Wim Hof: The Cold as a Noble Force
by Tami Simon

Tami Simon: Welcome to Insights at the Edge, produced by Sounds True. My name is Tami Simon. I’m the founder of Sounds True, and I’d love to take a moment to introduce you to the new Sounds True Foundation. The Sounds True Foundation is dedicated to creating a wiser and kinder world by making transformational education widely available. We want everyone to have access to transformational tools such as mindfulness, emotional awareness, and self-compassion regardless of financial, social or physical challenges. The Sounds True Foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to providing these transformational tools to communities in need, including at-risk youth, prisoners, veterans, and those in developing countries. If you’d like to learn more or feel inspired to become a supporter, please visit soundstruefoundation.org.

You’re listening to Insights at the Edge. Today is a special rebroadcast of a classic episode with someone who is a force of nature, Wim Hof. Originally from the Netherlands, Wim Hof has been nicknamed “The Iceman” for his ability to withstand extreme cold. He has set 21 Guinness world records including the ice endurance record for being submerged in an ice bath for an hour and 52 minutes. While his accomplishments seem to make Wim superhuman, he often says, “What I am capable of, everyone can learn.” Through this belief, Wim has developed the Wim Hof Method, where he combines specific breathing techniques, cold exposure, and techniques on mindset in order to empower people to become strong, healthy, and happy. With Sounds True, Wim Hof has written a new book. It’s called The Wim Hof Method: Activate Your Full Human Potential, a book that is the definitive guide on his powerful method.

In this episode of Insights at the Edge, Wim introduces listeners to the specific breathing technique that he teaches and the unusual states of consciousness that result. We also talk about why Wim sees the cold as a noble force and how his practices relate to the ancient Tibetan Buddhist practices of tummo, or inner-fire meditation, and how his methodology creates changes in brain chemistry, immunity, and hormonal regulation. We also talked about how he’s currently involved in more than 10 university research projects that are studying the effectiveness of his method, and how he invites all skeptics to join him in testing the results. Wim Hof is on a mission to help humanity with science backing up his methods. Get ready to embrace the cold with Wim Hof.

Wim, you’re known as “The Iceman,” with more than twenty world records, including the longest ice bath, approximately two hours; climbing Mount Everest without a shirt; as well as world records for swimming under ice for extended periods of time. Right here at the beginning, I would love it if you would our listeners the background of how you came interested in experiencing extreme cold not just to create world records, but really as a path of human growth, and development, and better health, and for you, really a spiritual path. How did you come to this?
Wim Hof: Exactly, it’s a spiritual path. I think the spirit is the purpose and the reason. So both the heart and mind, the purpose and the reason, to be in this world and we should be able to be connected therewith, and to understand, to feel it, to see it, to experience it every day. Spirituality is the main reason why we exist. I just had a newborn three days ago and I saw it again—three days ago, my wife, we had a new baby and I just see all my mind, all the world, and into all the science, and the celebrity things, and all the records, and all whatever it is, it just subsides, and it goes into the reason why we’re here.

Spirituality is spirit in a body coming to life, coming to this world, and wants to express itself, and takes a vessel, it takes a form, and the medium is love. Love, we will give it, and we will show it. Not only by giving love, but by scientific research, like DNA research with the best of them, and on inflammation, and chronic pain, and anything. We found a key of nature and we bring it back to the people. That’s what I do.

It shows that if you live along, your spirit in your body, you become healthy, happy, and strong. Because people don’t listen to that message so much, too much war, and all those tensions, and abuse, and all that is going on. That’s why I go through science. And showing in science—like four years ago, as the first evidence in a comparative study that the autonomic nervous system can be influenced. That, together with the innate immune system, means that we are actually built to be able to control our hormonal system and immune system. That means being healthy, happy, and strong is a matter of hormones and control over the immune system. It’s going back to the core, and the core is the spirit. The spirit is there, beyond any religious beliefs and/or thought about it. It is. It is the heart. It’s neurology.

That’s what I do with all the universities: I’m doing ten studies right now with ten different universities with real investigators who want to proceed in understanding that beyond speculation, we are made of spirit. And if we go away from spirit during the life, disturbing our system, we become sick. We become depressed. We become in tension. That’s all logic, but nobody listens to this. That’s why I think you guys do good work. I do good work, and we are just bringing a very simple principle back to the attention and awareness of people the belief that we are able to control our happiness, strength, and health. With that, it’s because of the spirit.

TS: Now Wim, I’m with you, both on this point of us being made of spirit and love being the medium, but what I would love for you to explain to our listeners is how you came to see the cold as a noble force. You say, “The cold is my God.” How did you get there? Swimming under the ice? Hiking up Mount Everest without a shirt? Explain that. How did you come to work with the cold?

