

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 102: Wim Hof

Show notes and links at tim.blog/podcast

Tim Ferriss: Listen up everyone, important warning for this episode as I've emphasized before; you should never do breathing exercises in water or before training in water. So you should not use the Wim Hof method without proper supervision, A, and B, never do it preceding training in water or in water. Shallow water blackouts can be fatal and I've seen some very, very scary accidents in the past, including a very close friend who recently remained unconscious under water at a public pool for almost four minutes and remained unconscious for 20 minutes. He has a small son, could have died in the process; do not make that mistake. With all that said, please enjoy.

I'm recording. Could you just tell me maybe what you had for breakfast?

Wim Hof: Yeah, nothing. I had nothing for breakfast. I never eat breakfast. Just once a day.

Tim Ferriss: Alright. We're going to talk about that for sure. Just let me pause this.

[Intro]

Tim Ferriss: Why hello, lemurs and leprechauns. This is Tim Ferriss and welcome to another episode of the Tim Ferriss Show, where it is my job to deconstruct world class performers, whether they are actors like Arnold Schwarzenegger, military strategists, or generals like Stanley McChrystal, chess prodigies like Josh Waitzkin, or, in this particular case, a miracle worker of sorts. In fact, you could say he is a daredevil.

Wim Hof, otherwise known as the Iceman, is a Dutch world record holder adventurer, certainly daredevil and he's nicknamed the Iceman for his ability to withstand extreme cold. He is the creator of the Wim Hof Method and holds more than 20 world records. He is, in my mind, the outlier of outliers. Not because he does so many absurd things and proves that these impossibles are, in fact, possible but he routinely asks scientists to scrutinize and validate these feats.

That's what makes him very, very unique and very interesting for this type of conversation. What are some of his feats? In 2007 he climbed path the Death Zone altitude on Mt. Everest, which is around 7,500 meters wearing nothing but shorts. In 2009 he completed a full marathon above the polar circle in Finland in temperatures close to negative 20 degrees Celsius, again dressed in nothing but shorts. He holds the Guinness World Record for the longest ice bath, which was around one hour 53 minutes and 12 seconds. But it's not just cold.

He has run full marathons in the Namib Desert without any water. He has also had toxins injected into himself, under doctor supervision, and demonstrated he can effectively control his autonomic immune response. This is crazy talk. These are things that fly in the face of many textbooks, and now he is featured in textbooks himself because he has documented all of this. And it is not just a whim specialty. He is not a mutant. He is able to train others to achieve many of these same effects and abilities, in some cases with just four days of training.

So we'll dig into all of this and more. I love this conversation. He is a human guinea pig of human guinea pigs, certainly, and makes me feel like an amateur. So without further ado, please enjoy my conversation with Wim Hof.

Tim Ferriss: Welcome to the show, Wim. I'm so pleased to have you.

Wim Hof: Great. Thank you for welcoming me this way. Thank you very much.

Tim Ferriss: I've been a fan for quite a few years because we have, as we mentioned before we started recording, a mutual friend in Ray Cronise and he was in my second book. So I looked very closely at cold exposure, and of course you, the Iceman, came up over and over again so it's really nice to finally chat with you. I feel like it's been a long time coming. And also had three past guests on this podcast, Laird Hamilton and Brian McKenzie and also Gabby Reese, Laird's wife, whoa re big fans of your methods and techniques who have been practicing it.

You have a lot of fans out there, listening as well. I thought we could just start with your name. I've always loved your name. Is Wim your full name?

Wim Hof: Yes. W-I-M, Wim.

Tim Ferriss: Does it have any particular meaning, or how did your parents choose that name?

Wim Hof: Wim is a common name in Holland and the Netherlands. But I looked it up and it says it's the protector of the people. You know, any name has got some eternal logical roots to it. My name is the protector of people. My brother's name, who is my twin brother, is Andre in French; like Andrew. He is the protector of goods. So who's better? I don't know.

Tim Ferriss: I suppose you need both types of protection, right?

You have such a fascinating story and you have a lot of accolades, a lot of records; I think more than 20 world records at this point, it seems. What was the first world record that you set?

Wim Hof: The first was in Paris, just staying a half an hour immersed in ice. And 12 days later, I repeated the record time and made it an hour in Hollywood, actually.

Tim Ferriss: You've spent a lot of time in ice baths. And largely influenced by you and a handful of other people – Tim Nokes Ray – and a huge fan of ice baths, and my fans always complain about it but I've seen you in so many containers full of ice. I saw one where it looks like there was a lot of Chinese or Japanese in the background. What has been the most challenging cold exposure experience that you've had, whether it's for records or anything else?

Maybe losing my sight while I was swimming underneath an ice deck of almost one meter. I had no goggles on so I lost sight at 35 meters, something like 40 yards, and I lost the hole. Yeah, things like that. Shit happens. It happened over there, right there. The meter of ice above me. So yeah, that was some great experience. Another one was losing my way on Mt. Everest in shorts at 80,000 feet in a blizzard, in a whiteout. So things like that happen, yeah, and they are challenging.

But then it throws me back to the depth of myself, which is trust and confidence and I've got it.

Tim Ferriss: What do you say to yourself in one of those moments? Physiologically did your retinas just freeze? Or when you were swimming under the ice stack, in a moment like that when many people would panic, did you panic? If so, what was the mental self talk when you realized that was happening?

Wim Hof: Very interesting. The stress level at that moment is absent, is not there. I'm just dealing with the situation. It has been shown in the university that our stress levels, the stress hormone levels are able to be raised laying in bed more than somebody in fear for the first time going into a bungee jump.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, doing a bungee jump for the first time?

