



Facing your fears this Halloween: augmented reality therapy for arachnophobia



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Halloween means cobwebs, creepy-crawlies, and lots of **fake spiders**. For some, it's fun. For others, **fear of spiders is very real**. A new study suggests technology may offer a surprising way to help.

THE STUDY

Researchers tested whether **augmented reality exposure therapy (ARET)** could treat arachnophobia as effectively as **traditional exposure therapy**.

- **ARET**: facing digital spiders through a smartphone app.
- **Traditional**: confronting real spiders in gradual, controlled steps.
- **Control**: no treatment.



THE RESULTS

Both ARET and traditional exposure produced:

- **Significant improvements** in behavioural approach to spiders.
- **Significant reductions** in self-reported phobia symptoms.
- **Equal effectiveness**: virtual spiders worked as well as real ones.

WHY IT MATTERS

Halloween means spiders everywhere, but for those with arachnophobia, this can be overwhelming. This study shows:

- AR makes therapy **accessible**, just a smartphone needed.
- It lowers the **intimidation factor** of using live spiders.
- It could scale to **reach more people at low cost**.



BIGGER PICTURE

Phobias keep many from seeking help. Digital tools like AR could make treatment easier to start and stick with. Facing your fears might not mean facing a real threat at all.



TAKEAWAY: A smartphone could soon be your tool of choice for conquering one of Halloween's most classic frighteners.