WH: Yes. From when I was 12 years old, I was already into Hinduism, Buddhism, and psychology, because I just had an intrinsic feeling and an intrinsic, deep urge. Whatever it was, it was a missing link. I didn’t know. I just felt attracted to something out there, because apparently it’s not here. People do not experience that. So I dove into those things. Just following a feeling, because there is more between heaven and earth. What? I don’t know, I didn’t know, and now I do know. I began to follow that. When I was 17, I had already learned very much. Many, many hundreds of books, debates, and philosophies,
and traditions, and cultures [inaudible] disciplines. I had experience. I had practice.

Then I came in contact with—I just felt the attraction to go into cold water. Why? I don’t know, but that’s the gut feeling. That’s the intuition. You end up going into cold water. Why? Because that’s a very strong, hardcore elemental force of nature. Attraction is just there, only when you seek. I went into it and felt a connection. A connection with the deeper parts of my physiology, more than the way I was taught. “Hey, put your scarf on when you go out. You will get a cold.” I went into the cold, and since then, I’ve never had a cold in like 40 years now, 41 years now. I’ve never had cold, or flu, or infectious disease, or anything, because I connected from the brain to the body and vice versa through the cold the way nature meant us to be.

That was when I was 17. I’m 58 now. I’m having a new child, because I’m strong. I’m the way nature was built and means to be. I went from there when I was 17, it just felt so good. I came back, I did it again the [next] day. I felt good again. In the beginning, only a half a minute or a minute, but very fast, I developed being able in months to stay through different ways of breathing, which brought me more conscious power over myself—because I had to resist the cold and I found out that if you breathe consciously deeper, you are suddenly able to stay in the cold, and you are in control. You find out the connection in the body begins to be stronger and that’s why I stayed in the cold.

A few months later, I was able to stay for five to seven minutes under the ice, just by breathing in, bringing more oxygen, controlling my physiology in the deepest—that makes us go back into the deepest part of the brain, and regain control. The connection in the brain is—and I showed it just recently in a study in Michigan, Wayne State University, I’m able to go into the parts of the brain where science thought it is not possible. I’m into the studies right now. It is all learned by going into the cold. You learn to breathe more, deeper. You get a different control over the body and it feels just great.

Whenever you feel great about something, and you are studied, you just go back. So I began to do more and more and began to challenge my body, because I—you feel it. When you feel it, you’re able to stay in shorts outside in freezing temperatures all night long. It’s not like I’m a hard, macho man or something; no, I have the control to energize and to adapt to the environmental stress so well. We lost that direction, but that’s the way I began. I learned. I felt something strange, that there is more. It’s not only about suffering—this world has a different things that need to be made. Who is going to stand up? Gandhi is gone. Mandela is gone. Now, it’s you. Now, it’s me. Now, it’s the listener who is going to make the difference.

That’s the spirit. You got the spirit. I found it out through the cold. Cold is cold, it’s merciless, but righteous. I went in. I felt great and now I’m changing science. I’m changing medical science, because of it. Because I went into a belief, into a feeling and that feeling is closing the gap that we are capable of becoming happy, strong, healthy. That should be a guarantee for every mother, for his or her, newborn. Then we don’t look for compensation out there like three cars, or four cars, houses, and all the power. No; happiness, strength, and health go back to the core values, brings you right back to the source, which is the spirit.

[That’s] the purpose of life, and it needs to come back; this time of confusion, that’s just the mind. We have to go back in the heart, and the medium is love, and the understanding is [fooled]. Because [with] measurement devices, as I’m working with all the universities—like ten universities right now, I’m working with people who work with Nobel Prize winners on DNA, and they are now fools. We just show this is the way: it’s not
only about having control over your hormonal system, the strength, and the good feel hormones, and the health, and the innate immune system, up to a level of the autonomic nervous system. It’s [also] about the spirit.

They will find a translation through science that the spirit is the source of our happiness, strength, and health, about the balance a kid gets from birth and should not leave that balance anymore. There’s a big margin, but what we get with this system, in this society, it’s sodomizing all the balance, the natural balance, and it shows. We’ve got plastics in the oceans. We are acidifying the ocean and thus the corals go and the people are not OK. All in the world there’s still tension, and politics, and bullocks. It’s all BS, because of the power, and people are in confusion. I want to just bring it beyond any speculation, I just want to show on a biological, molecular level that happiness, strength, and health correlate directly to staying with the spirit. You got it; stay with it. Then you will be like a flower during your life. Then you don’t need to compensate into cars, and houses, and this, and that, and blah blah blah. Back to the tribe. That’s what every mother wants: guaranteeing her child to be happy, strong, and healthy.