Wim Hof: Yes, but not me because a bungee jump, you are attached. But very unexpected situations in nature, like a blizzard or swimming beneath ice and losing the hole because your eyesight is gone, things like that, or climbing without gear steep mountains and having cramps. And what do you do at that moment? That's exactly what I learned: how to raise consciously the stress hormone level, purely controlled and I'm able to deal with the situation at that moment without panicking.

I think that's one of the crucial findings which could benefit for human mankind, as it is very subjected to stress all the time; panicking and having fear and all of that.

[00:12:00] I learned in nature how to deal with that. Cold brought me that science, brought me that knowledge; wisdom, actually.

Tim Ferriss: The raising of stress hormones, so controlling something that has long been thought to be part of the autonomous nervous system, something you have no control of – and we'll get to the breathing because breathing is very interesting because it is both autonomous but you can consciously control it and practice different methods. It was certainly in the Vice Documentary that recently came out, which I recommend to everyone and I'll link to in the show notes. But was it in 2011 that you were injected with some type of virus or bacteria to see if you could control the immune response?

Wim Hof: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: That was at the Dutch – I'm going to mispronounce this – the Radboud University?

Wim Hof: Exactly. Radboud University in Holland in intensive care nuclear science. I underwent an experiment and they injected me with an endotoxin, with a toxin, actually, which is a part of a bacteria. And that creates a very dramatic immune response. And as we have no control over the immune response in our body, they thought I was not able to do it as well as expected because nobody showed to be

able to suppress the immune response because it is part of the autonomic nervous system.

Nobody is able to do that until now. I showed that I was very able, within a quarter of an hour instead of hours of suffering from uncontrolled shivering, fever, headaches, and all of that. I showed within a quarter of an hour to have complete control over the symptoms and also the cytokines, which are the inflammatory beings in the blood created by the immune response.

I showed in the blood and by blood results to suppress them dramatically within a quarter of an hour. Then they told me: okay, you are an exception that confirms the rule because you have been training so many years. You're the Iceman, you do exceptional features. But nobody is able to do that without the proper training of so many years.

And I told them no, I can train them within ten days. And then the professor was really challenged. Because if this group would show to be able to, within ten days, to influence deeply into the autonomic nervous system related to the immune system, then that's for the first time in scientific history.

But he saw the indication of the possibility, but still thought those guys are not gonna be able to do that within ten days. You know what? It wasn't within ten days; it was within four days of training that I made them able to undergo the same experiments, the injection of the endotoxin had have them, within a quarter of an hour, completely in control over their immune systems related to the autonomic nervous system. So they showed a 100 percent score of everybody to be able, within a couple of days, to tap into the autonomic nervous system related to the immune system.

And the training prior to it, we had our beers in the evening and a lot of music and very relaxed. And their mindset, I said hey guys, probably you guys are the new gladiators; we are going to win the worst war ever which produced the most casualties, agony, pain, and all of that and that's the bacteria. That's the baxil, that's the virus. We're going to win this war. Are you with me? That's the way I talked to them, so they had a mindset. So in the evening, we were relaxed; it was like a hippie movement. But this is a new revolution.

In four days' time, they were able, on the fourth day, without prior experience in the cold, they were able to go in shorts at minus ten Celsius; freezing cold.

Tim Ferriss: That's probably in the 20s; below freezing.

Wim Hof: And then for hours and hours, we were going uphill and up the mountain, and we arrived at the summit after hours, and it was minus 27 Celsius. That is probably 10 Fahrenheit; something like that. And we danced the Harlem jig up there. And I knew these guys are ready. In four days' time, when they will be internalized in the hospital and injected with the endotoxin, they will be able.

Because I feel when somebody is back into their natural state of his or her physiology, now I know how to do that. The cold swayed me. The cold is my teacher.

Tim Ferriss: With these subjects, I'm so curious to ask because I am certainly not as proficient as you are in any of these techniques but I've enjoyed experimenting over the last ten years, and writing about these short experiments whether it's related to breath holding with David Blane, or other aspects; obviously you're a professional and I am not. But I would be very curious to hear you perhaps elaborate. For instance, on the first day of training with these subjects in preparation to be injected four days later, what did the first day of training look like for them?

Wim Hof: In the morning at 8:00 without food intake, we do breathing. They lie on the ground because that's the most relaxed pose. If you are relaxed, you are able to store up a lot more oxygen when in tension or in posture. I tell them just lie down, relax; now we are going to begin. Just breathe in deeply and let go. Breathe in deeply, let go. Make it a rhythm. Breathe in deeply, let go. Not fully out, but fully in and let go.

Repeat that about 30, 40 times until these indications or symptoms come about, meaning lightheadedness, feeling loose in the body, tingly, contractions. That's because carbon dioxide goes out, oxygen is roaming freely throughout the body, and the pH levels rise; they are optimized. They get to their best condition. That's proven. When we did this, they saw all these results, chemically.

Then once you feel positively charged with all these symptoms of lightheadedness, feeling loose, contractions and tingling in the body, I asked them just breathe in deeply, let go. And now the last time: breathe in deeply and let go. After letting go, after exhalation, stop.

Refrain from breathing; there is no need. We've got a whole lot of oxygen. Measurement devices are not able to detect how much; it's more than 100 percent, that's my opinion but devices still are not able to detect that. They only can go up to 100 percent, as they say. But the 100 percent, the body is able to store up more oxygen than current measurement devices are able to measure. Then after one and a half minutes, then you see that the measurement device shows 100 percent. Then it goes dramatically down afterwards.

Tim Ferriss: And you're using a pulse oximeter, like something you clip on your finger?

