

Planning for the Future: How Long Can You Hold Your Breath?

By William J. Goldsmith

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Having been a “husky” child in my early years, I have tried to be reasonably health conscious in my adult years, especially since I have young children. So, I routinely try out new methods and ideas to improve my health and wellness. Recently, I came across research and articles having to do with the benefits of specific breathing techniques and subjecting your body to temperature extremes — both hot and cold. This research has led me to build my own near-infrared sauna, jogging in 22-degree weather in just a pair of shorts, gloves, hat and sneakers and holding my breath for more than six minutes.

Living in the modern world, we are able to control the climate of our homes, cars, public transportation and work environments. Almost anywhere we go, we can remain comfortable. Even when exposed to the elements, we have the latest and greatest technical clothing to keep us warm and dry or nice and cool — whatever is needed at the time. But all of these advancements and comfort have come at a cost. Our bodies have become soft and are immune systems less robust.

All you have to do is look around you. While we have the most comforts and conveniences of any generation, we are more stressed, feel more isolated and have seen tremendous growth in all types of diseases (cancer, heart disease, autoimmune diseases etc.). Certainly, a large part of that is due to our diet, environmental exposure and lack of exercise. But what if there were a way to mitigate some of the damage being done? Certain breathing techniques and exposure to cold and heat may just be the ticket for many of us.

For me, the Wim Hof Method is my breathing technique of choice. Wim Hof, also known as the Iceman, is a Dutchman who developed a program that combines a specific breathing technique along with cold exposure. His extraordinary achievements have enabled him to compile 26 Guinness World Records including: climbing Mt. Everest in only shorts and shoes, being submerged neck deep in ice for 112 minutes, and running a full marathon in the Namibian desert in temperatures reaching up to 104 degrees without drinking a single drop of water (and without training) to name a few.

I share this information with you for two reasons. First, I want you to know that exposure to cold and heat along with the Wim Hof breathing technique may benefit you. If you suffer from depression, anxiety, asthma, any auto immune disease or any other number of health-related issues, you may want to research the Wim Hof Method and exposure to cold and heat (especially the benefits of sauna use). There are numerous articles, testimonials and scientific research that you may find very helpful.

The second reason has to do with my work as an advisor. My job is to meet with clients and learn what is most important to them. Then, it is my job to work with them to make their goals and dreams a reality. But the most important step is to gain clarity on what those goals and dreams are in the first place. Because if you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.

As I began my journey using the Wim Hof Method, if you told me that I would be able to hold my breath for 6 minutes and 12 seconds and routinely be able to hold my breath for longer than five minutes, I would have told you that you were nuts. After all, we are told that if our brains are deprived of oxygen for longer than five minutes, there is a good chance we can suffer brain

damage.

If you told me that I could perform 40 pushups on a single breath or run bare-chested in 22-degree weather and enjoy it, without shivering at all, again, I would have told you there was no chance of that occurring. Yet, as I sit here writing this article, all are true.

Here is the key: I have done things that I never thought possible for me. So, what else am I capable of? What other self-limiting beliefs are holding me back? How else can I expand my vision of what is possible for my life and my family? When I think of my future goals and dreams, my vision of what is possible has changed. I am capable of so much more than I previously thought possible. This is where all of it ties into planning. When you think about your life, don't think small and don't be scared to dream big. We are capable of so much more than we know. I encourage you to take a leap of faith and a jump into a cold pool.

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