TS: Now, Wim, I want to get more into the science. As you’ve said, ten different universities are currently studying your approach, The Wim Hof Method.

WH: Yes. Yes.

TS: But I want to begin with making sure our listeners understand the method you developed. You began by saying you use a special breathing technique. Can you introduce us to that technique? Can you even take us through it? What is the breathing technique that’s at the core of The Wim Hof Method?

WH: Yes, the core of The Wim Hof Method is actually the breathing, the rhythm for going into the cold. I was my own laboratory setting, and it was my feeling that drove me to do it. I felt there is more between heaven and sky, so I go and do it. For 30 years I’ve been doing all kinds of challenges. I’ve got 26 world records, going into the cold in all kinds of ways, and showing them that I’m not dying. I showed the scientists, and they took it on. They said, “Hey, what this man is doing is not possible. Let’s investigate on him.”

Then they found out, in comparative studies that the people who were trained by me doing breathing techniques, while being injected with a bacteria—which normally in a controlled experiment, which it is, it makes you sick. Headaches, uncontrolled shivering, all-over agony, fever, and all those things for like eight hours. Within in a quarter of an hour after training for four days, they were able to suppress the inflammation, which is causing the fever, and headaches, and all that, and bring it down, and boom, one hundred percent order.

What did I do? I showed them that within four days, without prior experience in the cold, to go on day four to a mountain in shorts, minus-10 degrees Celsius at the beginning and minus 27 on top. Being five hours exposed to cold and dancing the Harlem Shake on top
of the mountain. I knew then, with these people, after training and motivation and just give it what you got, then you see, you've got more than you think. They did it all; we danced the Harlem Shake. And everybody can teach himself to do [these exercises] or learn. It’s a free exercise, fully backed up by scientific endorsement and proof on my website. It’s all for free, you can see it, and experience it, and practice. Those guys did it, and four days later they were injected with a bacteria. It’s a controlled experiment, [and] normally it makes people sick. And all [of the test subjects], 100-percent score, they were—within a quarter of an hour, they had complete control. So no eight hours of agony, going up in inflammation, and fever, and this, and that. It just was not there. They took over their natural innate capability to control deeper systems within us. Those systems, they have gotten lost. And now, we brought them back within our awareness. I use the science to show it.

The breathing is what you see, also on the website, you see it—images, people, motion pictures on how they did it in the hospital. There is no speculation about it. But whole industries, they want to have us on the pills and medicine, and the food industry is sh***ng upon us. I say, I found a way to go back to our innate capability to cleanse ourselves through breathing exercises and gradual exposure to cold. For those who are not—

TS: Can you introduce me to the breathing right here, right now? Can you introduce that?

WH: Yes, of course. The breathing—one thing you got to know, it’s so simple you really cannot believe, “Can it be so simple?” Yes, I’m sorry, it is so simple, so effective, and so tangible, accessible. So like 30 or 40 times, [breathe] deeply in, [then] letting go, pulling in [breathes in loudly and forcefully], and letting go [blows out the breath], pulling in [breathes in], letting go [breathes out]; like 30 or 40 times. You feel lightheaded, you feel luminous in the body, tingling, and that’s all OK. You can read all about the explanations, the way it works; the protocol is actually on the website. It’s easy. It is as easy as I just showed you right now.

After the 30 times, you’ll feel loose and lightheaded in the body. What do you do? [Breathes in deeply.] Pull air in, let it go [breathes out lightly], and after you let go—not forcefully let go, just let go, and then you stop [hold your breath]. You can time it with an iPhone, or whatever phone you got, and see that you are suddenly able to stay one minute, or two minutes, or maybe three minutes without air in the lungs. That’s learning how to manipulate the chemistry in the body. We use the way of the breath. The breath, we found out through the science, it hits on the deepest of the physiology, the deepest of the brain—the brain stem—and it’s activates the part [that] directs the adrenal [glands]. What do you need in a fight-or-flight situation? You need adrenaline, epinephrine. Now it appears to be that those hormones, that system is able to reset the body and the brain to its utmost functionality. That’s what is happening.

When you feel [loose], lightheaded, that “hwooo,” you go on 30 times, 40 times, then the last time you take one fully in [breathes in], let it go [breathes out], you stop. You will see that you are able to stay around one minute, one-and-a-half minutes, without air in the lungs.
TS: So Wim, if I understand correctly, when you have somebody in their shorts in this very extreme cold situation, hiking up five hours, they’re doing this breathing technique that you just described while they’re hiking. Is that correct? They’re breathing like this while they’re walking all at the same time? Is that correct?