Wim Hof: Yes, pulse oximeter.

You have a heartbeat and you have the saturation of the oxygen inside the blood; so the amount of oxygen. After one and a half minutes, you see with everybody that the saturation of the blood has gone down. People with COPD, the lung disease, they suffer from real severe COPD when they have 85. We go from 90 to 80, 70, 60, 50. People die at 50 and 40 percent saturation in the blood. We go past; we go even to 30. And then the measuring device, the oximeter, shuts down; it is not measuring anymore. But we even go past that point.

Tim Ferriss: Why don't the subjects pass out at this point?/

Wim Hof: They don't pass out because they are alkaline. Their pH degrees are really perfect at that moment.

Instead of a person who is dying, he is very acidic. So that's the difference. Because we are so alkaline, people maybe sometimes are able to pass out but just two or three seconds because they are out of their conditioned control. After exercising, they have to regain not only control in those moments and those situations; they win a new part in the brain. They get very deep in the brain and it's all new terrain. It's like a baby. A baby has no problem with their [inaudible]. But there are no metoric – metorical neurons to yet.

We are going into different parts of the brain where the guy or girl has never been. So it's logical that people are able to pass out. But nothing happens because they are alkaline. So they just wake up. And almost always, they wake up very happy. It's like a drug experience. But that's beside the real effect of not trying, which we showed scientifically, which is to be able to tap into the immune system in all the layers. There are three layers, and normally we

are not able to get into the second and the third layer. And I say now we have found a key to the second and the third layer.

That means the nonspecific immune system and the specific adaptive immune system. That makes looking at disease completely different, because our abilities are so much more. We have been publishing – people in Boston, they published throughout America in the universities Chapter 22 on Biology Now. It tells that we have tapped into the autonomic nervous system, into the innate immune system, which was up until now not possible. We did it 100 percent with a group of nine people, showing that they were very able to do it; all of them within a quarter of an hour and have spectacular results.

It is science now, and [now it needs to get to every person in the world; how to tap into the deeper layers of our physiology without years and years of training, or being Yogis, or being the super athletes and all that. No, my aim is, within a couple of days, we are all able to tap into the deepest layers of our physiology and reset our immune system; bring it under our will. That's my aim. We make fun, too, and all of that but being serious, that's my goal.

Tim Ferriss: I think you're approaching it in a very intelligent way because it's very hard to get truly serious work done if you're serious all the time so it's very fascinating for me as a teacher to watch how you coach your subjects.

Because you use beer, you have guitars, and I think it's a very important component. I wanted to ask you about the breathing on day one just one more time. Is the breathing exercise on day one something that then the subjects use during the injection or before the injection? Or is it an exercise to prove to them that they can do more than they think they can do, and it's more of a confidence builder that you use to set the tone for the rest of the training?

Wim Hof: Both. It's a confidence builder and it's very effective at the moment when something like an injection is coming, and they know it will result in a dramatic immune response and they have to build up and make alert their shield, or their protective lines of defense which is the immune system.

Yes, so both.

Tim Ferriss: Is this something you can do after the fact? So for instance, at this point with your level of proficiency, if you were to contract a disease without realizing it and then get very sick, would you be

able to reverse that? Or is it something that needs to be – does the shield need to be activated beforehand in order for you to control that so-called autonomous response?

Wim Hof: Interesting. Very nice. It's both preventive and healing. So once a specific hormone or a molecule must be generated to get to an invader, non self invader in the body which could be a bacteria, a virus or a baxil which got through the first two lines of defense.

Then the third line is more specific. But it takes normally weeks or sometimes it's not traceable because an invader is mutating. We have now a method that is able to tap into the third layer and make the specific adaptive immune system rapidly active, even after something comes in. So it's both preventive but also when you become sick, so an invader has gotten in, then you are still very able to restore the balance within.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. If we're looked at the explanation [00:30:00] that the scientists have at this point for your ability and your subjects' ability to protect themselves or shield themselves, it seems that one hypothesis was you being able to increase noradrenaline or norepinephrine levels in the body. Do you agree with that or do you have other theories?

Wim Hof: I do.

Tim Ferriss: I'd love to hear it.

Wim Hof: If you have HIV, then the immune system is still looking for answers up to the moment that it is not able to specify anymore what is going on, and then we get AIDS. That means that all the defense systems are shut down. Now, we have shown by norepinephrine and noradrenaline that we can suppress the inflammation.

That means the flammatory bodies and creating an immune response and we suppressed it. That would be like shutting down the immune system, following the scientific logic, that makes us more vulnerable. No. What we do, and they've still go to find out but I just use my natural logic; you can read about it in the papers, that we have found a way to awaken the third line, which normally takes weeks or months to find the specific hormone or molecule which is going for the target cell, to go on the membrane and kill the cell.

Tim Ferriss: That's interesting. It's almost like internal drug development.

You're trying to find the proper key that fits the lock but you're doing it internally. It normally takes a very long time biologically to conclude with but you're accelerating that process.

Wim Hof:

Exactly. And then these hormones are not needed anymore because the specific molecule gets on the cell membrane. And then the noradrenaline, which is like firemen, gets throughout the system and the norepinephrine as well, and they suppress the inflammation, the action. That is only possible when the target is already annihilated; when the target has a specific molecule on it because of the third line of defense. That's what we found. We found a way.

Dr. Kevin Tracy from Manhasset, New York, who tells that. He's an authority in biochemistry. I worked with him in 2007 and I was able, in his institute, to suppress or to influence the vagus nerve. He said in nature, immunity does not come without neural regulation. They found a way.

