

Wim Hof

- Exercises

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InnerFire

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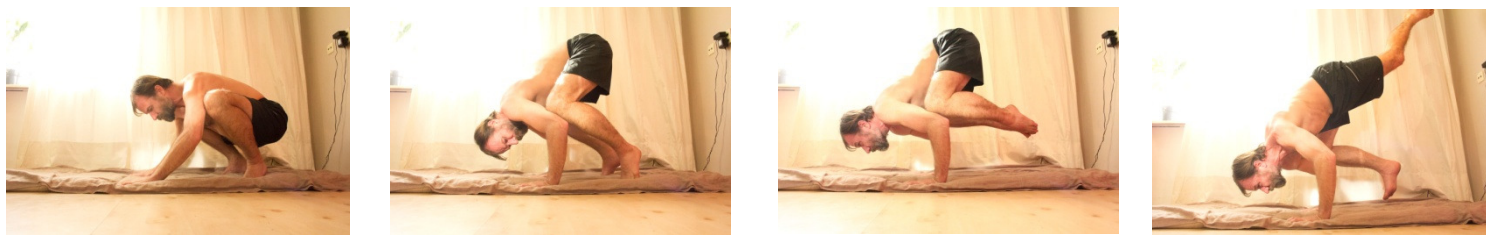


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The raven (*kakasana*)

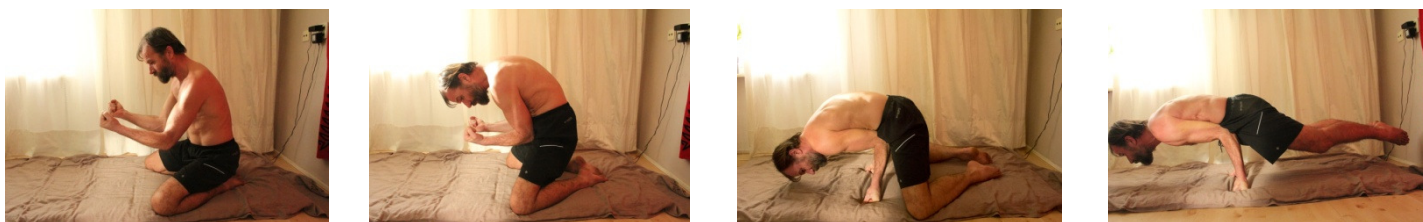


Put the hands on the ground and bend the arms in a 50-60 degree angle, then put the knees right on top of the elbows. All controlled by regular breathing.

When the knees are on the elbows you then find the balance, which is very close, and lift the feet from the ground. Stay for a minute. This exercise improves strength and balance.

The raven, when well done, is a preparative for the next exercise.

The shelf (*mayurasana*)



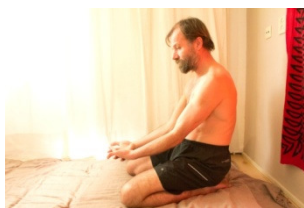
In this exercise we seek the absolute middle of our body, which is not an easy task and needs practice. But if this exercise is learned you got a powerful ally at your side; moreover, this is an excellent exercise to train the enteric nervous system, intestines and stomach.

Put the elbows near the genital area and look for balance, means i.e. look for the point where, with the fists on the ground, you can balance your body on your elbows. If you have arrived at that point it is a matter of stretching out the body.

Stay in this posture with controlled breathing. This is a very powerful exercise.



Head stand (*shirsasana*)



Here we make the blood flow in the opposite direction relative to gravity than it usually does. In this way our head gets an extra shot of fresh blood into all “lazy” parts of the brain.

Stress interferes with normal blood flow to/in the brain. This exercise helps the brain again get more blood flow. It also exercises the shoulders and neck muscles and one’s balance.

Kneel down, sitting on your heels. Interlock the hands and put your forearms on the floor. Now your arms make a triangle; the hands and elbows are the corners of the triangle. Lower your head into the hands so that the back of the head rests in the palms of the folded hands.

Balance and strength is needed at first but soon it all goes in a flow. Once the control gets in you can stay for minutes, no problem.