WH: I call it conscious breathing. That’s what I’m going to do a very famous actors coming [in] January again, climbing Kilimanjaro. It’s like six kilometers high. Almost six kilometers, so there’s less than half the oxygen. What we do is go climb the mountain in twenty-four hours, which is physiologically not possible without acclimatization, but we do it anyway. That mountain I did already with one-hundred persons, even with arthritis, Crohn’s disease, cancer, asthma, and I did it always in shorts in record times.

It means that this breathing technique is able to oxygenize [the] body to get into the deepest of the physiology more than anything we know in science, but now we have proven it in science that it all works and that bacteria has no chance; we can control it, together with the bacteria, the virus, but we need to prove it all. That’s what we do. It’s happening. Yes, 30, 40 times of the way I was breathing and showing it. That’s what it takes.

Then you go—that’s like round number one. When you feel the urge to breathe again, you take one in, you hold it for 10 seconds, and squeeze a little bit [of it] through your head. It brings oxygen into your head and all kinds of things happen. What we do is igniting or primordial power; our inner power, the way nature meant it to be. I found out that by going into the cold, which is righteous, but also merciless, you gotta function. That’s what I did, and after so many records, many more challenges in nature, I know how it works. This is what I bring through laboratory studies to the world and the world needs it. Not only the spirit, but it’s how to heal, and how to prevent some disease, how to be connected to our primordial capacities. It’s like, you have the car, but you don’t know where the key is.

Now Wim, I’m imagining some of our listeners who may feel skeptical about the scientific studies, so I’m curious if you could tell us about which university did this test with the injection of the poisonous bacteria, and some of the other studies, and what the laboratories are, which laboratories are conducting these tests?

WH: Yes, right. First of all, we got the Dutch university, Radboud University. Their intensive care and physiological department, they both did studies on me, and they are published both in PNAS, which is the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, and I was a full chapter in the university [text]book [called Biology Now], as we have shown in the first time in medical history that the autonomic nervous can be influenced together with the innate immune system. It’s in American university [text]books, a full chapter. Anybody can read [it]. I love skepticism, by the way, because polishes the diamonds of truth and knowledge. I go for that. Together with another university in Amsterdam, AMC, a hospital university, we did a study on patients with autoimmune disease. Very successful, being published very soon, completed the study.

Right now, I’m working with Michigan, Wayne State University’s neuroscience department on brain scans of different parts in the brain being activated, possibly showing solutions
for bipolar depression, anxiety, fear, PTSD, trauma. Another one is right now in the making. In San Francisco, [UCSF], together with Elissa Epel on DNA on telomeres, the longevity, the negative stress and the positive stress within the body. We got possibly—that’s next week. I will be in Silicon Valley to talk with possible sponsors for these three studies we are going to conduct. That’s only the beginning, because Professor Elissa Epel, she works with Nobel Prize winners on the DNA. We are working together right now.

Another one is Stanford University, also, San Francisco, together with Professor [Andrew] Huberman; he’s conducting right now the study on anxiety, where by VR [virtual] reality research [to cure anxiety]. Another one is in Melbourne, [RMIT]. That’s a retrospective study, and it shows so many people who are being healed through this method. Another one is in Hanover, over in Germany. They do studies on the emotion, the emotional reactivity, which correlates to the brain stem. Another one is Waikato [University] in New Zealand; it’s done on endometriosis, which is an infection of the uterus. Many more are coming—they are knocking on our door. I always say, do the research well, protocols, and yes, the more the merrier. That’s what I love.

Speculation has no space; not in my mind. With that I [exhort] anybody who is critical, do not be only critical; help me and study more. We are capable of becoming happy, strong, and healthy as it is correlated to control at will with the hormonal system as well as the immune system. This is what we want guaranteed to our children. The world needs it. So I need any help. The governments are too much into money; they’re too much into power and maintaining it. What I do is go back to nature and show you that we got it. Back to the tribe. Back to the family. Back to the love. Back to the power. It is simple, accessible, and effective. That’s what I show through all the non-speculative research. The more the merrier. Please do understand, I invite, I welcome anybody who wants to do study anytime.

TS: Now, Wim, what is your understanding in basic terms in how, when someone exercises The Wim Hof Method and does this type of breathing, how that’s affecting the physiology such that we’re influencing our hormonal system and our immune system?

WH: Yes, I got you. Thing is, we’ve got seven trillion cells. That’s a whole lot. Every cell acts like the other one. Now, if we don’t feed ourselves with the right breathing, then we cause stress. We cause insufficiency. That insufficiency in time is creating stress, chronic stress, oxidative stress. That comes all the deregulation within the immune system. The disconnection from the brain to the body through the cells, and yes, all the problems out there. Nobody knew it, but I went into nature and I found: hey, don’t think, do. Don’t think, be. Feel. Now, my feeling brought me to this understanding, and that made me able to do all kinds of crazy, crazy records, going so far that scientist say that, “This is normally not possible, but this man is doing it.”