Tim Ferriss:

For instance, I did my undergraduate for a very short period of time. In college I studied neuroscience. And I remember when I was in college; there was a professor there who determined that for instance, the neurons in the hippocampus could actually be regenerated.

And this was very, very big news because people had assumed for a very long time that in a number of parts in the brain that neurons could not be regenerated. Basically as you got older, you just lost neuronal function and it could not be restored. Now we know that's not true. And so you're having a similar experience where you are proving to people that things are possible that were thought impossible. What other impossibles do you think we will prove are possible in the next, say, five years in your area of experimentation?

Wim Hof:

Very nice thought and very good question. I think depression, for example, and the brain itself. We are able to tap into the brain and influence so much more that is related to the hypothalamus, the pineal gland, the pituitary gland, the hippocampus and the amygdala, the seat of emotion.

All these are part and around the brain stem, which is the reptilian brain, the primitive brain. And because of our comfortable way of living and behavior, this part doesn't get enough stimulation.

Tim Ferriss: Right, we're untrained.

Wim Hof: Yes. It doesn't get the stimulation or oxygen. So there is a certain kind of deregulating pH level going on. It's just due to lack of oxygen. There is no action, no stimulation. So in time, it begins to malfunction. That's actually logical. We suffer from a whole lot of, for example, depression in the Western world because we go too much into the neocortex, the superficial brain, the new brain.

And we have to do all kinds of things; debt lines and worries and we cannot stop it. It consumes all the energy. What I do and have learned is to go into the brain stem again. The simplicity of our reptilian brain, the primitive brain, the brain stem which is related to all these beautiful glands over there – the pineal gland, the pituitary gland and the controller of us, which is the hypothalamus – and the seat of emotion itself, which is the amygdala.

It's all there. And so I found a way to get into that and show, just by our example of ours, that by lying in bed, people are able to produce more adrenaline than somebody who is in fear, going into a bungee jump for the first time.

You see what I mean? That means fear, emotion, uncontrollable emotions and fear; we are able to control them. We tap control into the brain stem and produce any adrenaline or epinephrine or all these hormones we need. It's the pineal gland, finally, which is the controller of all the other glands in our body. We are able now to tap into that. So in the coming five years, I want to eradicate depression. I want to eradicate disease.

I know they are big words but we are into that. I'm not only into that; these are also professors, biochemists who stamp my point. They see it is so simple, so accessible and so effective but it needs to be translated into our infrastructure of thinking, as well as of interests. It needs to cooperate with schooling. Now that we've gotten into the university, that's nice. It's coming top down. If the U.S. universities are taking it on, then soon all the universities in the world will follow. I rest my point for now.

Tim Ferriss: So with depression, for instance, I'm sure there are a lot of people listening who have had bouts with depression or even extended depression.

Wim Hof: Yes, no control over their mood. That's no control over the brain stem. We bring it back to the brain stem.

Tim Ferriss: Right. So for instance, I find that it's very helpful, for me at least, to use cold exposure. Whether that's cold showers or an ice bath, it has a tremendous mood elevating effect, or maybe a balancing effect depending on how we want to explain it.

Wim Hof: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: For someone who is feeling depressed, what are some simple things you recommend that they try, potentially?

Wim Hof: First, get into conscious breathing; deeper breathing and be consciously doing that. It showed in the university that I was able, consciously, just by thinking that I was going into an experiment; I raised on the cell level the metabolic activity in the cell by 300 percent.

Just by thinking. That's our mind. So our mind should be, with people who are depressed, they just get lost. They have no control. So they have to regain control by consciously going into breathing. Deeper breathing brings about a better pH level in the body. But not only in the body, also in the mind. The right pH level will make the neurotransmitters, your mind; the electrical signals finally work better.

Then you're able to learn to direct these neurotransmitters – our thoughts, the mind itself – consciously with the right pH level. We make it simple.

We say conscious breathing all the time. Because you've lost track and it takes energy, it takes your mind, and you've got to bring your mind back under your control.

Tim Ferriss: I think this is related to a broader topic of compulsive behavior, or people who have automatic behaviors that are not serving them. And one of those is oftentimes overeating. Before we started recording, I asked you what you had for breakfast and you said nothing because you eat once per day. Could you describe what your daily eating ritual is?

Wim Hof: I eat after 6:00 in the evening, and that's been for 35 years. And I've got a lot of energy.

Tim Ferriss: You have a lot of allergies?

Wim Hof: No, energy.

Tim Ferriss: Sorry; got it.

Wim Hof: Maybe allergies as well; women, you know?

Okay, just making fun.

Tim Ferriss: I think you and I have to have wine next time we do that.

Wim Hof: I think it's very healthy. The thing is, by better breathing, conscious breathing, you make this chemical process in the cell happen, which is called aerobic dissimilation. In the cell production to make energy, mitochondrial energy, you need food. But if you are able to influence by a deeper breathing, then you produce simple metabolic activity in the mitochondria by better breathing and that creates energy, which is the purpose of food.

So food is nice, food is great; you should do it with a lot of love and have a nice time making it because that's the energy you get, finally. For me, it's a sort of a fast but I feel the senses really are going to be much more effective and the cell activity is going to be much more effective. And it is using all the food. If I eat after 6:00, I can eat what I want. The next day, I'm slim again. That's making the body work.

But as we eat all day long, the body is not shutting down. It's not effective any more. It doesn't go deep. It doesn't go into survival mode. It's not natural again. So it's beginning to store up all the fats because it doesn't know what to do anymore. Because the deeper mechanisms are not working anymore.

Tim Ferriss: What are some typical meals that you have after 6 p.m.?

Wim Hof: I like pasta, and I like a couple of beers, too. Yeah, sure.