Split (*Samakonasana*)



One leg in the front stretched out and the other bent behind your back. Slowly but firmly, little by little try to stretch out the bent leg into a straight position like the front leg.

Beautiful training for the pelvis, tendons and muscles of the legs. It is all millimeterwork mentality which makes the biggest progress.

Do your best.



Head to knees, and back bending (*paschimottasana*)



Sit with the legs in front of you, then exhale and bring the head forward as far toward the knees as possible. Remain there in the furthest position possible and wait for the muscles to relax.

Breathing should be relaxed, but when you try to go that little further you can use the pressuring manipulation of an inhalation.

Forward bending is followed by a back bending, ("Cobra pose"). Lie on your belly, put your palms on the floor with the fingers pointing forward and fingertips under the shoulders. Gently bend your back backwards, supporting yourself with the palms of the hands on the floor. Push until you feel a stretch but not discomfort or pain.

Stay for a minute or so and do not force, just let gravitation do its work.

Abdominal pull

Lie down on your back. Exhale, then retain (hold the breath) for ten seconds. While retaining, concentrate on the abdominal muscles to "throw" the belly out a few times, thus exercising the belly muscles.

It makes the muscles strong, better control in the diaphragm, intestines and stomach. Wonderful exercise. Just get the hang of it.



Another reversed balance exercise



Lie on your back and bring your legs up, then keep your arms on the floor and bring the legs further up by lifting the back of your body.

Now you stand (see photo) erect like a giraffe (ha ha).

Eventually bring your arms aside of the erected body, now you stand on your shoulders and the back of the head.

Balance and control is exercised.



Lateral twist (*matsyendra-asana*)



Sitting on the ground, bend one leg in, then put the other leg, with the foot on the ground, over the bent leg. Now twist your torso to put the arm opposite the knee that is in the air over that knee. The arm is now pushing on that knee from the outside and your body is rotated a bit sideways. Continue rotating in the same direction, using your belly muscles to twist your torso.

This exercise is good for blood flow for the kidneys and a training of the discs of the spine.



Untwist the torso, release the arms. Now change legs and twist the in the same fashion in the other direction.

Push ups after ex- and inhalation



Breathe in fully and let go on the breath out. Repeat that until lightness comes up, do not go too far. Be determined and concentrated, relaxed but fully there.

When your CO₂ goes down, concentrate on the lightness of the body.

When you feel the oxygen run through your body (positive lightness) do a few more of the mentioned breaths. Then inhale fully and exhale completely, and retain (hold the breath) with no air in the lungs.

You will be amazed how many pushups you can do without air in the lungs. Alternatively, you can do the pushups after inhalation(choice). It is a way to instantly go deep into the nervous system and clean it. The nerves running to and through the muscles will also function better, and that makes you in better condition. You will get stronger by doing this exercise daily once or twice as you feel

Once you get in touch with the deeper levels of your physiology everything runs better. Now this is consciously witnessed without moving, the energies move. Electricity and blood flow witnessed in depth.

What to say more, just feel the flow.

Suki nai, heta nai
Nan demo dekiru
Akarui

No love, no hatred

Anything can come

Clarity

As a spark of daylight in a cave

(A zen poem)



Breathing

*Note: When I put “easy” in parentheses, I am emphasizing that I do not want you to force the explained technique. It is important to stay comfortable and not over exert yourself. Practicing will push you a little more each time. Just try to stay relaxed; don’t force it.

Sit or lie down comfortably in a peaceful environment (bedroom, living room, back yard, in nature, whatever suits you). Then relax, consciously, and begin to breathe from the abdominal region, not too shallow, not too deep. Think of it like blowing up a balloon. Do this thirty times. Saturate the muscles and organs with extra oxygen. The goal is to let the oxygen saturate not only the lungs, but also all of the internal organs. It may feel like you are hyperventilating, but just remember that you have control.

Whenever you feel saturation throughout your body, exhale completely (easy), then inhale until you can’t take in any more air (don’t force it), then exhale completely (easy) and , with the lungs empty, hold your breath (easy). When the feeling telling you to breathe comes, it is because of the depletion of oxygen. At this point, you can inhale fully and hold it for ten seconds with your lungs full of air. When you complete that, you have completed your first cycle!

