

Do amazing things with a focused mind

Taking an ice bath and swimming in the Amstel river

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Dec. 6, 2018



Just when the temperature was a low 2° Celsius, I jumped in the Amstel river! While it was nearly freezing outside I went for a swim, just moments after I've taken an ice bath! This post is about the incredible birthday present I got, a workshop involving the Wim Hof Method.

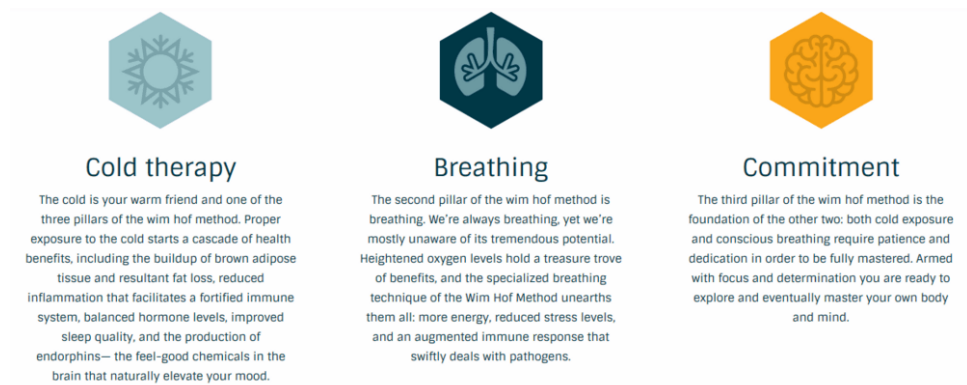
Wim Hof Method

He amazed doctors when Wim Hof demonstrated he was able to sustain an healthy body temperature while sitting in an ice bath.



Wim Hof in ice blocks wearing sensors

Ever since, he's been on numerous TV-shows, documentaries and talks explaining his method. The Wim Hof Method (WHM) consists of three pillars: cold therapy, breathing and commitment.



Wim Hof Method (source: wimhofmethod.com)

Cold therapy

In our modern society we tend to control our environment, like turning up the heat when we feel cold or powering on the air-conditioning when we're hot. Living in continuous comfort makes our bodies lazy. By regularly exposing yourself to cold, you train your body to deal with uncomfortable conditions - reactivating its natural capability to warm and sustain itself.

You can do this by taking cold showers or swimming in cold water. Exposure to cold brings down your heart rate and increases your circulation, minimizing inflammation and helping you recover faster from exercising. In addition, you harden your body to the natural stimulus induced by cold, resulting in an increased tolerance to stress and/or disease.

Breathing

With the breathing exercise of the Wim Hof Method you optimise your breathing, lower your heart rate, deacidify your body, activate your autonomous nervous system, improve your immune system and attain a deep meditative calmness.

This is done by concentrating on repetitive deep breaths, in and out. After a few minutes of deep breathing, you let go and pause breathing. Once your body clearly wants to breathe again, you take in one deep breath and hold it for about 20-30 seconds. The sudden intake of oxygen causes an intense full body sensation that some describe as a mind trip - you'll experience your body like never before.

Commitment

Both the breathing exercise and the cold therapy require dedication, they're no quick fix to a problem. Just like any kind of training, initial progress is often hard. Your commitment is required to become a master of your body.

You can fuel your commitment with the meditative calmness and focus you'll get when you're exercising and training, it's highly rewarding. Although it takes time to become a master, you'll be able to experience benefits quite quickly.

Experiencing the Wim Hof Method

As a gift for my birthday I received a Wim Hof Method workshop in Amsterdam. Together with my buddy Tim we visited Bart Biermans, both a doctor and certified WHM trainer. He gives workshops in Amsterdam on his fantastic houseboat in the Amstel river.



Bart Biermans' ice man training in Amsterdam (source: icemantrainingen.nl)

The workshop consists of two parts, first Bart Biermans explains the theory and science underpinning the Wim Hof Method. You'll learn about the exercises, Wim Hof, research and experiments. As these workshops are held in (small) groups, you'll also meet other people. You'll be able to discuss backgrounds, intentions and experiences during the day. This makes it much more than just a personal experience - you'll learn from and be inspired by others.

I experienced the Wim Hof Method workshop as something incredible. Although [I devote quite some time and energy to my health](#), I never experienced my body like this before. The breathing exercise helped me to gain a level of meditative calmness that - for me - was unprecedented. It may seem silly, but it felt as if I could distinctively feel my blood flowing through my vessels, my heart pumping, my body living; amazing!

Then it was time for the ice bath. The temperature outside was around 2° Celsius, one after one we were guided into the bath filled with ice cubes. The anticipation that you'll sit in a tub full of ice felt like a challenge. But once I entered the bath, I felt calmness.



Not your typical hot tub... taking an ice bath!

With some guidance from Bart Biermans, I was able to focus on my inner temperature, this enabled me to feel quite comfortable - despite being submerged in ice cold water! It's a very strange sensation to feel warm inside an ice tub. Once you get out of the ice bath you'll notice that your sense of temperature has shifted, the cold weather outside suddenly feels warm. To complete this temperature roller coaster ride, we jumped in the Amstel river for a quick swim!

Conclusion

What an experience it is to learn new things about your own body, that you can do amazing things without drugs or special equipment.

It has been an inspiring workshop that left a lasting impression on me. Big thanks to [Bart Biermans](#) for his expertise and my buddy Tim for this amazing birthday present!