Tim Ferriss: Sounds good. The eating ritual is very interesting. I've interviewed a couple of people on this podcast, including General Stanley McChrystal. He's a four star general. He's also famous for getting a lot of exercise early in the day and eating one meal per day. He's also very well known for that. You described some of the breathing exercises that you do. Does the type of breathing that you do, is it similar in any ways to Holotropic Breathwork, if you're familiar with that?

I heard from someone, and maybe you can correct me if I'm wrong, that some scientists had looked at whether you were producing or releasing more DMT during some of your breathing

activities. Is that accurate or did I get some misinformation from someone?

Wim Hof:

No, that's a professor, right? [Inaudible] What is his name again? He's an authority in the field. I had a dialogue with him and he's talking about iowiskane and all these drugs and experimenting. I told him I am able to trigger the pineal gland in a way that DMT is released.

And yes, I can make people very, very happy doing all these breathing exercises; that's true.

But the purpose of DMT actually is to work on the subconscious while dreaming, the rapid eye movement sleep. And the other one is when you die; DMT is released, also, to make it a happier time going out; having a nice time going to the other side, something like that. So there is a natural purpose for DMT. But I am very able to trigger what creates DMT. And I told him also, it's not only about the DMT – it's very nice, it's a nice drug and all of that.

But the better part of it is if we are able to trigger the pineal gland, which is related directly to the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland, if we are able to trigger that one and to decalcify our comfortable way of living, then this pineal gland is able to direct all the other glands. It's the only gland that is directing all the other glands. And we can neurally connect with it with our neocortex. It's what we do and it shows them we are able to prevent disease or bacteria coming in because we are able to activate it much more directly. That's the main purpose for looking differently at what creates disease.

It's because of our pineal gland, or the brain stem is not really active anymore because it's neglected because of our comfortable style of living and behavior. And we want to make a shortcut and to show that it is simple, accessible and effective.

Tim Ferriss:

I think the comfort is important to underscore. I was having a conversation with Dean Karnazes several years ago. He's a famous ultra marathoner. You guys would probably have a lot to talk about. He ran 50 marathons in 50 days in 50 states; he's one of those guys. He lives in northern California near San Francisco where I live, and one of his lines – and I might be paraphrasing this but he said people, now they confuse happy with being comfortable. And they think being comfortable is being happy. But those are not the same thing. I'd like to talk about discomfort for a second. You ran a marathon in was it Death Valley with no water?

Wim Hof: Yes, in Namibia. Namib Desert.

Tim Ferriss: Even more dangerous because you have snakes and whatnot. Of course when you are submerged in ice, it's been demonstrated that you can maintain your core body temperature for a very long time. Is it possible to drop your body temperature in a hot climate? Or is it training yourself to withstand the higher temperatures?

Wim Hof: Yes, exactly. Both, actually. Your tolerance is rising, and that means you are able to endure a whole lot more because you're able to influence the hormonal system in a way that neutralizes pain signals. That's one. The other one is because of my training in the cold, I not only trained in the cold but I trained to endure impact of temperature.

Those are receptors of ours which I have trained. And because of that, which is controlled by the hypothalamus, the thermal regulator of our body. Because I trained in the cold, I trained the thermal regulation of the body. Then without training, without training a meter of running, then not drinking during a full marathon in the Namib Desert in the heat, without prior training or ever having been there before I was very able to do that because this thermal regulative mechanism, the hypothalamus, I had trained in the cold, which is the temperature impact. So I learned to deal with the temperature. And you know what?

Not only the temperature, which is cold and heat, but also deprivation of oxygen. That means goin up in Mt. Everest in shorts. It's very cold out there. There is no oxygen, and you need oxygen for combustion in the cell to create heat and energy. And there is no oxygen. So I learned in the cold how to deal with impact on the nervous system, on our metabolism.

That means cold, deprivation of oxygen, heat, and also daily stress. The secret of our comfort, as you say, and the people who are confusing, like paraphrasing this great guy of northern California who is telling the truth; we are confused.

We don't know any more what real comfort is. Real comfort is the power to regulate all the impacts' existence in life. That means disease, which is impact on our body, heat, cold, deprivation of oxygen, stress in general; any stress. And we are able to control that a whole lot more, and that brings about the real comfort. Because if you connect yourself with all these systems within, then you feel really good. Real good is real connection. That's why all

these outdoor freaks and idiots, etc. – like myself – are doing this because we just feel good about it.

Tim Ferriss: It seems like also feeling comfort is, in a way, becoming confident in discomfort.

You have a competence that you can handle and adapt to whatever is going to come your way, much like some of the elite military I've met, who are actually very relaxed – most of the high level guys I've met – because they're systematically exposed themselves to discomfort so they don't fear discomfort, if that makes sense.

Wim Hof: Exactly. They control their stress hormone release completely. That's what I'm talking about.

Tim Ferriss: How many languages do you speak?

Wim Hof: Ten.

Tim Ferriss: Ten. That is a lot of languages. How did you learn that many languages?

Wim Hof: Just be open and love to learn, and that's it. I had no real teachers. People in the street, and sometimes I had to look for a teacher, like a Japanese teacher here in Amsterdam, and a Hindu teacher, Pandit.

I was just interested. If you are interested in life, you get to know and you never stop learning because you love it.

Tim Ferriss: Of all the languages you've tried, what was the hardest for you?

Wim Hof: Maybe Polish, because it's a completely different set of grammatical structures.

Tim Ferriss: Polish. [Speaking foreign language] I bet you know that one.

Wim Hof: Of course. [Speaking Foreign Language]

Tim Ferriss: I know. We definitely have to have a round two with some wine and beer. The next question I'd love to ask is perhaps a simple one, but why are people fat? How can people develop more brown fat and use it effectively?