Now I am showing it through science that everybody actually is able to do it, but we have to reconnect with all these seven trillion cells. It is an innate capacity of ours to do so when we have connection, because we de-stress the cell, molecular biology, and we can do that. That’s by breathing. Then breathing becomes not something—“Yes, but I breathe every day. So what I do wrong?” No, the wrong thing is that our mind has taken over too much, therefore the breathing, the feeling is disconnected, because we are dwelling too
much in our mind, and that’s the surface of the brain, the neocortex. That disconnects us from deeper parts of the brain, which are connected to, say, feeling and to survival, which is the limbic system and the brain stem.

Now, I’ve found techniques to realign with all these deeper parts of the brain, bring efficient blood flow through the breathing exercises into those areas. Thus, they begin to connect with all the parts in the brain, the way nature made it to be. Suddenly, the body becomes at will, in your awareness, in control. Suddenly, you begin to feel different and to see different. Suddenly, you begin to have a sense of control over your energy, and your hormones, your happiness, and your strength, the epinephrine, the adrenaline. Whereas you become sick when bacteria, just bacteria, they work when there is a low resistance going on, the immune system is not functioning. You are able to activate it into the deepest [places] and thus bacteria suddenly has no chance. It’s all there, but we have to learn to feed the cell’s biology a trillion times within us. It is the innate capacity of ours to do so. That’s what I say.

If you don’t understand, I do understand that you don’t, because this is new science. We getting through the science and we got this key from nature; not from books, from nature. It’s going to be in the books, it’s already in the books, but it’s going to be much more extended in the books, because this is the way we got to educate our children, that they are in control over their happiness, strength, and health anytime. Not only physics, and mathematics, and history, and language, but the new subjects: happiness, health, and strength, they need to be in school.

TS: One of the things I’m curious about you, you emphasized this notion of feeling. Not being in the surface of our thinking mind, but feeling. I’m wondering when you’re doing something like hiking up Mount Everest without a shirt, or swimming under frozen ice, that kinds of thing, swimming under the surface, what’s it feeling like for you? What’s your experience? What’s it feel like?

WH: You make your calculation. The thing is, every time I did, and I do a record in January again, and I’m at like 58 and I’m still on top of it, so what is it? That’s an innate capacity. What and how? If I see a mountain and even very steep, I go without gear. I go steep, like vertigo up. That’s one of the things under the ice, I can make the calculation. I can feel what I’m going to do. I have a foresight capacity to do so. How? You know, I got an identical twin brother who didn’t exercise all that. He is not capable of doing and I’m doing it, because I practice it.

I can bring this practice to anybody anytime, but the people need to be open. Not in their attitude, in their posture, or conditioning. Hey, relearn! Because your innate capacity is able to do much more than you think. Past your thinking, that is all that is wanted. That want is of all the parts of the brain together with the cell’s biology, which is the rest of the body. That makes you able to calculate beforehand what you are going to do. It’s like our dream state, like the vision quest [for] Indians, [for] natives. They go and see, “Who am I?” They deprive themselves of food for three days and they sit and learn about who they really are. That’s in the deeper. That’s our spirit. Our spirit, if we live to work that, if we live it, then we become like a flower, instead of tension, and disease, and out-of-balanced beings, and depressed, and all those things.
What I’ve learned [about] people is that the innate power of anybody is to be able to realize your dream, your dream state, and it’s exposed within your brain. You know who you are, but you don’t know how to go to the extent of who you are. Now we’ve found this connection; this is what we give to people. This is what makes me very confident and very capable of going under the ice, climbing Mount Everest, or doing anything to see and recognize “Who am I?” in the deepest of myself. What makes me happy, strong, and healthy? How can I take care of my family within this society? I got it, and now I’m sharing this with the rest of the world through science.

If we talk, we can talk until tomorrow evening and still the people will say, “Yeah, that’s what they believe.” I’m sorry, the results show. The data shows. The numbers show. The statistics show. This is a natural way and it shows that our innate capacity is what makes us happy, strong, and healthy. We got it all translated into chemistry. In the end, we become the alchemist.

TS: Wim, I think I understand what you’re referring to as this ability to calculate before you engage in a feat of being in the cold. You calculate what you know you can do.

WH: Yes.

TS: But my question for you is, when you’re doing it; when you’re actually swimming under the ice, or when you’re immersed in an ice bath for more than two hours, what does that feel like while you’re doing this breathing? What does it feel like? Describe your experience for me.

