Express your emotions and feel less fear

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People can reduce fear of something by expressing their emotions at the time of facing it. This is according to new research published in the journal Psychological Science, which found describing feelings when in a stressful situation might make an individual less anxious.

Michelle Craske, a Professor of Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, looked at the example of people afraid of spiders labelling their emotions when asked to touch a live tarantula.

It was demonstrated that participants who described their fears while carrying out the trial - when compared to others who either hid their anxiety, said nothing or spoke of something irrelevant - were able to get closer to the spider and their hands secreted less sweat the second time they attempted the challenge.

Professor Craske said the findings highlight the benefits of labelling fear and anxiety in a real-world setting, adding: "Exposure is potent ... It's surprising that this minimal intervention action had a significant effect over
of the mistaken ideas about the emotion itself (i.e. the feelings will never subside) and generally give a sense of control over seemingly uncontrollable feelings.

"All this contributes towards more effective emotional processing, one of the theories about the essential nature of exposure. Other well established therapies, such as Eugene Gendlin’s focusing, likewise places the verbal labelling of emotions at the heart of therapeutic change.”