Wim Hof: People are fat because it's a protective mechanism of our bodies.

It's actually an answer from too much impact; too much wrong chemistry going on. So it wants to make an insulation. That's a natural thing for the body to do. We are suffering from that now. It's called obesity and being overweight; we have no control. Just bring them back into control. How do we do that? By this brown fat, adipose. Most of those people have also an absence of brown fat because they have no stimulation anymore for a long time. And then this insulation reflex is beginning to build up and build up. But actually, it's saying hey guy, I'm trying to do my best for you but you are not doing anything in return.

And as long as you're not triggering or stimulating the adipose, the brown fat, then it succumbs. It goes away. And then it is not able to divert white fat into energy anymore. So it's gone. Obese people have no brown fat anymore. There is a logical explanation for it, and I know it. They have to bring it back.

Tim Ferriss: Is that cold exposure primarily that would be the first step?

Wim Hof: Cold exposure, natural exposure to the elements; that's one, in a gradual way that we are able to adapt to it. But as these mechanisms are not working really well within these people, they have to be very sensitive and gradual going into it.

And breathing. Breathing is influencing the chemistry right here, right now. Better breathing, deeper breathing brings about better pH degree in the body, which then finally results in a faster metabolism.

Tim Ferriss: If people are practicing this, or want to practice this breathing on their own, is there any pt mantra they should focus on or say to themselves as they're doing this? Is any type of medication okay to start with, like using an app like Headspace or Calm? Do you have a particular recommendation? If someone said I have ten minutes a day I'm willing to do this, what would you say to them?

Wim Hof: Just have your favorite music going on. Go really into it and go really into the breathing, because it's about chemical changes.

And whenever you hear the right music, you are able to relax more, and more oxygen then is more able to get into the body, which is finally changing the pH levels in the body to its natural state. Because we live in such a compressed society with too much stress going on, we do not have control over the stress and we get out of our natural state. So within ten minutes – I say within four minutes, just do this breathing exercise which I teach people and

do pushups. Pushups without air in the lungs. You should do that, too.

Tim Ferriss: So you do that after the exhale?

Wim Hof: Yes, after the exhale. First you do 30, like I explained: breathe deeply within, let go, deeply within. Look at the indications; feeling loose in the body and lightheaded, contractions, a little bit of tingling.

That's all okay. 30 or 40 deep breaths, and then letting go. 40 times and you will arrive at being charged with oxygen and the CO₂, carbon dioxide got away, pH level has gotten up. Then you should breathe in fully, letting go. After exhalation, you stop and you go do pushups. And you will see you are able to do more pushups without air in the lungs because you are influenced into the chemistry.

Tim Ferriss: And that's probably a good idea to do on a soft surface, first? Just in case you decide to kiss the floor a little too hard?

Wim Hof: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: This is something that Laird and his guys have been working on, as well. A lot of these guys are working on doing pushups and stationary bike. Very interesting. They have free divers they sometimes work with; it's very fascinating. Great. I'm going to try you a couple of rapid fire questions.

You can certainly take your time; it doesn't mean you have to answer them quickly. The first is when you think of the word successful, who is the first person who comes to mind for you?

Wim Hof: The heart in any person.

Tim Ferriss: The heart?

Wim Hof: The heart in any person. That is success. And further, maybe Mandela.

Tim Ferriss: Nelson Mandela?

Wim Hof: Yes.

Tim Ferriss: In the heart, if someone doesn't feel successful, what would your advice be to them? What would you say to them?

Wim Hof: Just do the method. This method is showing scientifically to be able to tap into the deepest of our physiology. If somebody feels frustrated, it is because he is not able to tap into his or her physiology at the deepest.

He has no control. That makes people frustrated. We mirror that with society and all of that. But you've got your vehicle. If you're able to steer your vehicle, your body, your mind, to whatever you feel, then you will be successful.

Tim Ferriss: Why Nelson Mandela?

Wim Hof: He's just a good guy. He was always smiling. He loved the women. And he stayed 25 years believing in his case, and that makes him, for me, really strong. And I love people who have faith, simply because that's what they feel. I have so many years been neglected and mocked and all of that but I always had my faith.

And now it is science. 20 years ago, they told me you're crazy, you're an idiot; you're a lunatic and all that. Yes? And even in my family, I was the black sheep. And right now, I am the whitest sheep ever! So it's a lot of hypocrisy going on in the world because people do not know. But I've got my faith. I've got my belief. And I want to go up to the point where we've showed scientifically everybody is able to tap into the endocrine system so much so that depression and being unhappy and being frustrated is no longer part of humanity. It's a choice.

Tim Ferriss: This is a topic I think we could talk about for a long time. What about is your favorite book, or the book that you've given to other people most as a gift?

Wim Hof: Whoa, never gave so many books except for the books I'm writing right now.

Tim Ferriss: What do you give to people as gifts? What do you like to give people as gifts?

Wim Hof: Stones and natural things. I give people natural things. I collect a whole bunch of things and two months later I'm fed up with it and I think this one wants to go with you. And those are beautiful stones. When I saw them the first time, I thought wow, great stone, beautiful. This artifact, great. Wow, nice. And then two months

later I'm saying it's gone. I just give it away. And with books, the same thing. Cedarta and Jonathan Livingston Seagull comes to my mind. That's okay. And some Scriptures. I read about the [inaudible] and the Bible, of course.

I was reading hundreds of books and at a certain point, I could not make a connection with the deepest within myself, which was the seeker. I was soul searching. And I found it, finally, in the open book of the ice water because the ice water is merciless but righteous. It brings you just within and there is no chit chatting around that. There is no philosophy. You just do it right or you do it wrong.

