

# SPIDERS: Course helps to conquer fears

# Cuddling up to creepy-crawlies



■ NICE TO MEET YOU: Reporter Jen Rivett gets up close and personal with Fluffy the tarantula, watched by Karen Rayner, left, at the Cotswold Wildlife Park

Picture: Damian Halliwell

IT WAS a scarier Hallowe'en than most for a group of arachnophobics, who came to the Cotswold Wildlife Park to confront their fears.

Saturday's spider phobia course - called Feeling Calm with Spiders - was the first of its kind to take place at the park near Burford.

Hypnotherapist Pippa Shay led four phobics in the three-hour course. The session cost £85, during which three therapies were used.

And by the end of the day, all had come closer to spiders than they had ever dared before - including touching a tarantula.

Karen Rayner, 43, of Bampton, took part to overcome her fears. She said: "I would never have thought at the end of the day I would be able to touch a tarantula and I was surprised at how quickly I got the result."

Ms Shay - who usually works

### ■ Jen Rivett

from the Beanbag Natural Health Store, in Witney, and Bampton Physiotherapy and Associates - said: "It's giving people the skills to run their lives better."

"It helps people be all they want to be in whatever way, reaching their potential and sorting out things that have been holding them back."

The session at the Cotswold Wildlife Park followed similar courses at London and Bristol zoos.

Ms Shay, of Bampton, said: "It's a perfect opportunity, being in such a beautiful place and it means that there are the spiders. People can then go as close as they want to."

● For more details, see the website Beautiful-Spaces.co.uk or call Ms Shay on 01993 852297 or 07733 225316.

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## ALTERED IMAGES

WE GATHERED in the brightly-lit drawing room of the wildlife park's manor house.

Accompanied by gentle music, we sat in a circle while we were asked to close our eyes and concentrate on our breathing.

While we were relaxed, Ms Shay used neuro-linguistic programming, which she described as a "user's manual for the brain". The idea is to look back at past events and see them in a different light.

We thought of three incidents when we were most afraid of spiders and were then told to rewind this image.

We imagined the spider wearing pink wellies and a red nose, accompanied by comical music.

Ms Shay explained: "People use all of their senses and having calm music helps to create a

calm atmosphere, like playing the Benny Hill theme tune for when we're remembering a memory, but remembering it differently."

The final method used was emotional freedom technique.

This is described as emotional acupuncture, as it uses 14 of the acupuncture points.

We were told to tap these areas while repeating what we had learned: that our fear would no longer rule our lives.

James Reynolds, who works at the park, was on hand to answer all kinds of questions about spiders.

From how many species there were, to their mating habits, he seemed to know all the answers.

Then James introduced us to the star of the show - Fluffy the tarantula, one of the biggest spiders in the park's collection.

## Preserved web dates back 140m years

THE world's oldest known spider web, dating back 140 million years, is being studied by Oxford

The analysis is being led by Prof Martin Brasier, of the university's department of earth

inclusions in it." Study of the threads revealed they were spun by a spider

It is thought that the web became trapped in resin exuded by trees, possibly during a fire

An article from The Oxford Mail about the Beautiful Spaces Spiderphobia day at the Cotswold Wildlife Park.