WH: Yes. I feel completely in control. You got that? It is as simple as—I say, “It’s control.” I control it. Why? Because I linked. I connected. I teach people to do this. I teach them within just a couple of days and it brings about this pride feeling. People just go past their conditioning. People go past their fears and find confidence, and strength, and they find their connection with their dream state. It’s about love, it’s about the tribe, it’s about family, it’s about the love for life itself. It’s not only [inaudible]—we, in the end, like in day four, we go up the mountain and test it to the laws of nature, the elemental powers, which are expressed through the cold. And they are all—men, women, old, young, without, or with a condition. If they are motivated then they are all able to do it and stay for hours and hours in intense cold and feel great. Why? Because they are connected.

We use the cold to show yourself and to stay there in the connection. After that they feel transformed. That’s just logical and connected. OK. That’s it. Then, they go back to society and society is about serving a system and not their spirit. So stay there; that’s what I tell everybody. We’ve got a community of 50, 60 thousand active members, but like millions of people know of this now and in one way or another, they are getting into it.

The thing for me is, I keep on with the science—listen, this is not about me. I just showed what is possible. There are many other things possible, but in the end it is your spirit. That’s the only possible way to go in this life to become really happy, strong, and healthy.
I’m showing it. I just keep on, and through the science we will be able to show people in time that this is the one. This is not mine; I just found it in nature. I showed things and I bring it to science. I’m very stubborn in it. I just keep on going.

TS: Now, Wim, I have to ask you this question, it’s a little edgy, but have you ever had any misfortunes or accidents with people engaging in The Wim Hof Method?

WH: Yes. It’s like a very strong medicine. If you do this under the water and you do it wrongly, then you could die. You could die. In the world, four or five persons who thought they were doing this method—but we advocate, we show that you don’t do it in the water, because if you do not experience how to control your breathing in the depth, you can become unconscious at a certain moment. If you are then under the water, yes, you will swallow at a certain moment, because the CO2 reflexes come back, but you are under the water. Don’t do it under the water. It’s not about competition, how long I can stay under the water. Do it on the sofa. Do it in a bath. Do it in a relaxed environment. Then it works miracles, but it’s like strong natural medicine. Don’t do it in the water. That’s what we advocate. And don’t do it in, for example, in a car while driving, because you really go deep.

TS: Now, Wim, when people start to learn this method and the breathing, as you described it, one of the things I’ve heard reported is that people can begin to see lights, or experience other kinds of phenomenon: seeing the chakras, or even meeting entities. Can you help me understand all of this phenomena that happens for people during the breathing?

WH: It’s amazing. Yes, you really get into your, you get “at will,” through conscious breathing and manipulating pneumatically the oxygen getting in, the chemistry, and then pressurizing is manipulating. Then you get a different influx of oxygen within the brain, which is able to enlighten the deepest part of the brain stem. In the brain stem we’ve got the apparitions. We’ve got a timelessness in different parts of the brain, but also apparitions of things past, within your subconscious normally, so you are conditioned in a way. That’s a great way] to exist and et cetera, but now you go deeper in different parts of the brain and suddenly they come to your awareness. That’s what you do at will. We do not only get in only our autonomic nervous system, which is related to the limbic system and the brain stem, but we get into our dream state. We get into the DMT. We get into—and all “at will.” All that you never have noticed consciously suddenly becomes—you’re becoming aware of those things. Even things genetically related to past lives, they come to the apparition, because you are part of your past lives. It comes. Then it comes visually, at will, to your awareness. Isn’t that amazing?

I all want you to learn about that through science, but first I’m into, let’s clean up first. Depression, bipolar, trauma, anxiety, fear, PTSD, things like that. First I want to do that and show neuroscientifically that we are able to get into those things and to clean up all in society where medical expertise is not able to get. We are able to get there. Very soon it’s going to be conducted, in February. We are into it right now with Stanford, with UCLA,
with the Hanover, and together with Michigan. Yes, we are into it, and that’s what we are going to do first. Then rapidly, we are charting new areas of the brain, “at will,” in control. Then we are able to go on with the charge, show it through results, neuroscientific evidence [of] how the spirit works, how the deeper state of the dreams work, how the DMT works, which at the end of the life when we’re going to die. What happens with the tunnel of light? What happens with the purpose of life? How does it express itself?

It all expresses it through the chemistry of the brain. We can make it visible now with the existing measurement devices, brain scans, and fMRIs, and all. We can show things and correlate and make logic, translate it to our awareness of what is happening in the brain. These breathing techniques, they are really so strong, they get into those deepest areas where normally, we “at will” are not capable of connecting with. Right now we are doing it. The final thing I’ll say—but first I want to clean up the garbage; which is PTSD, anxiety, fear, depression, and all those mental disorders, and, yes, that’s what I do.