Tim Ferriss: You've had of course some very challenging times, perhaps more so than many people I've spoken with. You had a very tragic, premature death in the case of your wife. What do you do to overcome those dark periods?

Wim Hof: Yes. Very good, very interesting, very real, indeed. Losing the person you love; I have four children with her. They work with me right now. The oldest one is 33, and then two daughters and another son and they all work with me right now. Actually, one is working right now at the Dutch Embassy in Washington, DC in America. But the rest are working with me all the time. Losing the love of your life, how deep can you go? And being torn apart; that's what I was experiencing at the time. I was the only person. I was alone and I had to raise four kids alone.

They were like seven years old, eight years, nine years and 11 and I had to raise them alone. I received so much love from my kids, and I did my training. And as I told you, the brain stem is also the area of the seat of emotion, which is the amygdala. And because of this training in the cold, I could control, silence myself and go on, and always find the energy to go on and be a father, happy, and exercising and practical with my kids. They gave me a lot of love. But the thing about grief and emotion is you have to go deep. Because emotion is going deep.

And as we live in the comfort zone, we have no control, mostly, over emotion. And I'm telling you there is a way to control the seat of emotion, which is the amygdala connected in the area of the brain stem. My experience tells me discipline, discipline and believing, believing within; there is a way to silence grieved, broken hearts; grief and hurt emotions, yes. That's the way I did it.

Tim Ferriss: It's really been fascinating for me to observe a number of people – I won't mention some of the other names – who have used specifically exposure of the cold, I suppose the purity of that cold and the attention that requires, the sort of purity of attention it requires, to overcome very dark periods.

Or to act as a very strong component for passing through these difficult periods. It's a very fascinating pattern that I've observed in a number of my friends.

Wim Hof: I recognize it.

Tim Ferriss: What do the first 60 minutes of your day look like? When do you wake up? What do you do in those first 60 minutes if you have completely control over the morning?

Wim Hof: First I begin with consciously breathing.

Tim Ferriss: When you wake up?

Wim Hof: Yes. Life is all about vital force created by oxygen. It's free and it's there and to me, it's God itself. Like preñialma, the vital force, the chi, the prana, it's all different names of God. All the belief systems tell us that's the vital force of life itself.

So that's a very logical, natural way I begin; just breathe.

Tim Ferriss: Still lying in bed?

Wim Hof: Yes, still lying in bed. And then doing the exercise, which I explained earlier in this interview, is very nice because you are still very relaxed and the body is without tension. So you then are able to tap deeply into the system.

Tim Ferriss: How long will you do that in bed, typically?

Wim Hof: I stay a half an hour, something like that, before I go into action. It could be an hour because it's never, never boring. It really isn't.

Tim Ferriss: What would you say to someone who says actually, I find it really boring? I'm not saying I feel that way but if someone said it felt boring, what would you advise them or what would you tell them?

Wim Hof: It's once again the same thing as this great Californian guy.

Tim Ferriss: Dean Karnarzes.

Wim Hof: Yeah, Dean Karnarzes. They don't know what comfort is all about. Just by breathing into the depth of our physiology is like gaining the aim of all those people going into outdoors or taking drugs, or doing extremes or going for a rush. Now you are able to learn to control the depth of your physiology by just breathing properly and going into that system. Boring is something that if you are doing things repetitiously but not breaking through the conditioning. I teach people to go through the conditioning.

Tim Ferriss: Right. You have to be conscious about the activity; you can't be daydreaming. It seems you have to be attentive to your breathing when you're doing something like this.

Wim Hof: Yes, just go into it. It's like Vipassana meditation. That's what they do. They sit and they just listen and focus on breathing, that's all I do. They get into a deeper layer of their brain because they are not giving their focus to anything else than just mere breathing. It is so simple but so effective.

Tim Ferriss: I'll try that tomorrow morning. So let's say you do that for a half an hour. Then what do you do for the next half hour?

Wim Hof: Nowadays I'm doing a lot of workshops and lectures, and I'm into science.

In between, I do exercising. I like exercising.

Tim Ferriss: What type of exercise? If you had to choose one type of exercise, or two types of exercise for yourself, what would you choose?

Wim Hof: Strength and flexibility.

Tim Ferriss: What would you do for both of those?

Wim Hof: Strength, for example, stay on two arms say for four minutes.

Tim Ferriss: Like a plank or just different types of poses on two arms?

Wim Hof: Yes, with one hand or two, a plank, or handstands or pushups, of course. Those are power exercises. Or stand in a horse stance for an hour with stones in my hands and make all kinds of Kung Fu follow up like movements; just make them up to better my the acidic processes in my body.

So I go deeply into the horse stance and breathe in a way that the acid is not developing in the body. That makes me control the body and it feels good. Then for flexibility, all kinds of splits and put my legs behind my head, do balancing exercises. It's nice. I maintain the body that way.

Tim Ferriss: Do you listen to music when you're exercising or do you do it without music?

Wim Hof: I simply have no record system. Right now, we bought a center so I will have my big dojo and cascade and all that, and a swimming pool and all those things and I will have the right music. I make music myself. I play the guitar.

I sing. I want to make a CD very soon. People like me singing, doing all kinds of mantras because I learned about the sun's creed and Spanish songs, English songs, all kinds of songs. I just make it up. I'm sort of a rapper, too.

Tim Ferriss: I'd love to hear it. What musician do you look up to the most? Is there a particular musician who you would like to emulate or look up to?

Wim Hof: I like a lot of lounge, easy music. I like Michael Jackson.

