-legged friends. But film director Woody Allen admits to cynophobia (a fear of dogs), while Leona Lewis and La Toya Jackson both suffer from ailurophobia (a fear of cats).

“If I see a cat, I'm terrified,” says La Toya, 54, who has seen a therapist to help combat her fear. “When I was a child I saw a cat attack one of my relatives. The cat decided to jump on her neck and just tried to kill her.”

“I recently worked with a child who had been attacked by a dog, meaning he and his sister were now terrified of the animals,” says Diana. “After talking through their fears, we started to research all the good work dogs do with the blind and with mountain rescue. Then, in later weeks, I asked his parents to let them stroke a very docile dog and take him out for a walk. They're not scared any more.”

and I can't look at anything to do with childbirth. It absolutely disgusts me.”

“Visualisation and hypnosis can work well in this case,” says Diana. “I work with clients who want to get pregnant but are scared, and we imagine their body being happy, relaxed and comfortable carrying a baby, because people with this kind of phobia are terrified of losing control.”

Visit www.ukcho.co.uk for more details and a full register of qualified hypnotherapists.

FLYING

Unless you're Superman, it's not a natural feeling to be 30,000ft up in the clouds. But for some, aviophobia (fear of flying) can affect not only their holidays, but their careers too. Whoopi Goldberg, Cher and ex-Arsenal star Dennis Bergkamp suffer from aviophobia – the footballer would never fly with his teammates for European matches, preferring to travel by sea or land.

Jennifer Aniston (right, top), 42, became terrified of flying after getting caught in an electrical storm. “What scares me most is taking off,” she says. “I don't understand how the plane gets up there.”

“Over 40 per cent of people have a fear of flying but 97 per cent of people can overcome it,” says

Captain Keith Godfrey, who runs courses to help people at www.flyingwithoutfear.com.

“The first step is to replace the myths with facts. For example, aircraft engineers never work alone, they're always supervised; and aircraft are better maintained than any other form of transport. You can help yourself further with books, DVDs, CDs or even book yourself on a one-day course.”