Now, we are doing this together. You, for example, right now are my window. Once again, I’ll say out loud to all the people who are listening: if you can help me, be critical, but help humanity. Help get the spirit where it belongs to be. Within us. Experienced and aware. Strong.

TS: OK, Wim, I just have a couple more questions I really want to ask you.

WH: Yes.

TS: Which is, I first was introduced to the idea that working with extreme cold could be an aspect of somebody’s spiritual practice through seeing images of Tibetan Buddhist monks who would be sitting out on snow fields with cold sheets wrapped around them and doing a practice known as tummo, or inner-fire practice. I’m curious if you see a connection between what you’re teaching, The Wim Hof Method, and what known as tummo practice?

WH: Yes, they connect their brain together with the solar plexus. Yes, you get the visualizations. They learn of the goddess, the female goddess, the female power within. It’s very purifying, and very good, but it takes a lot of years. I know that tummo, the tummo doctrine of Naropa is one of the six yogas. I was very interested in that and inspired when I was 17, 16, when I read about it by an anthropologist who traveled in the 1900s in those areas and saw that all. I can do those things, but it’s not so important. The thing is, our neurology of the existing Western people is completely different than those who live in, say, the slopes of Mt. Everest or the Himalayas and practice tummo. So I know about it, and I met great practitioners of those, and they have a lot of respect for what I do, because the tummo is one of the six yogas done by Naropa, a Buddhist avatar.

If you go back to what the Buddhists really are about, it’s a universal message that love is the thing—compassion. This, what I do, this serves the compassion a whole lot better. Why? Because it doesn’t take too much of a practice, and non-dogmatically—anybody can go into the cold. I always say, “Do not force. Just go into the innate power of yourself,
which is able to cope with all that, but your conditioned being is not yet there. Gradually grow into it, and then the end is great. In the meanwhile, you will be able to take over the control past your mind, which is there, and connect with that, and to use the cold.”

Anybody can do it in one day. I’ve got people of 80 years, who have no prior experience in ice water, and four hours later, they are relaxed in ice water. What is that? That means awakening the power. It’s our innate capacity to be in very strong environmental stress. Could be cold, could be heat, could be any stress, and we have to just learn to link up again within us, and then we go past this [inaudible] discipline called tummo, as you mentioned. It’s nice, but to me, it’s a circle that doesn’t show other people to be able to access it therein, to be effective therein, to relate to it, and to keep it secret. Don’t! Bring it out, because the message of Buddhism is compassion. Compassion is, “I take care of you. You take care of me. Look what I found. I’m going to share this with you.” It works.

Listen, it’s not a philosophy, really. It’s past any speculation; this is what results if we do this in a comparative study in and show it that in a couple of days we are suddenly able to do things we thought impossible. That not only brings us being able to stay five hours into the cold after four days; no, it reconnects us with the ability to become happy, strong, and healthy. That’s the way we were built, and we bring it back to our awareness. With that, the spirit, the soul of it all—the world needs it and we got it, and together we bring it out. I appeal to any person who’s listening right now: help us, help yourself, help humanity. We have to bring back harmony in the world. We are all very built to do the good. Let’s do it.

TS: Now Wim, I noticed listening to you, I feel very excited about learning the breathing, and learning your method, and yet a part of me is like, “Do I have to get into ice water at the end of the day, or walk up a mountain? Can’t I just learn this and be happy, healthy, and strong without this cold immersion?” Or is there something about the cold that will give me a kind of confidence? As I said, you called cold “a noble force.” Do I need the cold? To work with the cold?

WH: Some people live in hot countries. Are they missing out? No. Nobody is missing out. I just say, the cold can be a noble force, if you use it gradually. For most of the Westerners in the Northern Hemisphere, it’s accessible; Natural bodies of water, they are all around. Instead of making the winter a time of depression—no, make it your summer! Go out, and feel, and see! It will bring about a very good, deep stimulation of the cardiovascular system, which is, by the way, killer number one in the Western Hemisphere, is the cardiovascular system. We can kill that, or prevent, or tackle this serial killer, which is taking millions in the West all over in the Western Hemisphere. We can take it out, by going gradually into the cold or to deep stimulation of the vascular system.

The vascular system is about eighty-thousand miles within each and every one of us. It is composed, or helped, by the blood flow with millions of little primitive muscles and reflexes. But we never stimulate it, so it becomes lazy and the heart needs to pump and compensate for the loss. That’s very stressful, both for the heart and the poor transportation system called, the vascular system. So you better make use of the cold. The cold is your friend. It’s a noble force. You feel great afterwards. That’s why I call it a noble force—it’s not for nothing. It’s not that I’m admiring its beauty or something. I hate the cold, but I go into it and I feel great afterwards always. I’ve learned to love the cold. I see it as my warm friend, as it is improving my blood flow. Blood flow is all about warm,
and nutrients, and vitamins, and oxygen flowing through my body, energizing my body, making my immune system so strong. That’s why I use the cold.