Tim Ferriss: Michael Jackson's great.

Wim Hof: Yeah, he is.

Tim Ferriss: Do you have a favorite song or a favorite album?

Wim Hof: Of Michael Jackson?

Tim Ferriss: Yes.

Wim Hof: All the songs. "This is It," for example, "Frilla" is great. His voice is mesmeric.

Tim Ferriss: Totally.

Wim Hof: I gave my son his name, which is Michael, which is one of my sons. But also Pink Floyd, Gypsy Kings "Flamingo," and all the good music. There's a lot of good music going on.

Tim Ferriss: I can't wait to visit the center. Is that going to be in Holland?

Wim Hof: Yes, for now it's in Holland. I was looking to make a center near San Francisco, as well. I've got some very good friends over there.

Tim Ferriss: You should. You should come out. Maybe we'll do a workshop and I'll invite Dean, as well; you could meet Dean. He's a great guy. He would love to meet you, I'm sure. Just a few questions. I want to be obviously respectful of your time.

What purchase in the last six months or a year of less than \$100, so something you bought for less than \$100 has most positively impacted your life?

Wim Hof: Stones. Always stones.

Tim Ferriss: I love these stones. I want to talk about the stones. How do you find these stones, and what makes you pick one? Do you have any favorites?

Wim Hof: Whatever meets the eye. I take them from the mountains I climb, but I also like the amethysts and opals and all kinds of beautiful stones with the beautiful colors. I like that. I always take stones. I just found a big fossil in the Spanish Pyrenees. Big means like 2, 3 kilos.

Tim Ferriss: That's a big fossil.

Wim Hof: Yeah, a big fossil.

I couldn't get it down because I wasn't with a group. I had no backpack and I had to carry the ropes because we were doing canyoning and all that. But there was a girl from Austin Texas, Elizabeth Lee. She had a backpack and she carried it for me.

Tim Ferriss: That's a good friend.

Wim Hof: Yes, I love her so much.

Tim Ferriss: Do you put that in your kitchen? Where do you put such a stone and what effect does it have on you?

Wim Hof: Everywhere and they have a solid effect. They are simply there. They are beautiful and I always pass them out to other people, except for the big ones.

Tim Ferriss: What advice would you give your 30-year-old self?

Wim Hof: Just have faith.

Tim Ferriss: What type of faith? That things will work out, things will be okay?

Wim Hof: Simple logic. Have simple logic and understand things simply, and listen to your feelings. Listen to your feeling. Your feeling knows. It is simply making sense. If you are letting it in your way of thinking, and never lose track of whatever makes sense, which is feeling, which is instinct and intuition.

Tim Ferriss: Right. This is something I've been trying to work on a lot because it's easy, for me at least, to get trapped in my neocortex, to get trapped in the front of my brain where I can make pro and con lists. But the answer is so obvious sometimes because you know that something's wrong, or you know that someone isn't a good fit or you don't trust someone.

You have that feeling like a dog where you immediately like or dislike something.

Wim Hof: Exactly.

Tim Ferriss: I've been trying to train myself to go back to that simplicity.

Wim Hof: Making sense.

Tim Ferriss: It can be challenging. One or two more questions. If you could have one billboard, one huge sign anywhere with anything on it, what would it say and where would you put it?

Wim Hof: I would say breathe, motherfucker.

Tim Ferriss: So you could put that on a busy highway; you could put that on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Wim Hof: Maybe breathe and eh, eh, something like that, you know? I don't know the way they understand it but it's really meant lovable. It's meant strength is the answer up to the DNA itself. And it's not me telling that anymore. Because of the block results, professors have confirmed that we are in the middle of DNA.

And what is the trigger? Breathing.

Tim Ferriss: You could have it say breathe, motherfucker within a smiley face, like a smiley emoticon. That would be perfect.

Wim Hof: Yes. We've got a tee shirt. It says on the front, "Freeze." It's about the cold. The other side is, "Breathe, motherfucker."

Tim Ferriss: You and I need to hang out more. This has been great. Of course, everybody listening, I'm going to put tons of links in the show notes. You should check out Iceman Wim Hof, W-I-M H-O-F. Definitely check out Wim Hof Method, and I'll link to that in the show notes. It's a ten week online video course which a bunch of people whose names you would know are using right now. It's very, very interesting and there are a bunch of documentaries and links to the textbooks I will include, as well.

Wim, do you have any last requests or asks of my audience? There are a lot of people who will be hearing this. If you could ask them all to do something besides check out the courses and so on, what would you ask them to do? Something they could do when they hear this, or after they hear it.

Wim Hof: Breathe, that's one; and take a cold shower after a hot one. Just get into the science of this all. It is non speculative. And for the rest, I just love you guys.

Tim Ferriss: Wim, this is wonderful. Everybody listening, I will link to all these things. You can find Wim on Twitter @Iceman underscore Hof, H-O-F, and I'll link to that. Instagram, same: Iceman underscore Hof. Facebook is Facebook.com\becomingtheiceman. Wim, thank you so much for taking the time.

This was a blast.

Wim Hof: Thank you very much. I hear soul mates. I thank you very much. I love you very much. Greetings to Ray Cronise if you talk to him. I will mail him, also. He loves you and he loves your work; he loves my work. We like to work to make love happen.

Tim Ferriss: Definitely. We'll play some guitar and have some wine.

Wim Hof: Oh yes, nice.

Tim Ferriss: I would love to get into some shorts and freeze my ass off and breathe at some point up in the mountains. That would be great. So until next time, thank you everybody for listening. And Wim, thank you so much.

Wim Hof: Great. Thank you very much, too.