Repeat. By practicing this, over time you will be able to hold each breath longer and get deeper into your system (immune system, nervous system, blood circulation and heart).

After each retention (holding of breath) without air and inhalation, close your eyes and hold your breath, with air in the lungs, for 10-15 seconds. You may be able to see electrical charges (some categorize these lights as chakras, electric potentials, or even neurons firing). If you go deep inside yourself, you can stimulate this electricity by a pneumatic pressure that goes up the spine toward your forehead. These lights are your aim!

Oxygen aids the metabolism in creating energy for the body to circulate throughout your system. When you empty the lungs of oxygen, retain until you can’t anymore (easy, don’t do it to the point of passing out), and then inhale. Doing this will give the body new oxygen laced with boosts of energy. This provokes the electricity to go up the spine, reaching the nervous system, immune system, blood circulation, and heart. Thus, ending up in the forehead and influencing the brain effectively.

Meditation

Yoga is the silencing of the mind. Only then can we really see the peace inside ourselves. It’s no hocus-pocus. The breathing exercise written above will help you get there. To reach the forehead and see the electrical charges, you must not only be patient and practice, but you must really want it. Controlling the mind is controlling your senses and emotions. When

you can do that, anything is possible. By anything, I mean you will be able to still your mind and steer by the intentions to induce the lights. Once you are able to induce the lights, you will see that the technique is working. Your body will feel lighter and more powerful.

This technique can help calm your mind and make it pure. A pure mind can easily expand and reach its potential. That is when the light will become clear. I could talk about this forever, but what is important is that you truly want to do it. Practice it. That way, you’ll come to know and understand the true nature of the spirit.



Abhyasa vairagya bhyah = regular practice and perseverance.

Cold Exercises

I always say, “The Cold is a noble force.” If people ask me what that means I tell them, “The cold forces me to generate heat. It makes me feel alive. I see the heat as a warm friend whom I call upon to provide balance.” Every Yin has its Yang. The cold is about balance and moderation.

Adaptation

The first thing you should try doing is taking a cold shower after a hot one. Try to control your breaths as you face the impact of the cold on your lungs. Try to consciously control the lungs to not gasp and breathe at ease. When you are able to do this, you have taken a gigantic step in being able to consciously control the vascular system around your vital organs. Regularly practicing cold showers can lead to muscle development in your arteries. The entire vascular system altogether will be conditioned as you exercise, but let things adapt and don't force yourself through it. Stay determined, yet patient. Once the adaptation

process is complete you can move on to the next phase, which is taking a cold shower without a warm one. You will need to be determined for this as well. Before you even begin your cold shower, you may notice a drop in your body temperature. Due to your intentions of taking the cold shower, your body will react psychosomatically. It is all a part of the process. Once again, when you get in the shower, breathe controlled and let the adaptation happen naturally. You will gain the best results and best control over the body when you are completely relaxed. Eventually you will be able to steer the mind to consciously controlling the autonomic nervous system. If you try to force it, your body will fight back and try to block you from making any progress. This happens because your body isn't used to taking the impact of the cold. Once you adapt in this stage, you will feel much stronger. Some have reported an unexpected feeling of happiness. But most of all, your body's cardiovascular system will begin to run much smoother. Learn to like the cold and you will naturally feel different and eventually have the desire to immerse yourself in cold environments during the wintertime.

Visualization

In stage one and two we learned to adapt and began controlling the body with the mind. Now, we'll learn how to control the mind and body using the power of visualization. Remember, never force anything; let your intuition guide you. Always listen to what your body is telling you. The next time you go to perform a cold exercise, like the cold shower, I would like you to visualize heat generating within your body, just before you enter. Hopefully, you will notice that it brings a sensation of warmth and control. With every breath, intensify this sensation and keep your mind focused on the heat. Don't let it stray away. We can do this with our mind by reconditioning our way of thinking. It's important to focus on this sensation and not dwell on other matters. In time, this focus will come naturally to you. Once you can feel and control the heat, go into the cold water and control your breathing. Immerse with the power of the mind over the body. When you first get in, you may notice a gasping response. Try to control this, and then peacefully adapt to the water. Continue to keep your mind focused