I actually am a guy who loves palm trees and tropical areas. I love the exuberance of life—the flowers and all that. That’s who I am, but if the cold is there, then I use it to my benefit. That’s what I did and I did it well. I’ve got 26 world records and numerous more challenges into the cold, because I know it brings good. And that good, it’s now proven through science. That works.

If people live in warm areas the breathing really helps. The breathing comes from going into the cold. You learn to see that your breathing actually is shallow, because of non-stimulative behavior—always in enclosed, closed. closed. There is no stimulation on our skin anymore, therefore the vascular system is not working, thus it doesn’t ask for oxygen. Thus, we become shallow in our breathing. It becomes conditioned. Thus, the nutrients, and the vitamins, and the oxygen, they don’t get into all the trillion cells, seven trillion cells, thus we have stress. It’s cell biological stress.

We’ve got to learn these simple facts and expose ourselves to the elements of nature as we are built to be able to function within. It all works together. So we’ve got to change the paradigm about what the cold is. The cold, like intermittent stress, or acute stress factor—we are very capable not only to cope with it, [but] it brings about the best of functionality within. Then it becomes under our will, and suddenly disease, and energy loss, and all those things, they are the past. They are like, it’s not there. You become contact with all those systems and you are able to regulate as if you have a button. Want more? You get more, but not if the connection is not there through our comfort-zone behavior all the time.

So yes, the cold is good, but not necessary. In the end—and that’s where I’m getting, I’m showing this through brain scans—our mind is able to move physical mechanisms in our body. I showed in a brain scan to have ice cold water on my skin and I was able, just by mind, to make the skin temperature not go down. That is an innate capacity of our minds, but if for a long time you do not exercise that belief, that being within your mind, you think the cold, “Oh, this cold is cold!” No, the cold is just a force. We are exposed not only to cold, which is stress, [but] to daily stress. Daily stress is even worse than any cold. Cold is very direct; you’ve got to work and you’ve got to warm up yourself, but the daily stress comes in like a sniper. It kills us. It gives us chronic stress. It oxidates within the cell’s biology, and in the end, you get all the autoimmune diseases, cancer, diabetes, whatever. It is caused, you get it all because of the stress in the cell’s biology. That’s done through a non-stimulated behavior of your physiology. It’s logic.

The cold is good. It’s noble. It’s beautiful. It’s not all day long, but sometimes, like the dogs, you gotta—don’t let them all day in. You gotta go out with the dogs. We have a physiology which needs to have exposure to the elements of nature sometimes to be activated to its utmost functionality. Then it becomes under our will, and it listens to us. We got to live our lives, our physiology.

TS: Wim, I have to say, talking to you is incredibly inspiring and you’re such an unusual person, really. You’ve made a very passionate case for the work that you’re doing and the role of scientific research to create evidence for what you’re able to accomplish through
The Wim Hof Method. My final question to you is, what do you think it is about you that this mantle, this torch, has been given to you?

WH: Yes. I think, as in the beginning of our speech, Tami, the Mandelas are gone, and Gandhi is gone. It’s now upon your shoulders and my shoulders. You know, we are going to stand up. We’re going to make a difference and we’re doing it. You do good work. I do good work; together we will provide a great future for anybody to go and to come, because we care. We love, and we will care, and take care. That’s what we do.

Whatever that is, going beyond—is it possible, yes or no, thinking about it? No; I care, and I do it. We are sharing that right now. I appreciate and respect your work. That’s what you just showed, your respect for what I do. I once again challenge any person who is listening to this—not like challenging, it’s not a competition—let’s do this work. Let’s lay it upon our shoulders. We are responsible; we are able to respond to whatever is happening right now. We can do this together. We believe, and that’s the thing. We do not think; we believe and we do it. I’m showing this through science. It is the belief coming back to the people. That’s what we need.

TS: I’ve been talking with Wim Hof. He’s the developer of The Wim Hof Method. It’s been such a joy to have you on Insights at the Edge. Thank you so much for your love and your passion.

Thank you.

WH: Love you. Love you, Tami, and thank you very much for making this expressed through your medium. Thank you, thank you very much.

TS: Thank you for listening to Insights at the Edge. You can read a full transcript of today’s interview at soundstrue.com/podcast. And if you’re interested, hit the Subscribe button in your podcast app. And also, if you feel inspired, head to iTunes and leave Insights at the Edge a review. I love getting your feedback, being in connection with you, and learning how we can continue to evolve and improve our program. Working together I believe we can create a kinder and wiser world. SoundTrue.com: waking up the world.