on that heat sensation. Stay in the cold water for as long as it feels comfortable. As soon as you feel any sort of pain or feel uneasiness, get out. When you get out of the water, you will probably see steam coming off your body. This is a good thing and a nice result of a focused mind and proper visualization. Remember, never force. Eventually, when you feel comfortable enough, you can add the breathing exercises, explained in the first section, to your cold-water immersions. If you want to kick it up a notch, after you saturate with air and are able to hold your breath for a while, place your entire body underwater while holding your breath. I am able to easily do this up to 6.5 minutes everyday without any force whatsoever.

Let your body guide your training and only do what you are comfortable with.

Sitting Outside

Another cold exercise that you can do is to practice sitting outside in cold temperatures. By using your newly conditioned body that you have developed during the first few stages, you should be able to now visualize a warm sensation coming from the abdominal region.

Hopefully, this will allow you to comfortably sit in the snow and control your inner temperature. It is up to you to figure out how long you can sit there. It is extremely important that you do not force it! Now that you have taught yourself how to control the internal temperature of your body, you can attempt to increase your endurance and lengthen the amount of time you can remain exposed to cold temperatures.

Barefoot Snow Walking/Running

Another cold exercise you can try is walking or running barefoot through the snow. You will find great power when walking and running through the snow without footwear; it is a wonderful sensation. After you have completed the first few stages of the cold exercises, you will begin to understand the body at a whole new level. The heat sensation can be powerful. While you control that, you can simultaneously stimulate the autonomic nervous system. It is something that the Western Society once thought was impossible. Usually, people will enter cold environments fully clothed and think that the cold has negative repercussions on the body. Without experience, it is hard for one to understand how the cold can positively affect the physiological processes of our body, including the immune system. The cold has the power to show us true human potential... if we let it. Training and natural adaptation in the cold brings about great differences in blood circulation. We have to consider this carefully because we now have a way to increase the efficiency of our body's physiological processes. Everything we consume is processed to stimulate the metabolism to give the body energy. Without an efficient system, the arteries can become clogged and the body can slowly shut down the vital organs. The cold has a positive effect on the entire body; it is our teacher. As you adapt, the muscles in the cardiovascular system are conditioned. The muscles contract and relax, thus becoming stronger. When the muscles in the cardiovascular system get stronger, they improve the blood flow throughout the body and press it toward the finest threads of the blood circulative system. This also increases the efficiency of the heart because it doesn't need to pump as hard to force blood throughout the body. The cold feeds the immune system in the best possible way, keeping it alert and awake. With this newly utilized energy, the immune system can detect disease, and immediately fix the problem (e.g. with an appropriate inflammatory response). A lot of the western society suffers from a weakened circulation system, therefore causing heart attacks, strokes, arthritis and more.

These exercises are a way to fix that problem and begin to improve the efficiency of the body. By practicing in the cold, you will learn to breathe deeper. Breathing is also an important factor in



influencing the body in order to prevent possible diseases. It can be used to redirect blood flow and maintain warmth. It also helps us focus our attention on what our body is trying to tell us. Listen to your intuition and never force your practice. It is one of the few ways to bridge the gap between our inner nature and outer nature. At times, we can be overprotective when it comes to deciding what is “bad” for us. Therefore, we miss out on influences, like that the cold, that have the potential to help us grow. It is possible to be one with nature yet maintain a normal lifestyle as you do now. With this method, I hope you can go about your daily lives while using your body’s full potential. Just find the time to practice it and your body will live efficiently. We all are capable of using this ability; it is a learning process that we must ease ourselves into. Your body and mind will adapt when you are ready.

I would like to make one final note. You do not have to subject your body to extreme temperatures. You can see big changes in your system by simply implementing cold showers into your daily lives. This is definitely applicable to those that are reaching old age and their cardiovascular system is suffering. These cold showers will help your body remain in great condition. This training will help keep the heart, body, and mind in shape. That is the purpose of this technique, nothing less!

Good luck!
Wim Hof

